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## The Security situation of religious and ethnic minorities

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## Table of contents

1. Background information .....	3
2. Religious minorities .....	4
Christians .....	4
Kaka'i.....	5
Sabea-Mandean .....	5
Yezidis.....	6
3. Ethnic minorities .....	7
Shabaks .....	7
Turkmen.....	8
4. Sunnis and Shias.....	8
Shias.....	8
Sunnis.....	9

### Abstract

Even though the situation of Iraq's minorities has been precarious for a period of time that extends long before the security crisis in 2014, the "genocidal terror campaign" perpetrated by IS, characterized by "acts of inhumanity and cruelty" of an "unimaginable scale", has created an "unprecedented crisis" for Iraqi minorities, according to the UN. These events have created a "deep sense of betrayal by neighbouring communities, abandonment by Kurdish forces, and neglect by the central government of Iraq" among Iraqi minorities that will not be forgiven, according to the Minority Rights Group.

### Résumé

Bien que la situation des minorités en Irak ait été précaire depuis une période bien antérieure à la crise sécuritaire de 2014, la « campagne de terreur génocidaire » menée par l'Etat islamique, caractérisée par des « actes d'inhumanité et de cruauté » atteignant une « ampleur inimaginable », ont créé une « crise sans précédent » pour les minorités d'Irak, selon l'ONU. Ces événements ont engendré « un profond sentiment de trahison de la part des communautés voisines, d'abandon par les forces kurdes et de négligence par le gouvernement central irakien » auprès des minorités d'Irak, qui ne sera pas pardonné, selon le Minority Rights Group.

**Nota:** The translation of sources in foreign languages is provided by the Information, Documentation and Research Division.

## 1. Background information

Iraq hosts a variety of religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic minorities, especially in the North of the country. According to 2010 government statistics, 97% of the population is Muslim. 55 to 60% of those are Shia, who are mostly Arab, but also include Turkmen and Faili Kurds. The remaining 40% are Sunni, of whom 24% are Sunni Arabs, 15% are Sunni Kurds and 1% is Sunni Turkmen<sup>1</sup>. The rest of the population is made up of Armenians, Baha'is, Chaldo-Assyrians, Circassians, Jews, Kaka'i, Palestinians, Badawiyin, Bedoon<sup>2</sup>, Sabea-Mandeans, Shabaks, Yezidis, Zoroastrians and Roma<sup>3</sup>. The religion is stated on the ID in Iraq, although only certain religions and sects can be listed, namely Christian, Sabea-Mandean, Yezidi and Muslim<sup>4</sup>.

The situation of Iraq's minorities has been precarious for a period of time that extends long before the security crisis in 2014. The political vacuum which appeared in 2003 has especially threatened the safety of Iraqi minorities. According to the Minority Rights Group, even before the fall of Mosul in June 2014, more than half of Iraqi minorities had fled the country following 2003, and those who remained were "at risk of targeted violence, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, harassment, intimidation, displacement, political disenfranchisement, and social and economic marginalization"<sup>5</sup>. The UN also reported testimonies that described "a reality of widespread and long-standing anti-minority sentiment that is deeply entrenched"<sup>6</sup>.

But since 2014, the "genocidal terror campaign"<sup>7</sup> perpetrated by IS has created an "unprecedented crisis"<sup>8</sup> for Iraqi minorities, according to the UN. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, has called attention to the fact that the "acts of inhumanity and cruelty" recounted by survivors reached an "unimaginable scale that constitute a serious and deliberate attack on the most fundamental human rights and are an affront to humanity as a whole"<sup>9</sup>. Among Iraqi minorities, these events have created a "deep sense of betrayal by neighbouring communities, abandonment by Kurdish forces, and neglect by the central government of Iraq"<sup>10</sup> that will not be forgiven<sup>11</sup>, according to the Minority Rights Group.

