



Iraq – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 15 December 2015

Is there evidence that teenagers and even younger boys are subjected to forced recruitment by ISIS in Mousel, Iraq? Do parents prevent their male children attending school because of fear of attack by ISIS?

Referring to the recruitment of child soldiers by ISIS in Syria a report published by Human Rights Watch, in a section titled “Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS)”, states:

“Human Rights Watch found, based on interviews with four former ISIS child fighters and two adult fighters, as well as civilians in ISIS-controlled areas, that ISIS has actively recruited children to send to their military training camps and used them in military operations, including suicide bombing missions. The two adults interviewed had attended ISIS training camps in the Aleppo governorate and observed children as young as 13 receiving training. Of the four children interviewed, the youngest began fighting at age 15. Interviews indicated that ISIS also recruited children at younger ages. An FSA military commander told Human Rights Watch he captured 30 children between ages 13 and 15 who had fought with ISIS and attempted to rehabilitate them by isolating them in a remote rural location and bringing religious leaders as well as male relatives to speak with them. Researchers interviewed two medical service providers who treated children as young as 12 injured while fighting with ISIS.⁶⁷ Several interviewees reported interacting with children 13 years old or younger who trained or served with ISIS.” (Human Rights Watch (22 June 2014) *“Maybe We Live and Maybe We Die”: Recruitment and Use of Children by Armed Groups in Syria*, pp.20-21)

This section of the report also states:

“Both children and adults who fought with ISIS consistently reported seeing children 13 years old or younger undergoing the same training and performing the same military duties as adults. Two adult fighters who attended an ISIS training camp near Jarablus reported seeing children in training. Ahmed, 20, trained for 15 days. He said that in his training group of 200, there were children as young as 13 or 14, and that ‘many’ of the trainees appeared to be under 18.⁷⁴ ‘Wissam,’ 22, who attended the same camp in the Jarablus mountains for 45 days, said he saw children aged 13 and 14, and estimated that 60 percent of the trainees were under 18.” (ibid, pp.21-22)

A report from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty refers to the recruitment of schoolchildren in Mosul as follows:

“Over the past weeks, more and more reports have emerged with evidence that IS militants are providing military training to schoolchildren in Syria and Iraq. Other reports claim that the extremist group is also using children as young as 13 as fighters. In Iraq’s Mosul, which was taken over by IS gunmen

in June, IS has replaced physical-education classes in local schools with martial-arts classes. A teacher in the city told Bloomberg that IS militants explained that ‘they need Mosul’s students to be the future soldiers of the caliphate.’ Another Mosul resident, named as Abu Rawan, said that his 13-year-old nephew had been recruited by IS militants, who had given him a gun.” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (30 October 2014) *The Child Soldiers Of Islamic State*)

A UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) report, in a section titled “Forced recruitment and use of children”, states:

“UNAMI/OHCHR has received several reports that ISIL has been forcibly recruiting and using child soldiers. For instance, local media reported on 6 January that ISIL had been using child soldiers in Zummar sub-district, west of Mosul city in Ninewa. These children had been abducted and then trained in the use of weapons. Some were reportedly used to detonate bombs. On 13 January, sources in Mosul reported that ISIL was recruiting young men and boys as young as ten. On 6 February, ISIL told families in Mosul with two or more sons that one son would have to join the group. In mid-April, after the fall of Tikrit, Salah al-Din, ISIL began forcibly recruiting men and boys between the ages of 13 and 20. Sources reported that 100 young men, many of them children were forcibly recruited. Previously ISIL had permitted the payment of 500,000 Iraqi Dinar in lieu of service, but this practice was allegedly stopped.” (UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) (13 July 2015) *Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 December 2014 – 30 April 2015*, p.22)

A UN Security Council report, in a section titled “Recruitment and use of children by armed groups” (paragraph 29), states:

“Throughout the reporting period, children were recruited, trained and used by armed groups to take direct and indirect part in hostilities. Children were used to act as spies and scouts, to transport military supplies and equipment, to conduct patrols, to man checkpoints, to videotape attacks for propaganda purposes and to plant explosive devices, as well as to actively engage in attacks or combat situations.” (UN Security Council (9 November 2015) *Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Iraq*, p.8)

Paragraph 32 of this report states:

“In 2014 alone, the United Nations verified at least 67 cases of boys recruited by ISIL; however, those figures do not reflect the full scope of child recruitment. After the fall of Mosul in June 2014, the number of reported incidents of children being recruited and used by ISIL, including in combat or police functions, drastically increased in ISIL-controlled areas. ISIL and associated armed groups abducted boys aged 13 to 17 years, stating that it was the duty of all males to perform jihad. In other cases, ISIL recruited the sons or relatives of its own elements or targeted orphaned children. Eyewitnesses continued to report the presence of children alongside adults patrolling with ISIL and manning checkpoints in Ninawa, Salah al-Din and Diyala. Those reports were particularly prevalent in Mosul and Tal Afar (Ninawa). For example, from June to September 2014, witnesses in those two cities consistently reported having spotted armed children wearing attire similar to ISIL fighters and patrolling with ISIL. Sources indicated that ISIL

was recruiting and using children mostly to control areas, but they also reported that children were given the responsibility of arresting and detaining individuals or were being used in combat functions. On 25 July 2014, in Fallujah district (Anbar), five boys aged 15 to 17 from the Albu Aythah area reportedly joined ISIL voluntarily and were receiving salaries and being used as combatants. In addition, reports of the recruitment of girls were received but could not be verified. For example, on 1 July 2014, it was reported that nine girls aged 14 to 17 had been recruited by ISIL in Tikrit (Salah al-Din) and forced to carry weapons.” (ibid, pp.8-9)

See also paragraph 33 of this report which states:

“From August 2014 to June 2015, hundreds of boys, including Yezidis and Turkmen, were forcibly taken from their families in Ninawa (mostly in Mosul and Tal Afar) and sent to training centres, where boys as young as 8 years were taught the Koran and the use of weapons and combat tactics. It was reported that at least five training centres were receiving those children in the region of Tal Afar, Mosul, southern Mosul, and in Aleppo and Raqqa (Syrian Arab Republic). Pictures of training sessions were regularly posted on social media. In one incident, on 3 August 2014, two Yezidi brothers aged 10 to 16 years were forcibly recruited by ISIL in Ninawa. On 5 September 2014, in Sharqat district (Salah al-Din), ISIL forcibly recruited 40 boys during Friday prayers. ISIL told the mothers that their sons were going to join them in their battle against the Iraq i security forces. On 6 February 2015, in Mosul, ISIL reportedly told families with two or more sons that one son would have to join the group. In early February 2015, ISIL imposed compulsory recruitment of children in the Rutba district, west of Ramadi (Anbar). In mid-April, after the fall of Tikrit (Salah al-Din), ISIL began forcibly recruiting men and boys between the ages of 13 and 20. Reportedly, 100 young men and children were forcibly recruited.” (ibid, p.9)

A UN Security Council report, in a section titled “Human rights developments and activities”, states:

“ISIL continues to recruit children in Ninawa, particularly in Mosul and Tal Afar, and in Anbar. ISIL posted pictures and videos on social media showing boys being trained and boys perpetrating crimes, including killing, maiming and/or torturing civilians. ISIL also reportedly killed some of its underage fighters. On 18 August, ISIL murdered 18 juveniles in Mosul for having fled the front line in Anbar. In addition, the continued recruitment and use of children by affiliates of the popular mobilization forces in conflict areas, Baghdad and Basra remain of grave concern. Children are also reportedly participating in combat operations alongside the popular mobilization forces in Anbar and Ninevah.” (UN Security Council (26 October 2015) *First report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 7 of resolution 2233 (2015)*, p.11)

A UN General Assembly report, in a section titled “Children” (paragraph 37), states:

“The ISIL recruiting campaign continued, with reports in mid-May that ISIL fighters were visiting high schools in Mosul and demanding that students as young as 14 pledge allegiance to the group and to fight in its forces. ISIL subsequently announced at schools and universities that all male students

must join ISIL after completing their exams. ISIL posted videos on the Internet purporting to show children being taught its ideology and trained to become fighters. The children in the videos appeared to be as young as 12. Another video appeared to show captured Yezidi children as young as seven being indoctrinated. UNAMI/OHCHR received reports that ISIL has used children as fighters in areas of Sinjar and Zummar in Ninewa Governorate.” (UN General Assembly (27 July 2015) *Technical assistance provided to assist in the promotion and protection of human rights in Iraq : Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, p.8)

A report from the International Business Times states:

“The Islamic State (Isis) militants have executed at least 12 children near the Iraqi city of Mosul after they tried to flee the Isis training camp, according to a Kurdish daily. Kurdistan Democratic Party spokesperson Saeed Mamouzini told Rudaw that 12 children tried to flee an Isis training camp in Al Salam, but were arrested and later executed in Al Ghabat area of Mosul. The Iraqi official said that the 12 children aged 12 to 16 were executed on Saturday, 1 November.” (International Business Times (2 November 2015) *Mosul: 12 Iraqi children executed by Islamic State for fleeing Isis training camp*)

Reports of parents preventing their children attending school were not found among sources available to the Research and Information Unit. A BBC News report states:

“When a new school year began in Iraq this month, children from Mosul reportedly returned to a new curriculum created by the jihadist group, Islamic State (IS), which captured the city in June. One mother spoke to the BBC World Service about life in Mosul and her fears for her eight-year-old son. I have one son. He's in his third year at school. I've decided to send him back to school but I'd prefer to keep him at home and never let him out.” (BBC News (29 September 2014) *Islamic State crisis: Mother fears for son at Mosul school*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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