

Iraq 2024

RCD's Strategic Report

Edited by

Prof. Dr. As'ad K. Shabib

Prof. Dr. Miqdam A. al-Fayyad

Asst. Lect. Ammar K. Hamid



al-Rafidain Center for Dialogue

R . C . D

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مركز الرافدين للحوار
Al-Rafidain Center For Dialogue
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RCD's Forward

Prof. Dr. As'ad Kāzim Shabīb

CEO, Al-Rafidain Center for Dialogue RCD.

The release of the English edition of the Strategic Report for Iraq 2024 marks a significant advancement in the al-Rafidain Center for Dialogue's (RCD) efforts to translate several of its publications from Arabic into English, including prior editions of the Center's strategic report. This initiative reflects RCD's conviction that rigorous knowledge is a crucial instrument for influencing public policy, promoting dialogue, and fostering communication between Iraq and the global academic, diplomatic, and research communities. Research centers of this caliber function as pivotal institutions for producing studies, playing an essential role in shaping public awareness, informing policy decisions, anticipating future developments, and providing practical alternatives to policymakers. Since its inception, RCD has aimed to solidify this role through a diverse array of strategic studies, periodic reports, international forums, national and international dialogue programs, and academic collaborations with universities and research institutions both within and beyond Iraq.

This English edition is grounded in RCD's firm belief that Iraq must be understood through an objective, scholarly Iraqi lens, and that Iraqi researchers, research institutions, and the dynamics of the Iraqi political landscape should maintain an active presence in international discourse. Historically, most English-language studies have relied on analyses produced by foreign institutions. While many of these studies possess scholarly merit, they often originate from external perspectives or political and strategic priorities that diverge from the realities and complexities inherent to Iraq.

RCD posits that generating national knowledge in English constitutes a form of intellectual diplomacy and that presenting a balanced, scientific portrayal of Iraq helps rectify numerous misconceptions formed during years of conflict, violence, and instability. In preparing this report, RCD endeavored to produce an annual strategic document that transcends mere event documentation by offering in-depth analyses of overarching trends, elucidating factors influencing decision-making, and anticipating potential future scenarios. Consequently, the report integrates facts within a comprehensive analytical framework that elucidates the interrelations among politics, economics, security, society, and international relations, demonstrating how these domains mutually influence one another and impact the trajectory of Iraqi state-building.

The year 2024 was characterized by a series of transformations that rendered it a pivotal year in Iraq's state development. On one hand, Iraq continued to consolidate relative political stability compared to preceding years, with Prime Minister al-Sūdānī's government persisting in its efforts to implement its program. On the other hand, Iraq faced multifaceted internal challenges, including the ongoing necessity for administrative reform, anti-corruption measures, institutional efficiency enhancement, service quality improvement, and national economic development, alongside social issues such as poverty, unemployment, narcotics, domestic violence, and demographic changes.

Regionally and internationally, Iraq confronted a complex strategic environment in 2024, shaped by the ongoing "Israeli" aggression in the Gaza Strip, the escalation of conflict in Lebanon, rapid developments in Syria, persistent regional rivalries among major Middle Eastern powers, and the war on Iran. These circumstances imposed delicate challenges on Iraqi policymakers, who had to balance national security imperatives, diplomatic obligations, and economic interests while maintaining a policy of openness toward diverse international and regional actors. In response to this intricate context, the report employs a comprehensive methodology that views the Iraqi state as an interconnected system whose components cannot be analyzed in isolation. Accordingly, the report offers a multidimensional strategic analysis grounded in qualitative assessments, quantitative indicators, official statistics, government documents, United Nations reports, and academic sources from Iraqi, Arab, and international scholars, thereby providing readers with integrated scholarly material that extends beyond descriptive accounts to include analysis, interpretation, and forecasting.

The Strategic Report for 2024 encompasses eleven principal themes addressing various facets of Iraq's situation throughout the year. It commences with a chapter that offers a panoramic overview of the most significant developments, followed by examinations of the political process, government performance, parliamentary activities, political alliances, and forthcoming electoral matters. Subsequently, the report addresses the Iraqi economy, fiscal and monetary policies, energy, oil, and the Development Road project. Additional dedicated chapters focus on national security, Iraqi society, human rights, public services, anti-corruption efforts, education, international relations, and environmental challenges, each accompanied by practical recommendations and future outlooks.

RCD ensured that this report adheres to scientific research standards recognized by international think tanks, establishing it as an annual scholarly reference for researchers, policymakers, academic institutions, and international organizations seeking to comprehend Iraq's transformations. The report employs methodologies such as temporal comparisons, trend analyses, indicator studies, and scenario extrapolations, thereby positioning itself as a strategic document rather than a mere chronicle of events. Reflecting RCD's conviction that institutional collaboration guarantees the quality of scientific output, the report represents the collective efforts of a distinguished group of researchers, experts, and specialists across various disciplines. Under the guidance of the editorial board, this

team developed the report's methodological framework, standardized writing approaches, reviewed data, audited analyses, and ensured scientific consistency across all chapters.

The editorial board at RCD, comprising Prof. Dr. As'ad Kāẓim Shabīb, Prof. Dr. Miqdām al-Fayyāḍ, and Assistant Lecturer 'Ammār Ḥamīd, extends sincere gratitude to all researchers and experts who contributed to the preparation of this report's chapters. Their diligent efforts in data collection, indicator analysis, source review, and information verification were motivated by the belief that rigorous scientific research constitutes a national responsibility beyond its academic significance.

1.

Year 2024 in Review

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I. Political Process

The political process of 2024 can be analyzed by examining the positions of the forces constituting the government of Muḥammad Shiyā' al-Sūdānī, alongside evidence indicating emerging internal divisions in two directions: firstly, within the forces of the Coordination Framework itself, and secondly, involving the struggle of certain Framework factions against the Prime Minister himself, who is progressively establishing his path economically, politically, and in terms of security, supported by substantial backing from Sunni and Kurdish blocs. Politicians aligned with him contend that campaigns targeting him aim to undermine his prospects in the forthcoming parliamentary elections amid intense media rivalry among political factions. This rivalry began by mobilizing public opinion concerning what was perceived as governmental leniency toward the individual convicted of the largest theft in Iraq's contemporary history, namely Nūr Zuhayr, who managed, through legal pretexts and political pressures, to leave Iraq and subsequently flee Lebanon to an unknown destination.

The wiretapping case implicating the Prime Minister's Office emerged as one of the instruments intended to challenge al-Sūdānī's government, particularly following the dissemination of information indicating leaks affecting numerous high-ranking officials in Iraq. Judicial authorities initiated investigations with the head of the wiretapping network, Muḥammad Juḥī, who was employed in the communications department within the Prime Minister's Office. One of the pillars of the Coordination Framework filed a complaint against al-Sūdānī, seeking personal damages since the network operated from within his office. Insiders note that the espionage case was merely a pretext to interrupt al-Sūdānī's upward trajectory and prevent him from establishing a rival power center. This file nearly

led to his ousting, had it not been for the rapid acceleration of regional events, which compelled the leaders of the Framework to reach a consensus to halt the escalation. The third situation utilized as a weapon among political forces manifested in the circulation of audio leaks attributed to an associate of al-Sūdānī, Judge Ḥaydar Ḥannūn, the Head of the Commission of Integrity, who had previously appeared in the media accusing political blocs, believed to be from within the Coordination Framework itself, of attacking him.

In a recent development, the mere publication of a photograph showing al-Sūdānī accompanied by three governors reignited controversy regarding future political alliances, the concealed conflict unfolding within the Coordination Framework, and the likelihood of his preparation of an early electoral map. This map consists of the governors of al-Baṣrah, Wāsiṭ, and Karbalā', alongside his efforts to enlist current members of parliament, emerging youth political forces, and tribal leaderships. This portends an aggressive electoral rivalry between certain forces of the Coordination Framework and al-Sūdānī, who seeks to forge a homogeneous electoral front. The future of the relationship between al-Sūdānī and the Framework forces faced two scenarios. The first scenario involves the dismissal or resignation of al-Sūdānī and a move toward early elections, an outcome deemed unlikely as it would be detrimental to both parties. The second scenario involves reaching a settlement for calm, which is more probable given the nature of managing the political process by the dominant domestic and external power centers controlling decision-making in Iraq.