Because of this distrust, some minorities are now advocating for the establishment of various forms of administrative autonomy<sup>12</sup>. On the military level as well, minorities have established their own militias to defend themselves. Ninewa for instance is now studded with checkpoints belonging to different groups, some of which have long been rivals<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> United States of America, Department of State, "Iraq 2016 International religious freedom report", 16/04/2017

<sup>2</sup> The UN defines the Bidoon ("without" in Arabic, meaning people who are without identity documents) as pastoralists who live in the desert areas between Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, many of whom may identify as Badawiyin

<sup>3</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p.5

<sup>4</sup> United States of America, Department of State, "Iraq 2016 International religious freedom report", 16/04/2017

<sup>5</sup> Minority Rights Group, "Crossroads: The future of Iraq's minorities after ISIS", 07/06/2017, p. 7

<sup>6</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 5

<sup>7</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 1

<sup>8</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 1

<sup>9</sup> UNAMI, UNHCR, "A Call for accountability and protection: Yezidi survivors of atrocities committed by ISIL", August 2016, p. 4

<sup>10</sup> Minority Rights Group, "Crossroads: The future of Iraq's minorities after ISIS", 07/06/2017, p. 32

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 8

<sup>12</sup> Ibid p. 5

<sup>13</sup> Minority Rights Group, "Crossroads: The future of Iraq's minorities after ISIS", 07/06/2017, p. 20; KEVAL Allan, "Les chrétiens d'Irak réticents à rentrer à Karakoch", *Le Monde*, 25/07/2017

The political discussions about the integration of minorities in the post-IS era are however likely to be postponed as long as offensive operations are still ongoing, so as not to threaten the fragile anti-IS coalition<sup>14</sup>.

## 2. Religious minorities

### 2.1. Christians

Prior to the security crisis in 2014, there were around 300,000 Christians in Iraq, most of whom lived in Baghdad, Mosul, the Ninewa plain, Kirkuk, Basra and KRI<sup>15</sup>. According to 2010 government statistics, 67% of Iraqi Christians are Chaldean Catholic and nearly 20% are Assyrian, while the rest include Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Armenian Apostolic, Anglican and other Protestant<sup>16</sup>.

The decline of the Christian population in Iraq has been described by the UN as "dramatic", as it decreased from 1.4 million in 2003 to 300.000 in 2017<sup>17</sup>. When IS took over regions in the Ninewa plains, the population further shrank. According to the US Department of State, 10 to 15 Christian families were leaving the country daily in 2014<sup>18</sup>.

In IS-controlled areas, the Christians who were unable to flee have been forced to pay the *Jezyah*, a protection tax which is specific to Jews and Christians, while others have been forced to choose between converting to Islam or being executed<sup>19</sup>. In Mosul, Christian homes were painted with an Arabic "N" (for *Nasara*, which means Christians) and were later seized. The last Christian families fled Mosul by July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014, after being given an ultimatum to leave<sup>20</sup>. On January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Christian properties were sold at an auction<sup>21</sup>. IS also attempted to erase Christians' presence by destroying churches, such as the 1,400-years-old Monastery of Saint Elijah<sup>22</sup>.

In the rest of Ninewa governorate, Christians have formed their own militias. The Ninewa Protection Units (NPU) for instance, which were established in late 2014 by Assyrian Christians with the support of the Iraqi government, control different areas, including Al-Hamdaniya district<sup>23</sup>. Another group, the Ninewa Protection Forces (NPF), which were established by the KRG and are affiliated to the KDP, include Christian units, although their actual presence is reported to be "symbolic"<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Minority Rights Group, "Crossroads: The future of Iraq's minorities after ISIS", 07/06/2017, p. 8

<sup>15</sup> Minority Rights Group, "Crossroads: The future of Iraq's minorities after ISIS", 07/06/2017, p. 9; UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 10

<sup>16</sup> United States of America, Department of State, "Iraq 2016 International religious freedom report", 16/04/2017, p. 3

<sup>17</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 6

<sup>18</sup> United States of America, Department of State, "Iraq 2016 International religious freedom report", 16/04/2017, p. 18

<sup>19</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 10

<sup>20</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 10; Minority Rights Group, "Crossroads: The future of Iraq's minorities after ISIS", 07/06/2017, p. 11

<sup>21</sup> UNAMI, UNHCR, "A Call for accountability and protection: Yezidi survivors of atrocities committed by ISIL", August 2016, p. 15

<sup>22</sup> United States of America, Department of State, "Iraq 2016 International religious freedom report", 16/04/2017, p. 19

<sup>23</sup> Minority Rights Group, "Crossroads: The future of Iraq's minorities after ISIS", 07/06/2017, p. 20; Keval, Allan, "Les chrétiens d'Irak réticents à rentrer à Karakoch", *Le Monde*, 25/07/2017

<sup>24</sup> Minority Rights Group, "Crossroads: The future of Iraq's minorities after ISIS", 07/06/2017, p. 20

## 2.2. Kaka'i

Kaka'i representatives estimate that their community is composed of 100,000 to 300,000 members, who are scattered in different regions, particularly the Ninewa plains, the south-east of Kirkuk, Diyala, Erbil and Karbala<sup>25</sup>. The Minority Rights Group estimates however that there are around 75,000 Kaka'i left in Iraq in 2017<sup>26</sup>.

