



POLICY PAPER IRAQ

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DISCLAIMER

A country-specific policy paper provides the main points regarding the policy rules that are applied by the Commissioner General when assessing requests for asylum from a specific country.

A country-specific policy paper begins with a brief, simplified summary of the complex situation in a country of origin. The situation outline only covers the asylum-related aspects of the situation in that country. A non-exhaustive overview is then provided of the at-risk groups in the country of origin. The focus lies on the at-risk profiles that the CGRS encounters during its day-to-day work. In addition, it only covers the policy themes that are relevant for the country of origin or any special policy rules that apply to that particular country. Consequently, a country-specific policy paper does not contain a complete overview of all of the possible issues that may be faced by the citizens of the relevant country of origin.

The policy implemented by the Commissioner General is based on a thorough analysis of accurate and up-to-date information on the general situation in the country of origin. This information is collated in a professional manner from various, objective sources, including the EASO, the UNHCR, relevant international human rights organisations, non-governmental organisations, professional literature and coverage in the media. When determining policy, the Commissioner General does not simply examine the COI Focuses, drawn up by Cedoca and published on this website, as these deal with just one aspect of the general situation in the country of origin. The fact that a COI Focus could be out of date, does not necessarily mean that the policy that is being implemented by the Commissioner General is no longer up-to-date.

The policy paper does not reflect the complexity of the asylum application assessment process. When assessing an application for asylum, the Commissioner General not only considers the actual situation in the country of origin, at the moment of decision-making, he also takes into account the individual situation and personal circumstances of the applicant for international protection concerned. Every asylum application is examined individually. An applicant must comprehensively demonstrate that he has a well-founded fear of persecution or that there is a clear personal risk of serious harm. He cannot, therefore, simply refer back to the general conditions in his country, but must also present concrete, credible and personal facts.

A policy paper is published for informative purposes only and is not binding in any way. No rights, of any nature, can be derived from the content of a country-specific policy paper. The information is of a general nature and is not adapted to applicants' personal or specific circumstances. A country-specific policy paper cannot therefore be used as a resource for corroborating an application for asylum or an appeal against a decision made by the Commissioner General.

The information contained in a policy paper is checked as carefully as possible. The CGRS puts a great deal of effort into updating policy papers and ensuring they are as complete as possible. Despite these efforts, it is possible that they contain oversights or inaccuracies. The CGRS cannot be held liable for any direct or indirect damage resulting from access to, consultation or use of the information published in a policy paper.

For a better understanding of the policy themes that may be dealt with in a country-specific policy paper, see web page "About the CGRS/Policy".

1. SITUATION OUTLINE

As a result of an increase in violence and terrorist acts, the security and human rights situation in Iraq has deteriorated since 2013 and further escalated with the ground offensive that IS launched in June 2014. This has led to a bloody internal armed conflict. Citizens are being targeted by the conflicting parties for ethnic, religious or political reasons. In 2015, the military pressure on IS increased and the Iraqi Security Forces, backed by Shia militias and the Peshmerga, recaptured some areas from it. In 2016, IS lost more ground to government forces. The recapture of IS-controlled areas has clearly led to an improvement in the general security situation in Iraq. In 2017, violence continued to decrease in Baghdad.

The available information shows that there are still significant differences in the level of violence and the impact of the IS ground offensive according to the region considered. These strong regional variations characterise the security and human rights situation in Iraq. This means concretely that the situation in Central Iraq is different from the situation in South Iraq and the Kurdish Autonomous Region.



2. PERSECUTION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE REFUGEE CONVENTION

A high number of at-risk groups can be distinguished in Iraq. According to the situation in which he finds himself, the applicant must be able to demonstrate that he belongs to a specific at-risk group or must present additional concrete and individual facts in relation to persecution.

In general, refugee status is granted to an applicant as a result of specific or individual elements or facts. In some cases, refugee status is granted as a result of people belonging to a particular group.

The Commissioner General normally grants refugee status independently from the applicant's region of origin. In certain cases, granting refugee status may depend on the applicant's region of origin because the situation for certain population groups can vary per region.

The Commissioner General applies the principle of an internal flight alternative only in exceptional cases, where if it can be clearly demonstrated that the applicant has a genuine and stable internal flight alternative.

3. SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION

The available information shows that the level of violence and the impact of the IS ground offensive differs dramatically per region. These strong regional differences characterise the conflict in Iraq. For these reasons, when assessing the need for protection, the CGRS not only takes into account the current situation in Iraq but also examines the security situation in the area from which the applicant originates.

The CGRS constantly monitors the situation in Iraq. When assessing the need for subsidiary protection, the Commissioner General takes account of the actual situation in Iraq at the moment of decision-making.

4. EXCLUSION

If there are serious reasons for assuming that the applicant was directly involved in war crimes and crimes against humanity, or it is clear that he/she had a commanding role in such acts, he/she will be excluded from the refugee convention and the status of subsidiary protection.