In addition, this report monitored the state of consensus among the components of the State Administration Coalition, which, in addition to the Framework, encompassed Sunni and Kurdish blocs whose agreement to engage in a parliamentary coalition was conditional upon several demands related to their governorates. Shortly thereafter, rifts emerged regarding what was considered an evasion of executing the agreements and understandings. Among these was the ruling of the Federal Supreme Court of Iraq stipulating a halt to transferring funds to the Kurdistan Region, which threatened to dismantle the State Administration Coalition, while the Prime Minister's government announced the dispatch of a payment valued at 400 billion dinars in December 2024.

The report dedicated considerable attention to examining the gains and challenges within al-Sūdānī's government. Although he assumed office amidst political turmoil and deep social and economic tensions, he attempted to present a series of achievements across several areas that witnessed relative progress, contributing to reinforcing his status as prime minister. These included restoring political stability through forming a consensus government that includes all major political currents except the Sadrist Movement, and improving the federal government's relationship with the Kurdistan Regional Government. Another aspect was combating corruption and financial reform, as he launched numerous initiatives to pursue corrupt individuals and recover plundered funds; however, this file remains contentious, and accusations of corruption continue to persist. Focus was placed on improving the standard of public services, allocating large

budgets to rebuild electricity, water, communication networks, and social care systems, and increasing the number of families covered by social protection by 85%, in tandem with reducing the poverty rate.

Alongside this, al-Sūdānī's government faces future challenges and dilemmas, including the handling of vital issues such as reforming the defects in conducting ministerial adjustments, deputy ministers, and special grades; domestic political conflicts; regional tensions; problems in executing the vital Development Road project; organizational redundancy; and the complexities of managing the upcoming 2025 electoral process, among others.

Among the persistent challenges confronting the political process was the dominance of sectarian and partisan power-sharing over the mechanisms of election and the selection of names leading the formation of governorates councils. Influential forces worked to redraw the map of their influence through power-sharing and distributing governor positions according to the large blocs within each coalition, as well as sharing other positions, such as the governorate council chairman and deputy governors, down to all primary directorates. These political forces and parties adhered to the power-sharing approach in dividing positions across all administrative, executive, and advisory levels, with the intervention of party heads themselves in most instances.

The report critically examined the performance of the Iraqi Parliament, noting modest performance not only in this term but across five consecutive legislative terms due to political power-sharing. This rendered many decisions and files subject to bargaining and partisan interests, which prevented the opening of files or the questioning of figures belonging to influential blocs. Although constitutional instruments for accountability are available (such as questioning and votes of no confidence) the weakness of political will and the lack of seriousness in holding the corrupt accountable rendered these mechanisms nearly defunct. Many laws concerning security, economic affairs, and citizens' lives were postponed, such as the Oil and Gas Law and the controversial Personal Status Law. The Parliament also witnessed disruption, not only in performing its legislative duties but even at the level of the parliamentary speakership following the termination of Muḥammad al-Ḥalbūsī's membership in November 2023. The Parliament continued to be managed via the First Deputy, Muḥsin al-Mandalāwī, an associate of the Coordination Framework, who acquired the status of Acting Speaker of Parliament throughout that duration until the election of Maḥmūd al-Mashhadānī as Speaker at the end of October 2024.

The report prepared specialized tables monitoring the statistical rates of the Parliament's performance during 2024, which included a statement on the number of sessions, the number of speakers therein, the number of committee meetings and their reports, and the number of hosting sessions. This was alongside a similar table illustrating the evaluation of the governorates councils' work and a table of the electoral methods and laws under which elections took place in Iraq between 2005 and 2025. The report discussed proposals to amend the current election law, which was rejected by certain forces as it serves, in their

view, the interests of large parties and blocs at the expense of independents, attempts to exclude them, and disrupts their presence; hence, it is rejected by emerging parties.

The report conducted in-depth analyses regarding the blocs' positions on holding parliamentary elections and the shape of political alliances in light of upcoming obligations. It monitored evidence and hypotheses of the commencement of political conflict entering the electoral atmosphere, particularly in light of al-Sūdānī's announcement of his candidacy and his intention to remain a primary political actor. Meanwhile, other factions within the Coordination Framework (such as the State of Law Coalition and its leader Nūrī al-Mālikī) perceive their position as unfavorable, as their popular bases might orient toward the current Iraqi Prime Minister or new forces. The external equation also appears complex; American and Gulf pressure, combined with Tehran's desire to avoid a direct clash in Iraq, are all factors tipping the scale in favor of al-Sūdānī, who is viewed as a regionally and internationally acceptable figure.

Realities on the ground demonstrate that as the election date approaches and the probability of reshaping balances increases, political factions begin employing offensive policies, stirring files, issuing threats, defaming opponents, and even resorting to the Iraqi judiciary. With the decline of the existing conflict based on component identities and nationalist or sectarian foundations, a dispute of another kind has emerged among the primary blocs themselves, founded upon political rifts. Reference is made to the variance in the positions of parties and movements regarding the form of electoral alliances; while some will enter with a joint list, others have announced their determination to contest the elections with a single list. At the level of Sunni participation in the upcoming elections, divisions will also alter the features of the sixth legislative term, with the participation of lists based on political, sectarian, or nationalist foundations. The state of pluralism within the Sunni bloc is no different from what is unfolding within the Shi'i and Kurdish blocs.

II. Economy

Iraq is recognized as one of the foremost nations whose economy is predominantly or partially dependent on oil, thereby characterizing it as a rentier economy. Despite more than two decades having passed since the regime change and the fall of the Socialist Arab Ba'ath Party regime, Iraq continues to grapple with the ramifications of a rentier system, wherein oil accounts for approximately half of the gross domestic product (GDP) and nearly 90% of public budget revenues. This report examines the developments in the Iraqi economy during 2024 and the government's initiatives in this domain, notwithstanding delays in liquidity caused by the postponed ratification of the 2024 federal budget schedules. These schedules were enacted on June 27 following approval under Cabinet Resolution No. 24360 of 2024 and endorsement by Parliament pursuant to Parliamentary Resolution No. 64 of 2024 issued by the Committee Affairs, subsequently ratified

by the President of the Republic. Within this framework, the Iraqi government endeavors to adhere to the program it presented to Parliament across various sectors, with particular emphasis on the economic sphere; however, these efforts face numerous challenges.

The chapter dedicated to the Iraqi economy commences with an analysis of Iraq's GDP in 2024 and the predominance of the oil sector therein. Concerning oil dominance, 2024 mirrored previous years, with the oil sector contributing 37.3% to the GDP, a decrease from 41.6% in 2023, attributable to OPEC+ policies aimed at reducing oil production. Conversely, the agricultural sector's contribution increased to 3.39% in 2024 from 2.79% in 2023. The contributions of other non-oil sectors to GDP formation are detailed in the relevant table within the chapter.

Public revenues in the 2024 budget amounted to 147,837 billion dinars, with oil revenues comprising 120,496 billion dinars of this total. The 2024 budget represents the largest in Iraq's financial history, reflecting an increase of 12.951 trillion dinars. This increase signals the government's ambition to fulfill its program; nevertheless, it failed to adequately consider the execution mechanisms and the capacities necessary to finance these mechanisms or units, resulting in a planned deficit of 64.024 trillion dinars. Spending in 2024 rose by 12,951 billion dinars compared to 2023. Notably, allocations to certain sectors do not align with the government's reform vision. For instance, sectors such as social care and civil servants received 71.3% of the funds, indicating the need for the government to advance economic diversification by revitalizing the private sector or establishing partnerships within certain sectors.

Regarding public expenditures in 2024, no significant change was observed relative to the previous year. Total public expenditures reached 150,527 billion dinars, with current expenditures accounting for 125,214 billion dinars and investment expenditures totaling 25,313 billion dinars. Thus, current expenditures constituted 83% and investment expenditures 17%, proportions identical to those recorded in 2023. Despite the total revenues realized in 2024 being comparable to those in 2023, oil revenues remained nearly unchanged. This occurred despite the federal government receiving no revenues from the Kurdistan Regional Government due to the cessation of oil exports via the Turkish port of Ceyhan and the absence of an agreement to utilize oil extracted from the region in refining fields. Although other revenues, including those from petroleum derivatives, increased significantly in 2024, they remained low, constituting only 11% of total revenues. The minimal contribution of non-oil activities to public revenues and the persistent dominance of oil revenues are the primary causes of the structural imbalance that has afflicted Iraqi budgets for decades, with the 2024 budget being no exception. This situation underscores the fragility of the Iraqi economy and its increasing dependence on oil. Furthermore, the negligible contribution of non-oil revenues contradicts the government's declared policy of revenue diversification, thereby intensifying pressure on the government and exposing it to criticism for failing to fulfill its commitments in this area.