The Kaka'i are ethnically associated with the Kurds<sup>27</sup> but have a distinct religion, which is not recognized by the Iraqi government<sup>28</sup>. A part of Kaka'i members consider their religion to be a subgroup of Islam, but according to Ako Shawais, the Kaka'i representative in Halabja, this claim mainly aims at protecting the community from IS attacks<sup>29</sup>. Because of their religious proximity with Islam, the Kaka'i have often been accused of neglecting Sharia rules<sup>30</sup>.

In IS-controlled territories, the Kaka'i have been forced to convert and those who refused were executed. In total, community representatives stated that approximately 300 Kaka'i have been killed by IS. Most of the community is now internally displaced in KRI<sup>31</sup>.

## 2.3. Sabea-Mandeans

The Sabea-Mandeans, who are followers of John the Baptist<sup>32</sup>, are one of the smallest communities in Iraq, composed of less than 5,000 members, mainly living in the South of Iraq, whereas others are located in the KRI and Baghdad<sup>33</sup>. Their language, culture and religion is considered to be at risk of extinction<sup>34</sup>, as 90% of the community has fled the country since 2003, according to the NGO Heartland Alliance International<sup>35</sup>. Indeed, their precarious situation predates the security crisis in 2014. According to the expert Claire Lefort, they suffer from a "situation of segregation" in Iraq<sup>36</sup>. In 2014, the Sabea-Mandeans have fled the areas taken over by IS, as they were threatened to be executed if they refused conversion<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 10; Minority Rights Group, "Crossroads: The future of Iraq's minorities after ISIS", 07/06/2017, p. 9; United States of America, Department of State, "Iraq 2016 International religious freedom report", 16/04/2017, p. 3

<sup>26</sup> Minority Rights Group, "Crossroads: The future of Iraq's minorities after ISIS", 07/06/2017, p. 9

<sup>27</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 10

<sup>28</sup> United States of America, Department of State, "Iraq 2016 International religious freedom report", 16/04/2017, p. 5

<sup>29</sup> SALLOUM Saad, "Who are Iraq's Kakai ?", *Al Monitor*, 10/02/2016

<sup>30</sup> SALLOUM Saad, "Who are Iraq's Kakai ?", *Al Monitor*, 10/02/2016; Heartland Alliance International, "At Crossroads: Human rights violations against Iraqi minorities since the fall of Mosul", February 2015, p. 53

<sup>31</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 5 and 10

<sup>32</sup> DE COURTOIS Sébastien, "Chrétiens d'Orient : Les Saabéens-Mandéens du Sud de l'Irak, avec Claire Lefort", *France Culture*, 27/08/2017

<sup>33</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 11

<sup>34</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 11

<sup>35</sup> Heartland Alliance International, "At Crossroads: Human rights violations against Iraqi minorities since the fall of Mosul", February 2015, p. 64

<sup>36</sup> DE COURTOIS Sébastien, "Chrétiens d'Orient : Les Saabéens-Mandéens du Sud de l'Irak, avec Claire Lefort", *France Culture*, 27/08/2017

<sup>37</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 11

## 2.4. Yezidis

The Yezidis, which are one of Iraq's oldest minorities and are considered to number up to 700,000, were mostly located in the north of Iraq, in the area around Sinjar<sup>38</sup>.

