



INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL LAW & HUMAN RIGHTS

**Iraq's Minorities and Other Vulnerable Groups:
Legal Framework, Documentation and Human Rights**

May 2013

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Iraq's Minorities and Other Vulnerable Groups: Legal Framework, Documentation and Human Rights
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Acronyms

AIM	Alliance of Iraqi Minorities
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CoR	Council of Representatives
DIBs	Disputed Internal Boundaries
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GoI	Government of Iraq
HWR	Human Rights Watch
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP(s)	Internally Displaced Person(s)
IILHR	Institute for International Law and Human Rights
IMO	Iraqi Minorities Organization
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex
MHRG	Mandaeen Human Rights Group
MRG	Minority Rights Group International
MoDM	Ministry of Displacement and Migration
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoI	Ministry of Interior
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan party
RCC	Revolutionary Command Council (defunct)
UN	United Nations
UNAMI	United Nations Mission to Iraq
UNHCR	(the Office of the) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USCIRF	US Commission on International Religious Freedom
USD	United States Dollar

Executive Summary

Iraq's challenges to building security, stability, and a nation state premised on the rule of law are numerous and complex. Recent patterns reveal an overall downturn in violence and notable, though limited, progress to address the crimes the Ba'ath regime inflicted on the country's minority population. These improvements indicate the strength of Iraq's diverse ethno-religious history, but also demonstrate the slow and uneven pace of meaningful reforms to protect and preserve minority populations.

Iraq's ethnic and religious minorities, along with other vulnerable populations, continue to face disproportionate risks to lives, cultural traditions, and property. As international emphasis shifts away from Iraq and towards other crisis areas in the Middle East and North Africa, it is important to emphasize that, despite an overall decrease in violence and important progress to reintegrate and support some minority communities, minorities and other vulnerable populations continue to be targets of threats and violence based on religion, ethnicity, perceived ideology, and perceived sexual orientation. As a result, members of minority communities and other vulnerable populations continue to flee the country seeking safety and protection.

Iraq's population today remains exceptionally religiously and ethnically diverse. However, numbers of ethno-religious minorities remaining in the country continue to decrease through emigration and flight as the government tolerates systematic and egregious violations of religious freedom and human rights. Notably, the central government and the Kurdish Regional Government have made gains in improving the situation of ethnic and religious minorities—including increased protection for Christian churches and public displays of solidarity with the community; efforts to re-naturalize Faili Kurds; and public declarations on the importance of protecting Iraq's religious and ethnic diversity.

While these efforts mark an improvement since 2009 and 2010, critical challenges remain. The central government still has not developed systematic reforms to combat discrimination and protect the rights of minority components and other vulnerable populations; accountability for perpetrators of targeted violence remains elusive; and community members report ongoing violations of their rights at the hands of agents from both the central and Kurdish Regional governments. Treatment of ethno-religious minorities and other vulnerable groups prompted the US Commission on International Religious Freedom to recommend designating Iraq a "country of particular concern" under the American International Religious Freedom Act in 2012.¹

Prior to 2003, minority components made up as much as 15 percent of Iraq's population. While numbers are inexact due to the absence of any systematic effort to measure Iraq's

¹ U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom 2012 Annual Report, 4, March 2012, *available at* <http://www.uscirf.gov/images/Annual%20Report%20of%20USCIRF%202012%282%29.pdf>. Though the USCIRF recommended the designation, Iraq is not currently listed as a Country of Particular Concern.

population and decades of government suppression of some groups under the Ba'ath regime, members of minority communities in Iraq are estimated to have decreased by at least half today.

Despite improvements in security, minorities and other vulnerable populations continue leave Iraq due to, *inter alia*, an unstable political and security situation, targeted violence based on racial, ethnic, religious or gender bias, *de jure* and *de facto* discrimination, and a lack of institutional support and protection at most levels of government. As the states that receive Iraqi minority refugees respond to these movements of people and families, they require better understanding of the country's living situation, cultural and historical context, and realistic legal and identity options available to Iraqi minorities and other vulnerable populations in order to better evaluate claims for protection.