Concerning monetary policy developments in Iraq, as 2024 concluded and 2025 commenced, the foreign currency sale and purchase window mechanism for trade financing was terminated. Instead, reliance shifted to correspondent banks operating in coordination with private Iraqi commercial banks, whose number increased to over twenty, each opening accounts with correspondent banks to facilitate trade and financial transfers. Consequently, the Central Bank distanced itself from the trade financing mechanism, transferring this responsibility to private banks.

Iraq's external debt ratio in 2024 remained within acceptable limits; the debt-to-GDP ratio stood at 3%, the benchmark for debt indicators. External debt decreased from approximately 16 billion dollars to nearly 10 billion dollars, reflecting the current government's efforts to curb external debt. Conversely, internal debt expanded in 2024, rising from 70.6 trillion dinars in December 2023 to 83 trillion dinars in December 2024, with a monthly growth rate of 1.5%. This elevated rate indicates the pressure exerted by the government on monetary policy through indirect internal borrowing from the Central Bank. It is noteworthy that internal debt, despite its increase, does not pose a significant problem as long as it is denominated in sovereign currency; it becomes problematic only if it generates inflation. Provided inflation remains within acceptable levels, internal debt is considered manageable.

Regarding Iraq's oil production and reserves, in 2024 the Iraqi Ministry of Oil initiated 29 oil and gas projects across 12 governorates within the fifth (supplementary) and sixth licensing rounds. Among these, 22 companies, including eight Chinese firms, acquired information packages for the referral of these fields. The oil and gas quantities expected from these projects are anticipated to meet the country's gas import needs, according to the Iraqi Ministry of Oil. Additionally, Iraq signed a memorandum of understanding in 2024 with British Petroleum (BP) to rehabilitate and develop four northern oil fields in Kirkuk, aiming to add approximately 112,000 barrels per day and exploit associated gas under a profit-sharing arrangement. However, controversy persists regarding the percentage of profits allocated to the operating companies involved in developing and rehabilitating these fields.

In terms of exports and revenues, Iraq's crude oil exports in 2024 reached approximately 3.372 million barrels per day, a decline from 3.422 million barrels per day in 2023. The Asian market was the primary destination for Iraqi oil exports in 2024, accounting for approximately 73% via Gulf ports, equivalent to 2.464 million barrels per day. The European market ranked second at 20%, with around 675,000 barrels per day, followed by the American market at 6%, equivalent to 191,000 barrels per day. Africa was the final destination, receiving approximately 41,000 barrels per day. Iraq's exports of petroleum products in 2024 amounted to approximately 2.907 billion dollars, while imports of the same products rose to 4.021 billion dollars. Heavy fuel oil (black oil) constituted the majority of Iraq's petroleum product exports, alongside smaller quantities of jet and aviation fuel. Conversely, Iraq's petroleum product imports primarily consisted of gasoline.

Iraq experienced positive developments in associated gas flaring rates in 2024, reducing gas flaring to 1.6%, which led to a decline in emissions from flaring to 35.1 million tons. Gas flaring from oil fields decreased to 17.37 billion cubic meters in 2024, compared to 17.6 billion cubic meters in the previous year. Another development involved a reduction in imported Iranian gas, which dropped to approximately 8 million cubic meters per day since November 2024 via the pipeline to southern Iraq. The year 2024 continued previous efforts to seek alternatives to Iranian gas, primarily for electricity generation. The first alternative involved utilizing national gas; if Iraq achieves its goal of eliminating flared gas by 2028, it could add 5,200 megawatts to the electrical grid. The second alternative entails importing floating platforms for electricity generation, particularly those offered by Qatar, with ongoing negotiations to secure a specialized vessel as a floating terminal for liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports. However, installing floating storage and regasification units may require more than one to two years. The third alternative involves importing gas from Turkmenistan; in October 2024, Iraq signed an agreement with Turkmenistan to supply gas via Iran, expected to commence in the coming months. The fourth alternative focuses on solar energy, which, despite directed efforts, remains minimal.

These developments in the Iraqi economy during 2024 highlight the imperative for the current government to intensify efforts to address persistent economic challenges, notably diversifying the economy and reducing oil dependency (thereby undermining the rentier system), advancing banking system reforms, and earnestly resolving the electricity crisis through investment in Iraqi gas, alongside addressing other gaps and issues that hinder the economy's capacity to meet the needs of the state and its citizens.

III. Security

In 2024, Iraq experienced numerous internal and external security developments and challenges that significantly influenced its security and stability. One of the most notable security developments was the Turkish military operations in northern Iraq. Turkish forces conducted 1,076 air and artillery strikes from January to July 2024, targeting Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) strongholds within Iraqi territory, specifically in the governorates of Erbil, Duhok, al-Sulaymānīyah, and Nīnawá. These operations resulted in the deaths of eight civilians, the destruction of 20,000 dunams of agricultural land across several towns in Duhok Governorate, and the evacuation of 162 villages. Additionally, Turkey established new military bases and observation posts in Duhok Governorate, marking a significant escalation compared to previous incursions, thereby elevating the danger of this behavior to Iraqi security. In response, the Iraqi National Security Council officially designated the PKK as a banned organization in Iraq following a high-level meeting between Iraqi and Turkish officials in Baghdād on March 14, 2024. This decision facilitated enhanced Iraqi-Turkish cooperation, culminating in a memorandum of understanding that included security collaboration, intelligence sharing, and the establishment of joint border security coordination and training

centers. It also included an agreement to transfer the Turkish Zilikan Base in Ba'shīqah (northeast of Ninawá Governorate) to the Iraqi Armed Forces to transform it into a joint training center, and the creation of two other security centers for coordination and training.

The escalation of Iranian military activity, particularly missile strikes on northern Iraq, represented another critical development. On January 15, 2024, the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) launched missile attacks in Erbil Governorate targeting what it described as "espionage centers" linked to the Zionist entity and terrorist groups associated with ISIS. These strikes resulted in eight explosions, the deaths of four individuals, and injuries to six others. The IRGC justified these actions as retaliation for an attack on the Iranian city of Kermān.

In 2024, Iraq witnessed the continuation of the war of genocide waged by the Zionist entity on Gaza, observing with intense concern the flagrant violations of international law and humanitarian principles occurring in this war. This usurping entity spares no effort in killing innocent civilians, particularly women and children, and continues to violate the sovereignty of states in a brutal manner not witnessed since the violations committed by Nazi and Fascist regimes during World War II. Iraq continues its supportive stance toward the Palestinian cause, for which it has long been recognized among Arab and foreign nations. Since the al-Aqṣá Flood Operation on October 7, 2023, Iraq has been characterized by political movements championing the Palestinian cause and denouncing the actions of the usurping entity. In 2024, the official stance of the Iraqi government centered on issuing statements of condemnation, support, and advocacy in the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly, and the Arab League, alongside providing humanitarian assistance. The supportive positions of the Iraqi government toward the Palestinian cause and the victimization of Gaza City, channeled through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2024, reached 22 official actions, distributed among statements of solidarity, participation at the UN and Arab League, and statements of condemnation. At the popular level, Iraq and its cities witnessed numerous popular demonstrations in solidarity with the Palestinian people and in condemnation of the war waged against them. In the same context, the volume of aid dispatched by the Iraqi government to Palestine reached 750,000 tons. Beyond its advocacy for the Palestinian cause, Iraq is fully aware of the consequences that could arise if the Zionist entity is left to continue its genocide, expansion, annexation of additional territories, violation of state sovereignty, and exploitation of temporary conditions. It fully recognizes the impact of this on Iraq's security future and internal stability; therefore, it has not and will not spare any effort in maintaining its stance against the Zionist arrogance that undermines the security and prosperity of the region, of which Iraq is an inseparable part.