Since 2014, the minority has been especially severely targeted by IS, which has justified committing systematic and widespread crimes against them by labelling them as heretics and devil worshipers<sup>39</sup>. Indeed, when the organization overran Sinjar in August 2014, it tried to forcibly convert the Yezidi minority and executed those who refused<sup>40</sup>. In total, UNAMI and UNHCR stated that between 2,000 and 5,000 Yezidis were killed by IS. Additionally, 6,396 Yezidis were abducted in August 2014, including 3,537 women and girls, who were then sold or offered as sex slaves to IS members, and 2,859 men and boys, who were enrolled as fighters. Of those, it is estimated that some 3,000 remain in captivity today<sup>41</sup>. Many enslaved women are now reportedly being sold, especially in areas under assault that IS fighters are trying to escape<sup>42</sup>. The freed Yezidi women and girls, who have suffered serial rape and torture, often by several men, now display extraordinary signs of psychological injury (sometimes nearly reaching unconsciousness), and require strong medical support<sup>43</sup>. As for the abducted Yezidi boys, their future raises concerns. Besides having also been enslaved and tortured by their captors, many have been forcibly enrolled, some of them appearing in IS propaganda videos while executing sentenced civilians<sup>44</sup>. According to the UN, these crimes reached such a scale that they sought "to destroy Yezidis in whole or in part"<sup>45</sup>. Amnesty International also highlighted that these acts amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity<sup>46</sup>.

Today, most of the Yezidi population has sought refuge in KRI<sup>47</sup>. Even though community leaders have expressed their gratitude to the Kurdish authorities for welcoming the refugees, many have pointed to the fact that Yezidis don't have the same rights as Kurds in the region<sup>48</sup>. In Ninewa, the creation of Yezidi militias linked to the Turkish PKK (under the name of YBŞ) on one hand<sup>49</sup> and to the PMUs (under the name of "Yezidi Brigades", in Arabic *Kata'ib Ezdikhan*) on the other hand<sup>50</sup>, has exposed Yezidis to retaliation from the KDP-dominated KRG. The latter has notably implemented restrictions on the movement of goods into and out of the district of Sinjar, for fear it would supply the

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<sup>38</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 12

<sup>39</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 5; Minority Rights Group, "Crossroads: The future of Iraq's minorities after ISIS", 07/06/2017, p. 13; CHETERIAN Vicken, "Les Yézidis, éternels boucs émissaires", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, January 2017

<sup>40</sup> Minority Rights Group, "Crossroads: The future of Iraq's minorities after ISIS", 07/06/2017, p. 13

<sup>41</sup> MOSTAFA Mohamed, "Seven more Yazidis released from Islamic State captivity in 24 hours", *Iraqi News*, 10/10/2017

<sup>42</sup> KEVAL Allan, "En Irak, l'impossible retour des Yézidis", *Le Monde*, 03/08/2017

<sup>43</sup> UNAMI, "Promotion and protection of rights of victims of sexual violence captured by ISIL/or in areas controlled by ISIL in Iraq 22 August", 22/08/2017; CALLIMACHI Rukmini, "Freed from ISIS, Yezidi women return in 'severe shock'", *NY Times*, 27/07/2017

<sup>44</sup> United States of America, Department of State, "Iraq 2016 International religious freedom report", 16/04/2017, p. 16

<sup>45</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 5

<sup>46</sup> Amnesty International, "Iraq: Yezidi survivors of horrific abuse in IS captivity neglected by international community", 10/10/2016

<sup>47</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 12

<sup>48</sup> KEVAL Allan, "En Irak, l'impossible retour des Yézidis", *Le Monde*, 03/08/2017 ; United States of America, Department of State, "Iraq 2016 International religious freedom report", 16/04/2017, p. 1

<sup>49</sup> Minority Rights Group, "Crossroads: The future of Iraq's minorities after ISIS", 07/06/2017, p. 20; Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: KRG restrictions harm Yezidi recovery", 04/12/2016

<sup>50</sup> Minority Rights Group, "Crossroads: The future of Iraq's minorities after ISIS", 07/06/2017, p. 20; Human Rights Watch, "Kurdistan Region Iraq: Yezidi fighters' families expelled", 09/07/2017

PKK<sup>51</sup>. The KRG has also expelled some Yezidi families and threatened others with expulsion because of their relatives' involvement with the PMUs<sup>52</sup>. In the rest of Iraq, Yezidis have also testified facing specific security constraints at checkpoints held by the ISF or the PMUs<sup>53</sup>.

Today, many Yezidis feel reticent about returning to the region of Sinjar. Not only have many of their villages been completely demolished, but there is also, among the community, a widespread feeling of distrust towards Kurdish and Iraqi authorities who have failed to protect them<sup>54</sup>, which adds up to a longer experience of social stigmatization<sup>55</sup>.