This report is the result of a research and documentation effort that seeks to capture and describe the current situation and ongoing challenges Iraqi minorities and other vulnerable populations face. This report provides an overview of the current conditions facing minority communities and vulnerable populations within Iraq, as well as useful information on Iraq's legal and regulatory framework as it relates to citizenship, nationality, and identity documentation.

Specifically, this report describes the historical background and cultural and religious characteristics of sixteen populations and communities, and explicates and disaggregates specific improvements and challenges affecting Iraq's vulnerable populations today. While some communities have seen an improvement in their situation and report a cautious optimism for the future, others fear the complete extinction of their religious, linguistic, and cultural history due to continued persecution. Broadly put, minority communities and other vulnerable populations report a continuing lack of meaningful mechanisms to protect their members from targeted violence; systemic discrimination in law and practice; practical limitations on the exercise of political, civil, social, cultural, and economic rights; and challenges to access to and use of identity documents.

While the majority of groups examined herein are ethnic or religious minority components, this report also investigates the situation of other non-ethno-religious populations, such as (perceived) lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, and persons whose style of dress or other ascribed characteristics do not conform with traditional gender norms. **IILHR does not suggest that (perceived) LGBTI or gender non-conforming persons are minority components. Rather, this report seeks to examine the situation of ethnic and religious minority components, as well as the situation of *other* populations likely to seek asylum abroad under international protection mechanisms.**

Examined populations are listed in English alphabetical order. and include:

- Baha'is
- Bedouin

- Black Iraqis
- Circassians
- Christians (Assyrian, Chaldean, Armenian, and others)
- Faili Kurds
- Jews
- Kaka'i
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals
- Mandaean-Sabeans
- Palestinian refugees living in Iraq
- Roma (Dom)
- Shabaks
- Turkmen
- Women (with specific profiles or in specific circumstances)
- Yezidis

This report considers the situation of many of Iraq's vulnerable populations, including but not limited to ethno-religious minorities. However, this report is not exhaustive, nor is there any hierarchy implied in the order in which information is presented. Rather, the communities discussed herein include those identified under the Iraqi legal framework, which recognizes some traditional minority communities within the state,² as well as other vulnerable groups identified by the international and Iraqi civil society community as facing either *de jure* or *de facto* discrimination in the exercise of their rights, or persecution by state or non-state actors based on (perceived) ethnicity, religion, political opinion, sexual orientation, or other characteristics. **Many other individuals and communities not addressed in this report also may require protection, and their non-inclusion herein should have no bearing on the legitimacy of their claims under international protection law.**

This report is intended for a broad audience, but seeks specifically to inform and support the assessment of asylum claims within countries to which Iraqi refugees apply for protection, and to complement other sources, including UNHCR's Eligibility Guidelines,³ country of origin reports, and other sources. **Though Iraq's cultural, religious and historical context frames the situation of minorities and other vulnerable groups today, the information presented here is limited to that which would inform**

² The Iraq Directory of 1936 identified the "Israelite community," Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Muslims, Christians, Baha'is, Yezidis and Mandaean Sabeans as Iraqi components. The Ba'ath regime ranked Iraq's components in hierarchical order. Though no such rank order or official identification process exists under Iraq's current legal framework, common perceptions focus on "official components." Distinctions between "official" and "unofficial" minority components largely align with the distribution of electoral seat quotas, with components who do not have a quota, such as black Iraqis, suggesting that legal recognition may be required to access a host of rights and protections.

³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Iraq*, 31 May 2012, HCR/EG/IRQ/12/03, [hereinafter UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines, 2012].

asylum claims processes abroad, and is not intended to provide a historical or cultural analysis of the specific relationships between Iraq's diverse peoples.