Despite the decisive victory achieved by Iraq through its various military and security forces over the terrorist organization ISIS, this terrorist group continues to exploit local and regional conditions to carry out attacks within Iraq. It capitalizes on the volatile security situation in Syria and infiltrates across the Iraqi-

Syrian border. In 2024, the organization conducted attacks employing small arms and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) targeting Iraqi security forces and civilians. Additionally, it utilized displacement camps (particularly the al-Hawl camp) to disseminate its extremist ideology and generate millions of dollars, partly through extortion of local residents, to fund recruitment, incitement, and rearmament for executing attacks inside Iraq. The organization demonstrated its operational capacity, especially during the second quarter of 2024, by exploiting regional circumstances, most notably the Zionist war on Gaza. Its operations were characterized as sporadic and low-level, exemplified by its attack on January 7, 2024, against the Kirkuk and East Tigris Operations Command of the Popular Mobilization Forces, and its attack on May 14 of the same year against the Iraqi Army. Notably, the organization's attacks were confined to governorates that serve as sensitive junction points with border crossings into Syria.

The armed factions' assaults on US military installations in Iraq constituted a significant security challenge for the Iraqi government throughout 2024. In the context of the ongoing conflict in Gaza, these factions executed numerous attacks on US bases both within and beyond Iraqi territory, motivated by the sustained US support for the Zionist entity. This situation heightened the potential for escalation on Iraqi soil. From the onset of the Gaza conflict on October 7, 2023, through the end of 2024, these factions conducted over 120 operations, some in coordination with armed groups in neighboring countries, notably Syria. The frequency of these attacks intensified on January 20, 2024, when the factions targeted the American 'Ayn al-Asad Airbase with multiple rocket strikes, resulting in casualties among US service members. The apex of these hostilities occurred on January 28, 2024, when certain Iraqi factions launched an assault on the Tower 22 base located in the al-Rukbān region of northeastern Jordan, causing the deaths of three US soldiers and injuring thirty-four others. Subsequently, on February 5, 2024, these factions executed a drone attack against a training base hosting US forces at the al-Umar oil field in Dayr al-Zawrr Governorate, eastern Syria, as retaliation for the killing of Kata'ib Hezbollah leader Abū-Bāqir al-Sā'idī. This escalation targeting the American presence in Iraq and adjacent countries compelled the United States to prepare countermeasures against these factions.

Concerning Iraq's official position, the attacks perpetrated by these factions against US bases within Iraq and the broader region present a diplomatic dilemma, undermining the Iraqi government's efforts to maintain a unified stance on regional developments. Consequently, Iraq navigates a dual approach: an official policy advocating a balanced foreign strategy aimed at the withdrawal of US forces through legislative and diplomatic channels, and an unofficial stance characterized by unilateral actions conducted outside this framework.

The escalation by resistance factions in response to the Zionist war on Gaza evolved into a more perilous phase, as these groups conducted direct retaliatory attacks against the Zionist entity between April and November 2024. Notably, on October 4, 2024, they launched a drone strike against a Zionist base in the northern occupied Syrian Golan Heights, resulting in the deaths of two occupa-

tion soldiers and injuries to twenty-four others. The Zionist entity responded with indirect threats via official statements asserting its right to self-defense. Furthermore, it threatened to target faction headquarters within Iraq, prompting the Iraqi government to engage international organizations and diplomatic channels to condemn these threats and safeguard Iraq's national security from potential hostile actions.

The year 2024 continued to present significant internal security challenges for Iraq, notably in the areas of drug trafficking, human trafficking, and arms smuggling. The drug trade in Iraq during 2024 was primarily concentrated along three main corridors: the northern, central, and southern internal routes. These corridors are interconnected and linked to neighboring countries, which contribute to the persistence of this illicit trade. These networks facilitate the increased movement of substances such as methamphetamine and Captagon, alongside the smuggling of opioids. In response, the General Directorate for Narcotics Affairs within the Ministry of Interior arrested 14,438 suspects involved in drug-related offenses, dismantled 600 drug networks, and apprehended numerous major traffickers. These efforts yielded positive outcomes, including a 15% reduction in drug consumption offenses in 2024 compared to the previous year; specifically, 4,000 cases were recorded in 2024, down from 4,700 in 2023. Iraq's international initiatives included convening international conferences, intensifying consultations, and exchanging information with neighboring states to mitigate this issue. Concurrently, the Ministry of Health, under government directives, prioritized combating narcotics by establishing subcommittees in all governorates under the supervision of respective governors, developing preventive programs to curb the spread of drug abuse, and destroying approximately four tons of seized narcotics stored at forensic medicine departments in the governorates of Baghdād, Najaf, and al-Basrah in 2024.

Efforts to combat human trafficking also persisted in 2024. The Iraqi Ministry of Interior reported the arrest of over 1,800 suspects in human trafficking cases and the apprehension of nine Pakistani nationals linked to kidnapping, theft, and extortion. Additionally, 204 individuals were convicted of related crimes, and 316 beggars were detained. The Iraqi government enhanced victim protection through its anti-human trafficking committee and the Kurdistan Regional Government's counterpart. These measures led to the identification of more than 150 victims, including those subjected to sexual exploitation, forced labor, and other forms of unspecified exploitation.

Regarding arms control, the Iraqi government initiated a weapons buyback program in 2024, allocating 15 billion dinars to purchase unlicensed light, medium, and heavy weapons. A registration platform for light weapons was established via the "Ur" electronic portal, and approximately 700 centers were made available across all governorates for the surrender of medium and heavy weapons. These initiatives are part of the National Committee for Regulating and Confining Weapons to State Control, established by the Supreme National Security Council of Iraq pursuant to Resolution No. 21 of 2021. Despite these

measures, the complex security environment in Iraq has hindered tangible progress, as evidenced by ongoing tribal conflicts and attacks by armed groups against civilians and institutions, underscoring the persistent challenges to Iraq's internal security.

IV. Society

The government and relevant authorities have concentrated efforts on establishing a secure and stable Iraqi society by addressing poverty and unemployment, enhancing service provision, and facilitating private sector participation in projects aimed at improving citizens' livelihoods and supporting developmental initiatives. The population census conducted in November 2024 marked a significant phase in social development. The data obtained will serve as a foundational baseline for formulating major developmental plans to assist the government in monitoring and evaluating policies, updating data, and ultimately improving the quality of social services, advancing the economy, supporting performance evaluation, guiding programs and resource allocation, and optimizing budget distribution.

Tribal conflicts constitute a significant challenge intersecting constitutional provisions, legal frameworks, and deeply ingrained social traditions and values. Iraqi society faces a pervasive tribal culture that spans both urban and rural areas, exacerbated by escalating sectarian conflicts, partisan disputes, and inadequate legislation. Official institutions and social organizations have played a pivotal role in media education to emphasize the importance of respecting the law and preventing the exploitation of tribal customs to justify aggression against others. Numerous armed and unarmed disputes have been resolved, and the Iraqi Ministry of Interior issued the "Tribal Covenant," a document comprising clauses and measures designed to mitigate widespread tribal conflicts. Its provisions include adherence to legal principles and human rights in a manner consistent with religious teachings, enforcement of the rule of law, and upholding the state's authority by supporting official security agencies. Oversight by the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Interior, coupled with legal sanctions, has contributed to a relative reduction in conflicts; however, the issue remains unresolved and necessitates ongoing, qualitative interventions in collaboration with tribes and security authorities across Iraqi governorates.

Additionally, Iraqi society has experienced significant challenges related to drug trafficking and consumption, which have emerged as critical and complex issues following the recent expansion of the drug trade. This growth can be attributed to factors such as weak religious deterrence, adverse economic conditions, unemployment, systematic targeting of youth by organized criminal groups, misuse of the internet, domestic violence, and the cumulative effects of past conflicts. According to this report, approximately 14,000 individuals involved in drug trafficking and promotion were arrested, and several tons of various narcotic substances valued at over 200 million US dollars were confiscated. The Ministry

of Interior, in collaboration with health departments, has successfully treated thousands of addicts and disrupted numerous primary local and international networks as part of the government's strategic counter-narcotics campaign. The Iraqi judiciary has issued sentences ranging from life imprisonment to the death penalty and other prison terms. Iraq has also sought to enhance cooperation with regional and international countries and organizations to combat drug proliferation, actively participating in external meetings aimed at adopting a collective and balanced approach to drug control and information exchange.

