

## IRAQ

In conflict situations with a lot of people being displaced, the occurrence of sexual and gender-based violence increases dramatically. In Iraq, not only Yezidi women but all displaced women and girls continue to experience daily threats of sexual and gender-based violence from their families or community members. The survivors of such violence are suffering from severe trauma and depression, and suicides have risen sharply, particularly among women and girls.<sup>1</sup> The ongoing conflict in Iraq makes it very difficult to respond to survivors of sexual violence in conflict although local organisations are doing their utmost. The extent to which men and boys are also survivors of sexual violence is not yet known and likely to be under reported. In addition, any response to conflict-related sexual violence is impacted greatly by wider societal norms in Iraq, such as the status of women, as well as attitudes to survivors.

### 1. What are the issues surrounding the stigma faced by survivors of sexual violence, their families, communities etc.

- Sexual and reproductive health services, trauma counselling and reintegration support are severely limited; there is a shortage of staff trained in the clinical management of rape.
- Response to conflict related SV is impacted by wider societal norms such as the status and rights of women, as well as attitudes to survivors.
- Patriarchy plays a role in the ability of survivors to seek help and in the way in which public policy sets out to protect potential victims and provide care for survivors.
- Tribal systems in Iraq and the traditions within different communities could be significant obstacles to the identification and visibility of survivors – they do not want association with such crimes and they do not want to be seen as a place to which survivors can come.

### 2. Who is doing something already in these countries incl. FCO, DFID, Champion countries, local initiatives (NGO, government, leaders)

- **UK (DfID)** has committed £169.5 million of humanitarian assistance to Iraq since summer 2014 – this includes cash assistance for vulnerable displaced Iraqis.
- **UK (DfID)** has helped establish Women and Children’s centres and is providing psychosocial support for survivors of SGBV.
- **UK (FCO)** providing conflict-related SV training for Peshmerga.
- **UK (FCO)** is supporting projects to increase the use of the Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict and to tackle the stigma associated with sexual violence.
- **UK (FCO)** is supporting the implementation of Iraq’s National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security focusing on capacity building and support for victims of GBV.
- **Canada** has committed funds to build the capacity of relevant Iraqi partners to investigate SV crimes and support human rights in Iraq.

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<sup>1</sup> Norwegian People’s Aid

- The **US** has committed funds to projects aimed at increasing capacity in documenting human rights abuses committed by all sides

### 3. Specific activities that need doing e.g. access to legal or medical care, judicial reform, evidence gathering etc.

- Authorities to adopt measures to address CRSV including programmes to support the social reintegration of women and girls released from ISIL captivity; safe houses, shelters and community based medical and psychosocial care; engagement with religious and civil society leaders to curb extremism; efforts to enhance the capacity of the UN System through the deployment of Women's Protection Advisers should be accelerated.<sup>2</sup>
- The extent to which men and boys are also survivors of SV is not yet known.
- Improve the status of women by working to change existing discriminatory legislation and promoting women's political participation.
- Ensure the implementation of UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan.
- Develop the knowledge and capacity of the Government and Civil Society to improve the understanding of SGBV crimes and support for survivors.
- Women were most frequently the victims and needed to receive appropriate healthcare, psycho-social care, access to justice and remedies. But women should also be empowered to shape the solutions. This means integrating a gender perspective in conflict resolution efforts and ensuring women a seat at the table of peace negotiations.
- A strategy needs to be prepared that aims to meet the needs of men, women and children who have been subjected to abuse. This strategy needs to be put into effect at the earliest opportunity. The UK should press for this in international fora.<sup>3</sup>
- Proposed Team of Experts activity includes providing technical assistance to ongoing accountability efforts for sexual violence crimes in Kurdistan; engaging with the League of Arab States on the development of a Model Law on addressing sexual violence.

<sup>2</sup> SRSR Report: Conflict Related Sexual Violence 2016

<sup>3</sup> Select Cttee on Sexual Violence in Conflict Rpt 2015-16