Iraq's Demographic Landscape

It is important to stress that there are simply no reliable numbers for Iraq's demographic landscape. Ongoing challenges with violence, internal migration, emigration, lack of government capacity, and the politicization of identity make the collection of reliable demographic data on many minority communities virtually impossible at this time. No inclusive census has been held since 1987 (the 1997 census did not include the three Kurdish governorates). Though the Government of Iraq (GoI) passed a new census law in 2008, no census has yet been held due to political tensions between Arabs and Kurds over disputed territories in the north, and between Kurds and some ethnic and religious minorities living in the northern region—particularly in Ninewa governorate. As such, demographic data presented in this report are often estimates from community leaders, Iraqi NGOs and CSOs, or international organizations rather than from governmental or other sources.⁴

According to GoI statistics provided in 2010, 97 percent of Iraq's population is Muslim, with Shia'h Muslims constituting a 60 to 65 percent majority. Shia'h Muslims are predominantly Arab but also include **Turkmen** (approximately 2 million), **Faili Kurds** (no accurate numbers available, upwards of 300,000 in Iraq and Iran), **Shabak**, a small number of **Circassians**, and other groups.⁵ Arab, Kurdish and a small number of Turkmen, Circassians (2,000-15,000), and other Sunni Muslims constitute 32 to 37 percent of the population.

Approximately 3 percent of the Iraqi population is composed of:

- **Christians:** 800,000 (down from 1.4 million) in total, with an estimated 60 percent Chaldean, 40 percent Syriac and Assyrians, and approximately 16,000 Armenians;
- **Yezidis:** 500,000-750,000 in total, with approximately 142,000 in the disputed Sinjar area in Ninewa governorate;
- **Mandaean-Sabeans:** 3,500-5,000, down from 70,000 before 2003;
- **Baha'is:** 1,000-2,000;
- **Shabaks:** 200,000-500,000;
- **Kaka'is** (also called **Ahl-e Haqq** and **Yarsan**): about 200,000; and

⁴ The problem of collecting demographic data on ethnicity, religion, and geographic location of Iraq's minority communities may be found at all levels of assessment and reporting; the US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor's International Religious Freedom Reports, for example, similarly rely on data estimates from NGOs and community members, as do reports by Minority Rights Group International. Conversations with UNHCR and IOM representatives in Baghdad reveal ongoing challenges to collect accurate demographic data and a lack of baseline for many estimates.

⁵ US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, *International Religious Freedom Report for 2011: Iraq*, 2011, available at <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>.

- **Jews:** perhaps less than 10 individuals in Baghdad and, reportedly, some additional families in Basra.

Regarding other historic components, community leaders estimate that there are approximately 1.5 to 2 million **black Iraqis**. The Iraqi census of 1997 estimated the number of **Bedouin** at 100,000. Of **Palestinian refugees** living in Iraq, most having been born in the country, only about 11,000 remain,⁶ down from a peak of at least 30,000 in 2003. There are no accurate figures for the number of **Roma (Dom)** in Iraq, (also known as **Ghagar**), though some estimate there are between 60,000 and 200,000 in the country.⁷

At the end of 2011, the International Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) reported that an estimated 2.3 to 2.6 million people remained displaced throughout Iraq, including those displaced under the Saddam Hussein regime during the Ba'ath era.⁸ Sporadic increases in displacement since 2006 continue to affect mainly minority communities. By the end of 2011 for example, over half of Iraq's estimated 1.4 million **Christians** had fled their places of origin to live elsewhere in Iraq, mainly in the Kurdistan Region or the Ninewa plain. Among minorities fleeing the country, their departure risks devastating the cultural, religious and linguistic heritage of some communities. Among Iraq's **Mandaean-Sabean** community, for example, over 90 percent have left the country.

Challenges Confronting Minorities and Other Vulnerable Groups

Though the overall security situation in Iraq has improved since the peak of violence in 2006-2008, developments have been uneven and conditions for vulnerable populations remain distressing. Some of **Iraq's religious and ethnic minorities—as well as minority women and LGBTI individuals—remain at risk for targeted violence, political disenfranchisement, and social and economic marginalization. Those communities living in the Disputed Internal Boundaries (DIBs) area in Ninewa,**

⁶ According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Ministry of Interior registered 10,500 Palestinians in Iraq in 2008, and noted a smaller population of approximately 1,000 persons in Ninewa and a small number in Suleymaniyah. See UNHCR, "Update of UNHCR Aide-Memoire of 2006: Protection Considerations for Palestinian refugees in Iraq," July 2012, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/500ebee2.html>. According to other estimates however, the population of Palestinians has fallen to 7,000 individuals. See Euro-Med Observer, "Palestinian Refugees Under Attack in Iraq," 6 July 2012, available at <http://www.euromid.org/marsad/index.php?action=main/readcontent&lang=en&cat=1&id=318>.