Furthermore, Iraqi society has endured substantial violence against vulnerable groups, particularly women and children. The country's unstable political, economic, and security conditions have adversely affected the general well-being of its citizens, contributing to psychological distress and an increase in such cases. Key factors contributing to domestic violence include exposure to violent environments during upbringing, poor spousal compatibility, and challenging living conditions such as poverty and unemployment. In 2024, a total of 14,000 cases were documented, with physical violence constituting the majority. Female victims accounted for 73% of these cases, while males represented 27%. Additionally, assaults against children have shown a continuous and concerning increase compared to previous years. Electronic violence has also emerged as a growing threat, particularly targeting women and girls, thereby jeopardizing their safety and limiting their participation in digital spaces.

It is noteworthy that the Parliament has failed to enact more than one law addressing these issues, such as the draft Anti-Domestic Violence Law, due to objections and obstacles raised by certain influential political blocs under the pretext that the law grants women the right to government care and encourages them to "rebel." Similarly, the Child Protection Law, which aims to address issues such as child labor, exploitation, abuse, and the explicit enshrinement of fundamental rights including life, health, education, and nationality, has not been passed. The controversy persists regarding amendments to the Personal Status Law, which seeks to regulate marriage and inheritance affairs but is criticized for potentially undermining fundamental rights established in the existing law.

Among the emerging social phenomena is the issue of suicide, which has seen a significant increase in Iraq. Official statistics reveal record numbers, which experts attribute to various factors, primarily psychological issues, familial circumstances, and economic hardships. In response, the government implemented a National Strategy for Suicide Prevention (2024–2030) aimed at mitigating this issue and addressing its underlying causes. This strategy assigns responsibilities to every ministry and sector, as well as to non-governmental organizations, the media, families, schools, places of worship, social media platforms, and security agencies, emphasizing the necessity of a coordinated effort.

Begging remains a persistent and highly complex social phenomenon, intertwined with economic and cultural contexts. The estimated number of beggars in the country exceeds half a million, the majority of whom are juveniles and women. Organized crime controls approximately 70% of these individuals, while the

remainder engage in traditional and electronic begging. Children are exploited through forced begging and involvement in criminal gangs, often disguised under modern facades such as health-related begging and the establishment of humanitarian projects.

Due to the diverse negative impacts of begging, several concerned departments have taken responsibility for combating this phenomenon. These efforts are organized and supported by the Supreme Judicial Council and the National Security Advisory. Additionally, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, launched a campaign to provide care for eligible individuals. This initiative involved collecting data on arrested beggars and conducting field research to assess their conditions, with the goal of integrating them into the social protection network.

Civil society organizations in Iraq face significant challenges due to the reduction of international projects and grants, alongside a diminished global focus on the country. Only a fraction of the financial resources required for 2024 has been secured, adversely affecting humanitarian response efforts and essential support for displaced populations. Nonetheless, non-governmental organizations retain the capacity to influence social dynamics through various mechanisms, including raising awareness, capacity building, monitoring governmental performance, contributing to decision-making processes, offering legal and social consultations, countering extremist ideologies, and promoting democratic values and civil principles.

The persistent duality of poverty and unemployment continues to afflict Iraqi society, despite a decline in the poverty rate from 30% in 2021 to 17.5% in 2024, and a reduction in the unemployment rate from 16.5% to 13.5% in 2024, as reported by the Ministry of Planning. These figures indicate progress in economic growth indicators and the implementation of government policies over the three years preceding 2024. Such policies include the expansion of the social protection network to cover a broader range of eligible beneficiaries, regulation of foreign labor entry based on actual needs, support for private sector activities, and the enactment of the Retirement and Social Security Law, which harmonizes benefits for workers in both private and public sectors. Despite the official decrease in unemployment, independent assessments suggest that rates remain elevated, particularly among youth, ranging between 15% and 25%. This is especially pronounced among university graduates, who frequently encounter difficulties securing employment due to the absence of a clear future vision. Consequently, this situation has precipitated significant waves of protests among unemployed youth across several Iraqi governorates.

Among the social phenomena that undermine stability, disrupt peaceful coexistence, and pose severe threats to family safety and economic security are extortion crimes. Numerous companies have been compelled in recent years to cease operations or transfer ownership to secondary entities. Electronic extortion has become predominant, driven by the widespread use of technology and the deployment of artificial intelligence (AI) by criminal organizations and mafias.

These illicit activities predominantly target women and adolescent girls. In 2024, the Ministry of Interior documented a 3% decline in electronic extortion cases, attributing this to the treatment of hundreds of victims and the successful identification and apprehension of perpetrators by security agencies. The government has also initiated several programs, notably the unified emergency number project (911), which enables victims to confidentially report incidents and seek assistance from specialized authorities. Furthermore, the Iraqi National Security Service, in collaboration with humanitarian organizations and the Supreme Youth Council under the Prime Minister's patronage, conducted a comprehensive awareness campaign aimed at protecting girls and women nationwide. Iraq is beginning to adapt to the rapid advancements in artificial intelligence and enhance its preparedness in this domain; however, it currently lacks legislation addressing cybercrimes. Insiders reveal that extortion statistics are likely under-reported, as many victims choose silence and comply with extortion demands to avoid social stigma.

V. Human Rights

Despite ongoing efforts to enhance the status of human rights in Iraq, these initiatives have yet to elevate the country to the level of those that fully guarantee human rights and ensure their implementation in accordance with both national legal frameworks and international standards. The year 2024, the focus of this report, was marked by significant developments in the human rights domain, rendering it a prominent issue. Notably, the High Commission for Human Rights in Iraq experienced a downgrade from Category "A" to Category "B" within the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), alongside contentious debates within the Iraqi Parliament. These debates centered on legislative practices and mechanisms, such as the Personal Status Law and the General Amnesty Law, which have cast a shadow over the human rights landscape. Additionally, the continued absence of a Board of Commissioners and the Commission's administration under the Minister of Justice, Dr. Khālid Shwānī, further complicated the situation.

In October 2024, the High Commission for Human Rights in Iraq (IHCHR) was downgraded from Category "A" to Category "B" following a special review by the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) of GANHRI. This downgrade was attributed to the Commission's non-compliance with the Paris Principles, particularly concerning its lack of independence and limited effectiveness. Consequently, several countries issued recommendations urging Iraq to ensure the Commission's full adherence to the Paris Principles. Key recommendations included the urgent appointment of the Board of Commissioners to enable the Commission to fulfill its mandate in protecting human rights, ratification of outstanding human rights treaties (most notably the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, and the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aimed at abol-

ishing the death penalty) and a review of laws and practices that result in cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

The Iraqi legislative authority enacted in 2024 several controversial laws, foremost among them the Personal Status Law. Amendments to this law sparked prolonged disputes throughout the year and beyond, leading to the cancellation of numerous parliamentary sessions due to intense debates between supporters and opponents. The amendment to Personal Status Law No. 188 of 1959 attracted significant controversy, extending beyond domestic borders to the international arena. International organizations, particularly Human Rights Watch (HRW), condemned the ratification of these amendments as violations of international human rights treaties.

Several sub-issues related to human rights in Iraq during 2024 warrant attention, including the rights of women and children, human trafficking, and freedom of expression. Iraq demonstrated notable progress in the women and children's rights sector, as acknowledged by some international organizations; however, substantial efforts remain necessary to address issues such as violence against women, child labor, and child homelessness. The rise in human trafficking posed a significant challenge to the Iraqi government, prompting increased efforts to mitigate its impact on national security and international reputation. Despite these efforts, Iraq remains in the early stages of addressing gaps in victim protection and trafficking prevention. Further advancements require robust governmental measures, prosecution of offenders, and support from the United Nations.

Regarding freedom of expression, Iraq took a significant step in August 2024 when the Board of Commissioners of the Iraqi Media and Communications Commission (CMC) ratified resolutions outlining the media vision and strategies to combat fake news and secure digital content. However, these measures may provoke controversy if not implemented in a manner that respects constitutional freedoms. Simultaneously, it is imperative to prevent the exploitation of freedom of expression to promote content detrimental to social values and family structures. Addressing these challenges necessitates nuanced efforts to counter deviations without inciting public unrest or undermining governmental credibility. Social media has become a platform for various human rights violations; for instance, Fāḍil al-Gharrāwī, Head of the Strategic Center for Human Rights in Iraq, reported that approximately 50% of Iraqi women experience digital violence, bullying, electronic extortion, and online human trafficking.

