

Summary of 2005 State Department Human Rights Report on Iraq

The Iraqi people continue to suffer from many human rights abuses today, including torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment; denial of fair public trial, a fledgling judicial system lacking capacity; limitations on freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and association due to terrorist and militia violence; restrictions on religious freedom, large numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs); constraints on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); and discrimination against women, ethnic, and religious minorities.

Until the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003 he and his government murdered and "disappeared" many thousands of people. In 2003 and 2004 mass graves were discovered that provided the evidence of the huge dimension of these practices.

For example, according to the 2005 State Department country report on Iraq:

"Grid coordinates were obtained on at least 10 mass graves in Al-Hatra in Ninewah Province in 2004. Two gravesites were excavated; one site contained the remains of women and children, and the other contained remains of men. Approximately 275 bodies--thought to be Kurds who were killed by the former regime--were found in each site. Search for additional sites in the area was ongoing during the year."

"Graves contained forensic evidence of atrocities, including signs of torture, decapitated or mutilated corpses, and evidence that some victims were shot in the head at close range."

There is a significant lack of security in Iraq and increasingly conservative societal tendencies that have a serious, negative impact on women. A group of women activists reported increased human rights abuses against girls and women in a letter to UN Secretary – General Kofi Annan on July 7th 2005, including forced veiling, segregation, contracted marriages of underage girls, and killing.

Extremist groups targeted women by kidnapping, killing, and terrorizing them in an attempt to force them to refrain from working in public, stay at home, wear veils, and stick to a very conservative interpretation of Islam. These claims were made by Iraqi women leaders – ministers, members of parliament and ambassadors.

The following was reported by the State Department:

“According to a February Amnesty International report, women and girls feared abduction, rape, and killing, and the lack of security remained a serious threat.”

“According to local law enforcement sources, two or three women were murdered each week in Basra, where banners were frequently seen that threatened women who did not wear the hijab. It was widely believed that many of the women were killed because they were not wearing the hijab, including some women who were targeted, taken from their homes, and killed. In October, for example, three young women were fatally shot in the head, and their bodies were left near the university.”

In addition to threats against women, limits on religious freedom were found as well:

“The ongoing insurgency significantly harmed the ability of all religions to practice their faith. Additionally, sectarian misappropriation of official authority within the security apparatus harmed the rule of law and the right of citizens to worship freely. The Sunni Arab community often cited police raids of its mosques and religious sites as an example of targeting by the Shi'a-dominated government.”

Also mentioned in the report is that there were allegations that the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) engaged in discriminatory behavior against religious minorities. Minorities living in areas north of Mosul that declared that the KRG confiscated their property--including the properties of Christians--without compensation and that the KRG began building Kurdish settlements.

[State Department Report on Iraq 2005](#)

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