⁷ See UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines, 2012, p. 147, n. 779; see also Iqbal Tamimi, "The Roma of Iraq—a forgotten community," London Progressive Journal, 18 September 2011, available at <http://londonprogressivejournal.com/article/845/the-roma-of-iraq-a-forgotten-community>.

⁸ This number is higher than UNHCR's estimate for IDPs, 1.33 million as of January 2012. IDMC notes that the differences may derive from various factors, including the fact that figures for post 2006 refer only to registered IDPs, which is voluntary and contingent upon documentation which IDPs often lack. Research on access to and use of documentation conducted by IILHR indicates that such requirements may present a significant under-estimate of the numbers of IDPs actually living within Iraq.

Kirkuk, and parts of Diyala and Salahaddin remain at particular risk because religious and ethnic identity in these areas have become increasingly politicized.

Despite notable security improvements and important steps to support and reintegrate some minority groups, investigations throughout 2012 and early 2013 by the Institute for International Law and Human Rights (IILHR), its partners and associates in Iraq and abroad, and secondary research sourced from 2010 to early 2013, reveal the ongoing problem of targeted violence including frequent bombings, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, intimidation, discrimination, displacement and marginalization facing Iraq's cultural, religious and ethnic minorities, as well as other vulnerable populations.

The ongoing persecution and marginalization of Iraq's vulnerable populations occurs for a host of reasons and remain significant factors in emigration. These reasons range from **political instability and the ongoing territorial disputes between Arabs and Kurds, to religious and ethnic bias and intolerance, to long-standing patterns of discrimination, to criminal profit.**⁹ Though there has been a marked reduction in total levels violence since 2008 and incidents were relatively similar over 2010 and 2011, data from 2012 and early 2013 reveal a marked backslide which analysts attribute more to an entrenched conflict and rising sectarian tensions than to a transformation in the security situation.¹⁰ Overall deaths in 2012 increased by over three hundred killings as compared with 2011, with June 2012 the most violent month in three years and December the least.¹¹ **Most notably for Iraq's components, 43 percent of deaths in 2012 occurred in just two areas: the capital of Baghdad, and Ninewa, where 90 percent of minorities live.**¹²

Minority Women and Children

Although little disaggregated data is available for the situation of minority women, numerous reports by local NGOs and international organizations reveal that minority **women and children** represent the most vulnerable group in Iraqi society, both as members of minority communities and as women and children. This effectively makes for "double" discrimination and increases the risk of exploitation and violence.

⁹ Much of the evidence presented herein supports the findings of past assessments of the situation of Iraq's ethnic and religious minorities conducted by Minority Rights Group International, Human Rights Watch, UNHCR, UNAMI, and others. This report therefore emphasizes the entrenched and pervasive nature of the challenges faced by Iraq's vulnerable populations and the continuing inability or unwillingness of the GoI and KRG to adequately protect and defend Iraq's minority communities and other vulnerable groups.

¹⁰ An estimated 4,471 civilians were reported killed in 2012, compared to 4,136 in 2011 and 4,073 in 2010. See <http://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/2011/>.

¹¹ Iraq Body Count, "Iraqi Deaths from Violence in 2012," 1 January 2013, available at <http://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/2012/>.

¹² *Id*; Reportedly, Ninewa suffered 834 deaths in 2012, with an estimated governorate population of 3,270, 422. Baghdad suffered 1,086 deaths in 2012. Population estimates are provided by Iraq's Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology, "Estimated Population for the Year 2011, available at http://cosit.gov.iq/AAS2012/section_2/8B.htm.