Other human rights issues in Iraq during 2024 generated both domestic and international controversy, including the death penalty and gender-related phenomena. Iraq ranked third globally in executions in 2024, following Iran and Saudi Arabia, with 92 executions carried out. This ranking attracted criticism from international human rights organizations. Nonetheless, the death penalty cannot be universally characterized as a violation of human rights, as it serves a deterrent function through retributive justice.

The aforementioned developments underscore the urgent need for serious and coordinated efforts to manage the complexities of the human rights situation in Iraq. It is essential to prevent the deterioration of Iraq's international human rights reputation by intensifying governmental collaboration with relevant international bodies to achieve tangible progress. While domestic initiatives in 2024 have fostered hope for reform, sustained and organized efforts remain critical. Iraq's human rights agenda must be managed by a robust institution endowed with the authority and capacity to advance this cause. This institution is the High Commission for Human Rights, which until now does not possess a Board of Commissioners to undertake its leadership.

VI. Public Services

The public services sector represented a substantial portion of governmental efforts throughout 2024, despite notable discrepancies between the planned objectives outlined in the government program and the actual fulfillment of social needs. Empirical evidence indicates the government's continued commitment to enhancing service quality through the completion of new projects and the rehabilitation of infrastructure across various domains, including electricity, energy, transportation, and housing. However, the rates of achievement remain limited; fundamental sectors such as oil and electricity demonstrate relatively higher activity and accomplishment levels compared to other sectors, whereas housing and transportation sectors experienced weak implementation and a significant number of project delays.

The government of al-Sūdānī faced a persistent electricity crisis, deeply entrenched over several decades, compounded by challenges such as the inability to meet escalating domestic demand and a shortfall in both national and imported production capacity. Projections indicate that demand is expected to double within a few years. According to reports from the Ministry of Electricity, demand surpassed 35,000 megawatts, while actual production did not exceed 24,000 megawatts. Despite these challenges, the country observed a relative improvement in electricity supply attributable to increased investments in power plants and enhancements in distribution networks. Authorities announced the implementation of a smart transformation project for the electrical grid, which contributed to extending supply hours, occasionally exceeding 20 hours daily in certain regions.

Iraq also pursued collaboration with international companies to advance the electricity sector. Notably, cooperation with the Chinese company SEPCO aimed to double electricity production at al-Anbār gas power plant. Additionally, work resumed with the German company Siemens to develop electricity infrastructure, and agreements were established with the American company General Electric to augment production capacity and enhance grid efficiency. Partnerships with the Japanese company Toyota focused on developing network capacities, while a solar energy project was initiated with TotalEnergies and QatarEnergy, among

other agreements. These efforts were complemented by initiatives to curtail the flaring of associated gas by redirecting it to generation stations, alongside a strategic orientation toward utilizing appropriate solar panels to meet increasing demand. Iraq's geographical advantage of abundant sunshine positions it to benefit significantly from rapid advancements in solar energy technology.

The government has identified the housing issue as a significant and multifaceted challenge, characterized by complex economic and social factors. These challenges stem from factors such as the uncontrolled acceleration of the annual population growth rate and inadequate urban planning and coordination among relevant authorities. This situation highlights the fragility within the housing sector's structure and underscores the necessity for comprehensive planning and legislative reforms to mitigate the crisis and prevent its escalation. Data from the beginning of the year indicate a substantial proportion of the population relies on unstable or informal housing arrangements.

Consequently, federal and local government efforts have converged to implement a series of measures, including the initiation of new residential city projects encompassing the governorates of Baghdād, Maysān, and al-Muthanná, as well as other urban areas. Additional initiatives aim to facilitate gradual homeownership for citizens by increasing the ceiling on interest-free housing loans for construction and executing subsidized housing projects through the National Investment Commission, targeting support for low- and middle-income groups. Although these initiatives have yielded tangible results, evidenced by an increase in the number of licenses issued for new housing construction, several challenges remain evident. These include the subdivision of residential units into excessively small spaces, limited financing capabilities, and a high incidence of encroachments and construction on agricultural lands, which has contributed to the proliferation of extensive informal housing settlements.

The health sector required substantial reconstruction and modernization of its infrastructure. Consequently, the government undertook initiatives to enhance medical services, facilitate access to healthcare, and rehabilitate and develop hospitals and centers that were damaged, neglected, or in a state of disrepair. These efforts included the renovation of existing facilities and the construction of new hospitals to address the increasing demand for healthcare services. Notably, the first public hospital in the capital, al-Sha'b Hospital, was inaugurated after nearly four decades since the last similar facility opened. This hospital was equipped with state-of-the-art medical technologies and specialized centers. Additionally, private healthcare institutions were integrated into the national health insurance system. The Ministry of Health also initiated a project to digitize health information, aiming to improve data collection and its application in health planning. The private sector experienced significant quantitative and qualitative growth, expanding into new specializations.

Despite these advancements, the health sector continues to confront significant challenges. These include shortages of medical personnel and equipment, inadequate sustainable financial funding, particularly in rural areas, and dispari-

ties in the quality of services across governorates. Most governorates suffer from deficits that adversely affect the quality of healthcare provided. It is noteworthy that the governorates within the Kurdistan Region demonstrate higher rates in certain healthcare services compared to the central and southern governorates.

Regarding public services, various municipal services were provided within both urban and rural areas, with the objective of enhancing quality of life and promoting environmental and economic sustainability. Among these services, sewage water management was particularly prominent, facing numerous challenges, including a significant shortage that adversely affects human health and impedes social and urban development in Iraqi cities. The sewage networks cover only a small proportion of the population, and most governorates continue to struggle with the complete treatment of the large volumes generated. Untreated wastewater constitutes a major environmental and health hazard due to its pollution of groundwater and surface water, as some of it is discharged directly into rivers and streams without adequate treatment. The government is addressing these issues by establishing new, highly efficient treatment stations in residential, industrial, and service areas, connecting them to the public network, integrating villages and homes into centralized sewage systems, and educating the population on the importance of sustainable water resource utilization.

The strategic report highlighted the significant challenges associated with waste collection in urban areas, which is currently conducted using primitive methods and transported to landfills, most of which are informal, lack environmental approval or supervision, and do not incorporate recycling. This situation poses serious environmental risks that substantially impact human health. Waste generation in Iraq increased to 4.41 million tons in 2024, representing an annual growth rate of 25% between 2021 and 2024. Additionally, the proximity of some residents to discarded waste in densely populated areas has heightened health risks. To safeguard public health and the environment, it is imperative to re-establish an effective waste management system, including capacity building, training programs, private sector participation, and support for private initiatives. Sulfur pollution has emerged as a significant air pollutant in Iraq, particularly in oil-producing, industrial, congested governorates and major cities such as Baghdad and al-Basrah, resulting in vegetation degradation and pollution of soil and water bodies. Iraq ranks as the sixth most polluted country globally in terms of atmospheric pollution. According to 2024 data, Baghdad Governorate was ranked 191st worldwide, and the recurrent presence of sulfur odors in the capital's atmosphere has become a notable phenomenon.

The government has prioritized the provision of potable water, recognizing it as a fundamental public service. Data from 2024 indicate that the percentages remain comparable to those of the previous year; although most urban residents have access to basic water services, the proportion receiving genuinely improved and secure water services does not exceed 60%, while in rural areas, this figure falls below 50%. Additional estimates for 2024 reveal that 76.3% of the total population obtains water for domestic use from the public network, with others relying

on water tankers, rivers, open wells, and alternative sources. The drinking water sector in Iraq continues to confront significant challenges, including water scarcity driven by climate change, persistent drought, and contamination of water sources due to industrial and agricultural pollutants, compounded by inadequate water treatment infrastructure. These circumstances necessitate effective water management strategies, sustained diplomatic engagement with neighboring countries (particularly Turkey) to enhance water releases, and the regulation and rationing of water demand commensurate with the severity of the issue.