### **3. Ethnic minorities**

#### **3.1. Shabaks**

The Shabaks are an ethnic group composed of 200,000 to 500,000 people, who are mostly located in the Ninewa plains. Most of the community is Shia and the remaining 30 to 40% is Sunni<sup>56</sup>. Although they have been recognized as a distinct ethnic group in Iraq since 1952<sup>57</sup>, the Shabaks have been pressured to identify as Kurdish by the KRG, as part of the broader territorial dispute over the control of Ninewa, according to the Minority Rights Group<sup>58</sup>.

Since 2014, Shabak Shias have been targeted by IS as the rest of the Shia community. In Mosul, their properties were marked with the letter "R" (for "*Rafida*", meaning that they "rejected" IS' interpretation of Islam) and were later seized. Those who refused to obey IS rules were executed<sup>59</sup> and according to a Shabak representative, over 250 people have been held captive<sup>60</sup>. In the rest of Iraq, Shia Shabak neighbourhoods and villages have been targeted by IS terror attacks<sup>61</sup>.

Outside of IS-controlled areas, a militia called the Ninewa Protection Forces (NPF), which were established by the KRG and are affiliated to the KDP, include Shabak units, although their actual presence is reported to be "symbolic"<sup>62</sup>.

The community representatives estimate that around 7,000 Shabak families have fled the territories controlled by IS<sup>63</sup>. According to the UN, Shabak IDPs now feel reticent to

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<sup>51</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: KRG restrictions harm Yezidi recovery", 04/12/2016

<sup>52</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Kurdistan Region Iraq: Yezidi fighters' families expelled", 09/07/2017

<sup>53</sup> Heartland Alliance International, "At Crossroads: Human rights violations against Iraqi minorities since the fall of Mosul", February 2015, p. 17

<sup>54</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 12

<sup>55</sup> Heartland Alliance International, "At Crossroads: Human rights violations against Iraqi minorities since the fall of Mosul", February 2015, p. 13; Cheterian, Vicken, "Les Yézidis, éternels boucs émissaires", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, January 2017

<sup>56</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 11; Minority Rights Group, "Crossroads: The future of Iraq's minorities after ISIS", 07/06/2017, p. 9; United States of America, Department of State, "Iraq 2016 International religious freedom report", 16/04/2017, p. 3

<sup>57</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 11

<sup>58</sup> Minority Rights Group, "Crossroads: The future of Iraq's minorities after ISIS", 07/06/2017, p. 9

<sup>59</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 11

<sup>60</sup> United States of America, Department of State, "Iraq 2016 International religious freedom report", 16/04/2017, p. 18

<sup>61</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 11

<sup>62</sup> Minority Rights Group, "Crossroads: The future of Iraq's minorities after ISIS", 07/06/2017, p. 20

<sup>63</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq", 09/01/2017, p. 11

return and express a deep sense of loss that goes beyond the loss of their homes but rather relates to “the loss of their entire cultural and historical heritage”<sup>64</sup>.

### 3.2. Turkmen

The Turkmen are the third largest ethnic group in Iraq, after Arabs and Kurds. Their representatives claim that they number up to 2 to 3 million, although international sources estimate the Turkmen population to range between 500,000 and 600,000. They mainly reside in northern Iraq, including in Tal Afar, Mosul, Erbil, Diyala, Tuz Khurmatu and Kirkuk, although communities can also be found as far south as Wassit Governorate<sup>65</sup>. Religiously, the Turkmen are predominantly either Shia or Sunni, and some 30,000 are Christian.

When IS took over territories in northern Iraq in June 2014, Shia Turkmen were targeted because of their religious affiliation. IS tried to destroy four Shia Turkmen communities south of Kirkuk by killing at least 40 persons on June 16<sup>th</sup>.<sup>66</sup> In Mosul, the homes of Shia Turkmen were marked with the letter “R” (for “*Rafida*”, meaning that they “rejected” IS interpretation of Islam), as other Shia properties. According to Turkmen representatives, tens of thousands of Turkmen have fled<sup>67</sup> and around 500 women and children have been abducted for ransom<sup>68</sup>.

In the rest of Iraq, Sunni Turkmen have reported suffering from specific security constraints and retaliations because of the general perception that they come from areas where Sunni residents have supported IS. Sunni Turkmen IDPs have notably been held at checkpoints in Erbil<sup>69</sup>, and harassed by KRG authorities in Kirkuk in order to compel them to leave<sup>70</sup>.