Women in Iraq face high levels of gender-based violence (GBV), including female genital mutilation (FGM) in the north, domestic violence, sexual violence and harassment, and “honor-based” violence. They are also at risk for forced and early marriages and human trafficking. Crimes against women and children continue to be perpetrated with impunity, with few prosecutions for rape and other acts of violence, harassment, and other crimes. These problems, as well as the ongoing threat of ethnic and religious violence and systemic patterns of discrimination in law and society, have limited women’s freedom of movement, their right to express their religious and ethnic identity through the way they dress, economic opportunity, and access to health services and education.¹³ The Kurdish Regional Government has passed several important laws to improve the situation of women, and the central government has developed a Directorate of Violence against women. However, implementation is slow and cumbersome, and interventions continue to center on reconciliation over prosecution or social services support.

Iraq’s Legal and Regulatory Framework

Under the Iraqi legal framework, the potential for discrimination in law and practice heightens the sense of insecurity among minority components and other vulnerable groups. This insecurity, combined with other circumstances, may form the basis for a reasonable fear of persecution. Minority community leaders argue that the Iraqi legal framework does not adequately recognize or protect Iraq’s components and other vulnerable populations on several levels, including political representation; recognizing and protecting components’ historical, cultural and religious contributions to Iraqi society; the equitable establishment of endowments or cultural centers; and legal protections against discrimination, intimidation, and human rights violations.¹⁴

Regardless of the *de jure* protections outlined in the national Constitution and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) draft Constitution, **the Iraqi state and the KRG remain unable or unwilling to protect Iraq’s minority community and other vulnerable populations.**¹⁵ Some components, including Christians, Turkmen, Yezidi, and others, continue to face discrimination or persecution at the hands of state and regional officials and Islamist militants, particularly in the disputed territories.

¹³ See Mumtaz Lalani, Minority Rights Group International, *Still Targeted: Continued Persecution of Iraq’s Minorities*, June 2010; Human Rights Watch, “Iraqi Kurdistan: Law Banning FGM Not Being Enforced,” 29 August 2012; US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011: Iraq*, 2011.

¹⁴ Reported to IILHR in a joint consultation with Iraqi components held in Hamdaniya in Ninewa Governorate, January 2013. Represented groups included Yezidis, Chaldean, Assyrian and Armenian Christians, Shabaks, Baha’is, and Kaka’is.

¹⁵ The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom 2012 Annual Report, 95, March 2012 notes that “The Iraqi government continues to tolerate systematic, ongoing and egregious religious freedom violations.”

Mandaean Sabeans, Roma, and other communities also face ongoing targeted attacks by criminal gangs and private individuals based on religious intolerance, or perceived wealth or perceived immorality. Though state officials have publically condemned some attacks, perpetrators are rarely held accountable.

Iraq's 2005 Constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, origin, color, religion, sect, belief or opinion, or economic or social status. The draft Constitution for the KRG¹⁶ contains similar prohibitions on discrimination, adding protections for language, age, and disability. The draft also recognizes equality between men and women.¹⁷

Though the state and the KRG have made some progress in protecting minorities and other groups, neither has adopted legal or practical mechanisms to implement a functional protection framework. Additionally, the state has not made meaningful progress in reforming discriminatory or potentially discriminatory provisions in Iraqi law, nor has it provided adequate recourse to justice, compensation, or alternative arrangements to address past or ongoing persecution and discrimination against vulnerable populations.

The Iraqi legal framework is in many ways a model for the region and new laws passed in 2011 and 2012 provide important protections for women and vulnerable populations. However, large bodies of law—particularly the Penal Code and Personal Status Code—discriminate against women and fail to protect them from many instances of violence. Nor do women exercise the same legal rights as men with regard to divorce, other family issues, and protection from crime. **The penal law considers “honor” a mitigating excuse for violence against women, and allows rapists to escape punishment by marrying victims.**