The Ministry of Construction, Housing, Municipalities, and Public Works has implemented an extensive campaign comprising 60 traffic projects aimed at alleviating traffic congestion. These initiatives include the construction of overpasses and the opening or widening of streets, primarily concentrated in the capital city, Baghdad, as well as in other governorates such as Ninawa. The projects have resulted in improvements in traffic flow, with fluidity rates ranging from 30% to 70%, contingent upon the specific location and nature of each project. Concurrently, the Traffic Directorate has advocated for the enhancement of public transportation systems and the adjustment of working hours across various ministries to further mitigate congestion.

The government assumes a pivotal role in overseeing the road networks and infrastructure, ensuring their operational efficiency, and managing the transportation sector due to its integral connection with the broader economic development. Iraq's transportation infrastructure encompasses tens of thousands of land roads, including secondary roads, primary roads, and highways. In the air transport sector, there has been a notable increase in the number of operational aircraft at Iraqi airports under the General Company for Iraqi Airways, alongside growth in passenger traffic (both arrivals and departures) and transit flights. Despite these advancements, revenue generation remains disproportionately low relative to the sector's potential. Iraq also possesses six principal seaports, comprising four major commercial ports and two oil ports dedicated to oil exports, each equipped with four berths. The final phases of the al-Faw Port development are underway, anticipated to bolster Iraq's regional relations, strengthen economic ties with neighboring countries, and open expansive opportunities for local development, employment generation, and enhancement of living standards. According to available data, the port is projected to include 92 berths and five major projects, such as railways, a submerged tunnel, and highways. Several stages of this development are expected to be completed by 2025, positioning the port as a fundamental component of the Development Road project, which seeks to augment Iraq's geo-economic standing.

The Ministry of Communications is responsible for overseeing internet services, managing distribution networks, controlling fiber optic infrastructure and international gateways, and leasing bandwidth to private sector internet service providers (ISPs). The majority of the Iraqi population accesses internet services through various channels, including mobile networks, Wi-Fi, and local intermediaries in urban areas. Earthlink is recognized as the largest and fastest-growing

ISP nationwide, currently providing coverage to most densely populated regions. In 2024, digital technology indicators in Iraq revealed a 2.3% increase in internet users, with social media usage reaching 69.4% of the total population, predominantly on Facebook. Additionally, the total number of active mobile phone lines in Iraq reached 46 million at the beginning of 2024, equating to 100% population penetration. However, the average internet speed remains relatively low compared to global standards.

It is important to note that specialized authorities have imposed extensive restrictions on internet content deemed to violate public order, public morals, or national security. In March 2024, the Federal Supreme Court issued a ruling mandating the Ministry of Communications and the Media and Communications Commission to block websites disseminating obscene material or content opposing religious and social values. The Ministry has adopted a stringent approach in enforcing judicial rulings, resulting in the blocking of various websites, music libraries, and the disabling of independent critical journalistic platforms. Nonetheless, some of these restrictions have been circumvented, highlighting deficiencies in the technical infrastructure employed for content regulation.

VII. Anti-Corruption Efforts

Administrative and financial corruption represents one of the most critical challenges confronting the Iraqi state post-2003, given its direct repercussions on economic, social, and political stability. Corruption manifests in various forms, including bribery, fraud, collusion in governmental duties, and influence peddling, resulting in violations of citizens' rights and the misappropriation of public resources for personal benefit. Although corruption is a global phenomenon, Iraq presents a unique context due to the historical origins of corruption and the social rationalizations that have emerged since the 1990s, which have expanded its social reach and complicated efforts to address it.

From this perspective, the strategic report for 2024 aimed to provide a comprehensive analysis of anti-corruption activities in Iraq during 2024 by monitoring both global and local corruption indicators, highlighting the most prominent cases, and examining the role of the Federal Commission of Integrity in combating this phenomenon, while also outlining future plans for 2025.

Data from Transparency International indicate a persistent increase in corruption levels worldwide, with approximately 85% of the global population residing in countries scoring below 50 out of 100 on the Corruption Perceptions Index, signifying widespread corruption, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected states. Domestically, Iraq demonstrated measurable progress, as its score on the Corruption Perceptions Index increased to 26 points in 2024 from 23 points in 2023, advancing 14 ranks to secure the 140th position globally.

This advancement reflects the efforts of oversight bodies in Iraq, including the Federal Commission of Integrity, the Commission for Monitoring the Allocation of Federal Revenues, and the Federal Board of Supreme Audit, among others. Addi-

tionally, Iraq's accession to several international agreements has contributed to this progress, such as ratifying the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), implementing the National Strategy for Integrity and Anti-Corruption (2021–2024), and the National Strategy for Countering Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing (2023–2027). Collaborative initiatives with civil society and the private sector have further enhanced transparency, alongside the integration of youth and women into oversight activities.

Prominent corruption cases in 2024 include significant financial misconduct in various sectors. In Diyālā Governorate, authorities uncovered the embezzlement of approximately 9 billion dinars intended for compensation funds for terrorism victims in April 2024. Employees within the governorate's headquarters were implicated, with several suspects arrested and a portion of the funds recovered, while investigations continued to expose the full extent of the corruption network. Another major case, known as the "Theft of the Century," witnessed new developments, as the stolen amounts increased to more than 8 billion dollars, implicating more than 30 suspects. The Commission of Integrity succeeded in recovering some of the stolen funds, and several defendants received prison sentences, notably including Nūr Zuhayr. Additionally, the Railway Case revealed suspicions of corruption in a contract for rehabilitating railway lines, involving financial obligations up to 22.5 billion dollars and imposing binding conditions on the state, such as mortgaging Iraqi oil. The contract was characterized as an adhesion contract favoring the contracting companies, and effective measures to address corruption within this contract have yet to be implemented.

Data from the Federal Commission of Integrity indicate that the commission undertook numerous effective activities throughout the year. These activities included receiving 20,369 reports and processing them at a rate of 76.5%, investigating 23,787 criminal cases with a finalization rate of 70%, and referring certain cases to specialized courts or the Supreme Court as necessary. Additionally, the commission executed 2,071 arrest operations in flagrante delicto and detained 519 suspects, including civil servants, on charges such as bribery, embezzlement, and exceeding official duties. The commission also recovered funds exceeding 67 billion Iraqi dinars and 177,622 US dollars. Furthermore, it signed memoranda of understanding and international cooperation agreements with counter-corruption bodies in Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, China, and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). To enhance social awareness regarding corruption, the commission launched awareness programs including "Toward Integrity" and "The Path of Integrity," and published magazines and booklets aimed at children.

VIII. Education and Higher Education

The academic year 2023–2024 in Iraq experienced significant transformations and challenges at both global and local levels, particularly in the context of humanitarian crises and rapid digital advancements. UNESCO played a pivotal role through initiatives aimed at enhancing digital learning and promoting equity

in education. Iraqi educational institutions endeavored to engage with these global trends within the constraints of their available resources; nevertheless, the educational landscape in Iraq continues to face structural impediments that obstruct the attainment of necessary development.

1. Education

UNESCO's most notable publication in 2024 was a comprehensive report emphasizing the role of technology in education as a complementary tool rather than a substitute for educators, while underscoring the imperative of ensuring equitable access to digital education. The report also highlighted the importance of closing the gender gap in access to technology and digital competencies. Additionally, the Sixth International Conference on Learning Cities, convened in Saudi Arabia, advocated for cities to become active hubs of lifelong learning, especially in response to climate and economic challenges. In Iraq, preliminary efforts to adopt these concepts emerged, including limited implementation of e-learning and expansion of vocational education; however, inadequate infrastructure and a shortage of trained personnel remain significant barriers to progress.

Furthermore, the school education sector in Iraq is afflicted by numerous structural issues, including the deterioration of school facilities, scarcity of essential supplies, and inequitable distribution of educational opportunities across governorates and regions. Furthermore, curricula are characterized by rigidity and a lack of alignment with contemporary demands and labor market needs. Continuous professional development for teaching staff is insufficient or absent in many cases, and early childhood education, which forms the foundation for cognitive and intellectual development, receives inadequate attention.