## 4. Sunnis and Shias

### 4.1. Shias

Since 2014, the Shias have been especially targeted by IS, which considers them worst, labelling them as apostates who have turned their back on Islam<sup>71</sup>. On several occasions, the organization carried out mass executions of Shias when it took over territories in Northern Iraq in June 2014. On June 10<sup>th</sup> for instance, in Mosul’s Badoush prison, it isolated the 670 Shias from the rest of the prisoners and executed them<sup>72</sup>. On June 11<sup>th</sup>, it claimed the massacre of 1700 Shia air force recruits in Tikrit<sup>73</sup>. In Mosul, the homes of Shia Shabaks and Turkmen were marked with a “R” (for “*Rafida*”, meaning they

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<sup>64</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, “Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq”, 09/01/2017, p. 16

<sup>65</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, “Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq”, 09/01/2017, p. 11-12; Minority Rights Group, “Crossroads: The future of Iraq’s minorities after ISIS”, 07/06/2017, p. 39

<sup>66</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Iraq: ISIS abducting, killing, expelling minorities”, 19/07/2014; HAUSLOHNER Abigail, “Shiite villagers describe ‘massacre’ in northern Iraq”, *The Washington Post*, 23/06/2014

<sup>67</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, “Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq”, 09/01/2017, p. 12

<sup>68</sup> United States of America, Department of State, “Iraq 2016 International religious freedom report”, 16/04/2017, p. 18

<sup>69</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, “Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq”, 09/01/2017, p. 12

<sup>70</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Kirkuk security forces expel displaced Turkmen”, 07/05/2017

<sup>71</sup> Tara Schlegel et Aurélie Kieffer, « Le Magazine de la rédaction : Quel avenir pour les communautés chrétiennes et yézidiennes en Irak ? », *France Culture*, 06/10/2017

<sup>72</sup> HADRING Luke and RAHWAMY Fazel, “ISIS accused of ethnic cleansing as story of Shia prison emerges”, *The Guardian*, 25/08/2014

<sup>73</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Iraq: ISIS abducting, killing, expelling minorities”, 19/07/2014; CNN, “Terrifying execution images in Iraq”, 17/07/2014

“rejected” islam)<sup>74</sup> and were later seized. In Government-controlled areas of Iraq, Shia cities and neighbourhoods, including Shia mosques, shrines and funeral processions, have been the primary targets of IS bomb attacks<sup>75</sup>. More generally, IS propaganda has been especially directed at Shias over the past years, continuously threatening to kill them “wherever they were found”<sup>76</sup>.

## 4.2. Sunnis

Since the beginning of the security crisis in 2014, Sunnis have been frequently viewed with suspicions by the Iraqi and Kurdish security forces, often perceived as potential IS supporters or members, especially if they come from areas known as IS strongholds<sup>77</sup>.

They have been exposed to sectarian violence, especially but not exclusively in combat areas, from the Iraqi security forces, the Peshmergas and militias in retaliation for IS acts<sup>78</sup>. Out-of-law executions of suspected IS supporters have also been frequent at checkpoints<sup>79</sup>. More specifically, the families of IS members have often faced reprisals from the population and been expelled, even if they had dissociated themselves from their relative<sup>80</sup>.

Based on an excessive use of the antiterrorism law and on sectarian profiling<sup>81</sup>, the Iraqi and Kurdish authorities have conducted mass arrests of Sunnis and detained them without timely access to due process<sup>82</sup>. During the battles to retake Fallujah and Mosul in particular, Human Rights Watch have reported the detention of thousands of men and boys “in inhumane conditions without charge” by Iraqi forces. The NGO also documented numerous cases of illegal executions of Sunni prisoners<sup>83</sup>.

Sunni IDPs have been especially suspected by Iraqi and Kurdish authorities who fear that IS might infiltrate the migratory flows. Specific security constraints have been imposed on them, such as lengthy screenings at checkpoints<sup>84</sup>, the obligation to have a sponsor to enter certain cities or being forbidden to leave IDPs camps<sup>85</sup>. Because of being perceived

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<sup>74</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Iraq: ISIS abducting, killing, expelling minorities”, 19/07/2014

<sup>75</sup> For more details on the numerous IS attacks against Shia targets in Iraq, see the monthly reports of Joel Wing’s “Musings on Iraq” and of the Institute for the Study of War