Among non-Muslim components who voluntarily or were forcibly converted to Islam, the Civil Status law requires that **minor children follow in the religion of the parent who embraces the Islamic religion.** This provision leaves no remedy for non-Muslim parents to pass their religious identity onto children once the adult has been registered as Muslim, and prevents children from choosing their own religion as adults. This problem is compounded by regulations founded on Shari'ah Law which **prohibit individuals from converting away from the Muslim faith.** This is particularly problematic for minorities forcibly converted under the Ba'ath regime or who registered as Muslim who seek new identity documents reflecting their true faith. **To date, members of the Kaka'i, Baha'i, Christian, Mandaean Sabea, and Yezidi faiths report that, where families have been forced to adopt Islam for the purposes of identity**

¹⁶ Draft as of 2009, on file with IILHR. Renewed discussions about a referendum on the draft Constitution began in early January 2013, with highly politicized arguments over control of the disputed territories (particularly areas in the governorates of Wassit, Diyala, Salahaddin, Kirkuk and Ninewa which the Kurds claim). See <http://ikjnews.com/?p=3318>.

¹⁷ On file with IILHR.

documentation, they have been unable to change their religious designation despite the legal right to practice their faiths. As a result, where threats to life or freedom are based on religious or ethnic status, some applicants may be unable to demonstrate such status through documentation.

Within Iraq, these and other circumstances have forced some members of vulnerable communities to hide their religious or ethnic identity, or sexual orientation. As such, some asylum-seekers may not articulate that his or her religious, ethnic, or sexual orientation status contributes to the subjective assessment of whether actual or expected measures against life or freedom on the basis of that status may be taken.

Recommendations

To the Iraqi Government:

1. **Reform the Iraqi identity documentation process to make it more transparent, accountable, and less rigid.** For example, devolving authority to Iraqi consulates and embassies as the final authorities on passport and other identity documents would be a practical step to relieve the burdens faced by Iraqis seeking to reclaim lost identities and establish nationality. Similarly, devolving authority for documentation within the Ministry of Interior would better manage the identity documents process. Other countries have devolved authorities in this way in order to more efficiently and effectively process claims from abroad.
2. Consider declaring an amnesty on all forms of registration for citizenship and nationality, allowing Iraqi citizens to register in the place where they are currently living, based on available documentation in the possession of applicants. An amnesty, while difficult, would enfranchise and empower more Iraqi citizens, allow for increased refugee returns, and overcome challenges that arise through the continued linking of identity claims to the 1957 census. Reliance on 1957 census data disenfranchises families who were not registered at that time and further complicates existing procedures.
3. **Develop clear anti-discrimination legislation as called for in Iraq's Constitution to better protect the rights of the vulnerable.**
4. Consider other important legislative initiatives to more fully implement Iraq's Constitution, including legislation to implement the Constitution's Article 125 which calls for local administration rights for minority populations.
5. Ensure the continuing political and financial independence of the new High Commission for Human Rights and support its ability to document human rights abuses and propose recommendations for improved protection mechanisms.
6. Reform Iraq's Penal Code and Personal Status Code to reflect the needs of vulnerable populations, including women, and eliminate discrimination against women and non-Muslims within the legal framework.¹⁸
7. **Provide adequate security and decentralized administration in the areas contested between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Federal Government in Baghdad, cooperating and coordinating movements of security forces from both the KRG and the central government.** This includes security

¹⁸ For specific recommendations on reforming the legal framework, please see Institute for International Law and Human Rights, *Women and the Law in Iraq*, 2010, and *Minorities and the Law in Iraq*, 2012, both available for download at: www.iilhr.org.

coordination in disputed districts, as well as joint patrols and checkpoints in these districts. The Federal Government should ensure that minorities and other vulnerable populations are included in security forces and their leadership; and ensure that other actors, including intelligence and Assayish units, fall under appropriate command and control and include minority representation.

8. Cease discriminatory resource and service allocation where there is a significant minority presence, halting efforts to manipulate such groups or enlist them to a particular side in political disputes. Provide for increased political representation among members of minority components and other vulnerable groups.

