



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

Iraq - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Monday 25 February 2013

Treatment of Sunni by Shia

A report issued in July 2012 by the *United States Department of State* notes:

“According to statistics provided in 2010 by the government, 97 percent of the population is Muslim. Shia Muslims – predominantly Arabs but also Turkmen, Faili (Shia) Kurds, and other groups – constitute a 60 to 65 percent majority. Arab and Kurdish Sunni Muslims make up 32 to 37 percent of the population – 18 to 20 percent are Sunni Kurds, 12 to 16 percent are Sunni Arabs, and the remaining 1 to 2 percent are Sunni Turkmen. Approximately 3 percent of the population is composed of Christians, Yezidis, Sabeen-Mandaeans, Baha'is, Shabaks, Kaka'is (sometimes referred to as Ahl-e Haqq), and a very small number of Jews. Shia, although predominantly located in the south and east, are also a majority in Baghdad and have communities in most parts of the country. Sunnis form the majority in the west, center, and the north of the country” (United States Department of State (30 July 2012) *2011 Report on International Religious Freedom - Iraq*).

This report also states:

“Sunni Muslims continued to claim general discrimination, alleging an ongoing campaign of revenge by the Shia majority in retribution for the Sunnis' favored status and abuses of Shia under the former regime. Sunni Muslims also claim to suffer discrimination because of the public's perception that the majority of the Sunni population sympathized with Sunni extremists and former regime elements” (ibid).

It is also pointed out in this report that:

“Shia in Sunni-dominated neighborhoods, Sunnis in Shia-dominated neighborhoods, and religious minorities in both Sunni- and Shia-dominated neighborhoods reported receiving anonymous death threat letters demanding that they leave their homes” (ibid).

In January 2013 *Amnesty International* states that:

“Since last December tens of thousands of mainly Sunni Muslim Iraqis have taken to the streets expressing discontent with the government of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, a Shi'a Muslim, at the continuing discrimination against them in Iraq” (Amnesty International (25 January 2013) *Iraq: Investigation needed as troops shoot anti-government protesters*).

BBC News in January 2013 states:

“A Sunni member of parliament has been killed by a suicide bomber in the Iraqi city of Fallujah, officials have said” (BBC News (15 January 2013) *Iraq Sunni MP killed by suicide bomber*).

In January 2013 a document issued by *BBC News* notes:

“Sunni leaders in Anbar have threatened to launch attacks against the army in the western Iraqi province after five protesters were shot dead in Fallujah” (BBC News (26 January 2013) *Iraq Sunnis threaten army attacks after protest deaths*).

This report also states:

“The protesters accuse the government of discrimination against Sunni Arabs, saying they are treated as second-class citizens...” (ibid).

In January 2013 *Reuters* notes:

“Sunni Muslim outrage erupted in late December over what protesters see as abuses and discrimination against their minority sect since the fall of Saddam Hussein and the rise of the country's Shi'ite majority” (Reuters (1 February 2013) *Thousands of Iraqi Sunni protesters say no to Maliki*).

A report published by *IRIN News* in February 2013 notes:

“Protests have rocked Sunni-dominated provinces of Iraq for almost two months, raising sectarian tensions in the country's fragile post-war environment” (IRIN News (13 February 2013) *Briefing: A guide to defusing sectarian tensions in Iraq*).

This document also notes:

“Sunni protesters have expressed a rising sense of their sect's neglect since Sunni President Saddam Hussein was deposed in 2003. Their demands include more influence on decision-making, the release of detainees (especially female detainees), cancellation of the de-Baathification law (which bans former members of Hussein's Baath party – mostly Sunnis - from jobs in the civil service), and cancellation of a counter-terrorism law that Sunnis say is being used only against them” (ibid).

An article published by the *Associated Press* in February 2013 points out that:

“Members of the country's Sunni minority have been staging mass rallies for two months, with some calling for the toppling of a Shiite-led government they feel discriminates against them and is too closely allied with neighboring Iran” (Associated Press (25 February 2013) *Return of sectarian threats in Iraq raises alarm*).

References

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre 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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