<sup>76</sup> United States of America, Department of State, “Iraq 2016 International religious freedom report”, 16/04/2017, p. 16

<sup>77</sup> UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, “Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on her mission to Iraq”, 09/01/2017, p. 6

<sup>78</sup> Amnesty International, “Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq”, 14/10/2014; Human Rights Watch, “Iraq: New abuse, execution reports of men fleeing Mosul”, 30/06/2017; Amnesty International, “Iraq: Tribal militia tortured detainees in revenge attacks during Mosul offensive”, 02/11/2016

<sup>79</sup> Amnesty International, “Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq”, 14/10/2014

<sup>80</sup> SHAMDEEN Nawzat, “Crime and punishment : In Mosul, what to do with extremists’ families?”, *Niqash*, 20/07/2017

<sup>81</sup> United States of America, Department of State, “Iraq 2016 International religious freedom report”, 16/04/2017, p. 1 and 8

<sup>82</sup> United States of America, Department of State, “Iraq 2016 International religious freedom report”, 16/04/2017, p. 8; *Le Monde*, “L'Irak répond à l'Etat islamique par une série d'exécutions”, 06/07/2016 ; Amnesty International, “Punished for Daesh’s crimes: Displaced Iraqis abused by militias and government forces”, 18/10/2016; Human Rights Watch, “Victimized first by ISIS, then by the liberators”, 03/02/2017

<sup>83</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Iraq: New abuse, execution reports of men fleeing Mosul”, 30/06/2017; Human Rights Watch, “Iraq: US-Trained forces linked to Mosul war crimes”, 27/07/2017

<sup>84</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Thousands fleeing kept waiting near front line”, 21/06/2017

<sup>85</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Displaced people can’t move freely”, 21/10/2016; Danish Refugee Council, Danish Immigration Service, “The Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Access, possibility of protection, security and humanitarian situation”, April 2016; Amnesty International, “Punished for Daesh’s crimes: Displaced Iraqis abused by militias and government forces”, 18/10/2016

as potential IS members or supporters, Sunni IDPs have also often been forced or harassed to leave by security authorities<sup>86</sup>.

In some cases, Shia militias and Peshmerga members have taken advantage of the security gap in Iraq to change the ethnic or religious composition of certain cities by destroying Sunni properties<sup>87</sup>, preventing Sunni IDPs from returning to their homes<sup>88</sup> or harassing Sunni inhabitants to leave their neighbourhoods<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>86</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Kurdish forces ejecting Arabs in Kirkuk", 03/11/2016; Amnesty International, "Where are we supposed to go?: Destruction and forced displacement in Kirkuk", 03/11/2016, p. 12; Amnesty International, "Kurdish authorities bulldoze homes and banish hundreds of Arabs from Kirkuk", 07/11/2016; Human Rights Watch, "Kirkuk security forces expel displaced Turkmen", 07/05/2017;

<sup>87</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Marked with an X: Iraqi Kurdish forces' destruction of villages, homes in conflict with ISIS", 05/11/2016, 91 p.; Amnesty International, "Banished and dispossessed: Forced displacement and deliberate destruction in Northern Iraq", 15/01/2016, 46 p.; Amnesty International, "Where are we supposed to go?: Destruction and forced displacement in Kirkuk", 03/11/2016, 20 p.

<sup>88</sup> Amnesty International, "Punished for Daesh's crimes: Displaced Iraqis abused by militias and government forces", 18/10/2016, p. 61; Amnesty International, "Banished and dispossessed: Forced displacement and deliberate destruction in Northern Iraq", 15/01/2016, p. 36; United States of America, Department of State, "Iraq 2016 International religious freedom report", 16/04/2017, p. 1

<sup>89</sup> *NBC News*, "Baghdad's Sunni Muslims fear repeat of Iraq's darkest days", 07/07/2014; Amnesty International, "Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq", 14/10/2014; IOM, "Obstacles to return in retaken areas of Iraq", March 2017; UNAMI, "Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 November 2015 – 30 September 2016", 30/12/2016, p. 24; Amnesty International, "Kurdish authorities bulldoze homes and banish hundreds of Arabs from Kirkuk", 07/11/2016; Human Rights Watch, "Kirkuk security forces expel displaced Turkmen", 07/05/2017; Danish Refugee Council, Danish Immigration Service, "The Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Access, possibility of protection, security and humanitarian situation", April 2016, p. 32

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