9. Provide all possible assistance to the returning Iraqi refugee community, in particular those who represent minorities and other vulnerable groups, coordinating with UN mechanisms and host countries where possible. Assistance should address reported challenges in reclaiming property and access to jobs among people who do not affiliate with political parties, as well as reforms to improve the efficiency and adequacy of the Public Distribution System. Ensure that Iraqi refugees have the opportunity to vote in upcoming provincial council and national elections.

10. Work to develop a peaceful resolution of disputed internal boundaries that respects the religious, ethnic and cultural identities of Iraq's minority components and other vulnerable groups.

To the Kurdish Regional Government:

1. Ensure that regional laws and regulations as they relate to minority rights, nationality and identity are in harmony with those of the Federal Government, Iraq's international human rights treaty obligations, and international good practices.

2. Provide adequate security and decentralized administration in the areas contested between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Federal Government in Baghdad, cooperating and coordinating movements of security forces from both the KRG and the central government. This includes security coordination in disputed districts, as well as joint patrols and checkpoints in these districts. The Kurdish Regional Government should ensure that minorities and other vulnerable populations are included in security forces and their leadership; and ensure that other actors, including intelligence and Assayish units, fall under appropriate command and control and include minority representation.

3. Cease discriminatory resource and service allocation where there is a significant minority presence, halting efforts to manipulate such groups or enlist them to a

particular side in political disputes. Provide for increased political representation among members of minority components and other vulnerable groups.

4. Provide all possible assistance to the Iraqi refugee community, in particular those who represent minorities and other vulnerable groups, coordinating with the Federal Government in Baghdad, UN mechanisms and host countries where possible; and ensure that Iraqi refugees (including those internally displaced in the Kurdistan Region) have the opportunity to vote in upcoming provincial council, regional and national elections.

5. Adopt robust anti-discrimination legislation reflecting the national Constitution's equal protection clause and international standards. **Develop and implement robust mechanisms to ensure that individuals will not be discriminated against or intimidated regarding access to services or employment on the basis of race, ethnicity (particularly among those not identifying as Kurdish), nationality, religion, gender, language, political party affiliation, sexual orientation, origin, color, religion, sect, belief or opinion, or economic or social status.**

6. Work to develop a peaceful resolution of disputed internal that respects the religious, ethnic and cultural identities of Iraq's minority components and other vulnerable groups.

To Refugee Host Countries and the International Community:

1. Assist relevant Iraqi parties to reach a durable settlement on the disputed territories, power sharing and constitutional reform, security and the role of Peshmerga, Assyrian, police, and other security forces, and practical and legislative arrangements on hydrocarbon legislation.

2. Ensure that all Iraqi citizens that have taken refuge in host countries have access to support and services in harmony with domestic law and international best practices, providing special emphasis on the needs of Iraqi minorities and other vulnerable groups.

3. **Adjust asylum criteria, background checks, and other policies, while accelerating resettlement efforts, to recognize the unique dangers that confront Iraqi minorities and other vulnerable populations**, including adverse conditions at home and inconsistent identity documentation.

4. Encourage the Iraqi Government to provide a better legal, policy, service, and security framework to combat discrimination inside Iraq and provide for orderly return of refugees, thereby mitigating the reasons for refugee flight from the country.

5. Offer financial support to host countries, IOM and UNHCR, make such assistance transparent and monitor program implementation, express readiness to accept resettlement of Iraqis found by UNHCR to be especially vulnerable, refrain from

returning refugees to unsafe areas in Iraq and conform to repatriation advice issued by UNHCR.

6. Develop comprehensive support for integration efforts targeting religious, ethnic, or other identity elements rather than broader policies of dispersal. For many of Iraq's smallest components, dispersal in asylum may actually speed the disintegration of cultural, religious, and linguistic ties and risk the destruction of whole communities. **Comprehensive, long-term integration support should include not only focused help to adapt to new surroundings, but also goals to support community cohesion and cultural preservation.**

7. Encourage responsible investment in infrastructure and development within Iraq, particularly in Ninewa and the disputed territories, to promote economic growth within the state and facilitate peace-building mechanisms.

8. Encourage the resolution of the question of refugee status for Palestinians living in Iraq to facilitate relief and the issuance of passports or internationally recognized travel documents.