2. Higher Education

Higher education in Iraq faced multiple challenges in 2024, notably limited university autonomy and a disconnect between academic programs and labor market requirements. Traditional pedagogical methods predominated despite some initiatives to introduce blended learning. Scientific research showed relative improvement, supported by increased publication in international journals; however, insufficient funding, academic brain drain, and bureaucratic obstacles continue to impede sectoral advancement. Iraqi universities persist in graduating large cohorts in disciplines misaligned with national economic needs, exacerbating youth unemployment and widening the gap between education and employment.

The report clearly indicates that education in Iraq necessitates comprehensive reforms focused on curriculum modernization, infrastructure development, qualitative training for educational personnel, and enhancement of both administrative and academic autonomy in universities. Educational policies should prioritize vocational and technical education and broaden the concept of lifelong learning to encompass all societal segments through effective partnerships with the private sector and civil society organizations. Educational reform is not a luxury but a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable economic and social development

in Iraq, requiring clear political will and long-term investment in human capital as the cornerstone and primary objective of development. The implementation of the National Strategy for Education in Iraq (2022–2031) entails the following proposals:

- The urgent allocation of necessary financial resources, coupled with effectiveness and transparency in their utilization.
- The strategy estimates a cost of 140 trillion dinars over the next decade, a substantial amount necessitating an increase in education's share of the public budget and expanded expenditure relative to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). To meet this financial requirement, the strategy outlines three primary criteria for augmenting education sector funding:
 - Increasing the education sector's share of government expenditure from 10% in 2021 to 16% in 2031.
 - Raising education spending from 11 trillion dinars in 2019 to 29 trillion dinars in 2031, equivalent to 5.6% of GDP.
 - Establishing a dedicated budget line within the state's public budget to finance the "Education Transformation Development and Rehabilitation Program," which includes the construction and rehabilitation of schools, universities, laboratories, libraries, workshops, sports facilities, and other educational infrastructure.

IX. International Relations

In 2024, Iraq navigated a complex regional landscape characterized by ongoing conflict and uncertainty. The intensified war conducted by the "Israeli" occupation entity against the Gaza Strip and Lebanon reached a critical point. In response, Iraq assumed a responsible regional role by advocating for the Palestinian people, who were subjected to genocide by this occupying entity. Iraq's support manifested through both official diplomatic channels and popular movements. Officially, Iraq condemned the continuous assaults on the Gaza Strip via regional and international institutions, issuing formal denunciations, leading diplomatic campaigns, and supporting countries and organizations that condemned these actions. Additionally, Iraq endorsed United Nations and international resolutions condemning the entity's heinous actions. Iraq was also among the first nations to provide humanitarian aid to Palestinians in Gaza, despite logistical challenges. At the popular level, protest gatherings in Baghdad and other governorates vocally opposed the genocide against Palestinians, underpinning the government's official stance.

A significant development in Iraq's relationship with the United Nations occurred when Prime Minister al-Sūdānī formally requested in May 2024 the termination of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq's (UNAMI) political mandate by the end of 2025. This request emphasized Iraq's readiness to independently manage its political and security affairs and restore full sovereignty.

Consequently, Iraq and the United Nations began reassessing the future of UNAMI's presence. The mission's termination will be gradual, maintaining operations until the end of 2025 to oversee a phased transition and manage critical issues. On July 15, 2024, UN Secretary-General António Guterres appointed the Omani diplomat Muḥammad al-Ḥassān as the new Special Representative for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, succeeding Dutch diplomat Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert. al-Ḥassān commenced his duties on October 10, 2024, engaging in key official visits and meetings with political and religious leaders in Baghdād, Najaf, and the Kurdistan Region. Notably, he met with the Supreme Religious Authority in al-Najaf al-Ashraf. His appointment reflects the UN's intent to facilitate balanced dialogue with Baghdād, addressing sensitive outstanding issues requiring skilled political management, particularly regarding the partial transition and termination of UNAMI by 2025.

Prime Minister al-Sūdānī's visit to the United States in 2024 was a pivotal diplomatic event. The visit's significance derived from its timing and agenda, as al-Sūdānī sought to redefine Iraq's relationship with the United States. Key topics included security concerns, particularly the US military presence, and economic cooperation, focusing on investment and banking sector reforms. Discussions with President Joe Biden and other officials resulted in agreements on scheduling the US military withdrawal in 2025, reshaping and redefining the US presence in Iraq. Economic talks aimed to foster cooperation, reform Iraq's banking system, and facilitate Iraq's integration into the global financial system.

Regarding Iraq's relations with its neighboring non-Arab states, Iran and Turkey, 2024 witnessed summit-level visits by both countries' leaders. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's three-day visit (April 22–24, 2024) marked his first official visit to Iraq in nearly 13 years. The visit culminated in signing over 20 memoranda of understanding covering security, defense, water, transportation, and trade. Despite this diplomatic progress, operational challenges remain due to sensitive issues such as the relationship between Iraq's federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, and cross-border matters like water rights requiring long-term legal and technical solutions. Erdoğan's visit aimed to recalibrate relations with Baghdād, leverage Iraq as a trade corridor to the Gulf, seek cooperation against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), resolve political differences delaying various files, attract investments, address oil export issues via Kurdistan, and mitigate the water crisis exacerbated by drought and Turkish projects in the Euphrates and Tigris basins.

The most notable development in Iraqi-Iranian relations in 2024 was Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's three-day visit (September 11–13, 2024), his first foreign trip after assuming office. The visit sought to strengthen political, economic, and cultural ties, resulting in several memoranda of understanding and agreements. Iran aimed to maintain and deepen coordination with Baghdād, enhance economic cooperation, and underscore religious and sectarian bonds. President Pezeshkian met with Iraq's political leadership, including President 'Abd-al-Laṭīf Rashīd and Prime Minister al-Sūdānī. His itinerary included Baghdād,

Najaf, and the Kurdistan Region. This visit was significant given the ongoing war waged by the “Israeli” occupation entity on multiple regional fronts, with Iran as a key front. The visit had symbolic importance in reinforcing religious and historical ties and practical significance in activating agreements to benefit both nations, reaffirming Tehran’s traditional relations with Baghdād across multiple sectors.

Regarding Iraq’s relations with the Gulf states, these relations experienced significant developments in 2024, representing a notable advancement toward reintegrating Iraq into the Gulf’s sphere of influence. Iraqi-Saudi relations demonstrated practical and observable progress across multiple domains in 2024. On August 4, 2024, a delegation from the Iraqi Ministry of Trade visited Saudi Arabia to study the Kingdom’s digital transformation initiatives and to establish cooperative frameworks in this area. Subsequently, on November 4, 2024, Saudi Minister of Defense Khālid bin Salmān met with his Iraqi counterpart, Thābit al-‘Abbāsī, in Riyadh, where they signed a “Military Memorandum of Understanding.” This agreement underscored both parties’ commitment to security solidarity, particularly amid regional tensions, and was regarded as a pivotal moment in military cooperation between the two nations. Furthermore, on November 19, 2024, the Iraqi-Saudi Coordination Council convened to deliberate on various topics aimed at enhancing cooperation across diverse sectors. The council agreed to continue collaboration and to develop implementation mechanisms in line with prior agreements. Economic cooperation also advanced, as evidenced by the increase in bilateral trade volume to 1.3 billion dollars.

Despite enduring contentious issues impeding the progression of Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations (especially those concerning maritime border demarcation, missing persons, 1990 property claims, among others) 2024 witnessed tangible efforts to bolster diplomatic cooperation. These efforts included official visits, ministerial meetings, and high-level engagements aimed at improving bilateral relations. Notably, Iraqi Foreign Minister Fu’ād Ḥusayn met with Kuwaiti officials to reaffirm ongoing dialogue and coordinate channels of cooperation. During the final quarter of 2024, communication persisted between the foreign ministries through Iraqi-Kuwaiti technical-legal committees addressing various matters. This development signaled Kuwait’s unwillingness to maintain a boycott or fully freeze relations with Iraq. Conversely, Iraq consistently expressed readiness to cooperate, contingent upon the preservation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity, particularly in light of challenges stemming from actions of its former regime.

Iraqi-Emirati relations exhibited remarkable progress in 2024, particularly within diplomatic spheres and high-level visits. Iraqi President ‘Abd-al-Laṭīf Rashīd met with UAE President Sheikh Muḥammad bin Zāyid Āl-Nahyān in Abu Dhabi to discuss strengthening bilateral relations and fostering cooperation in economic, investment, developmental, and renewable energy sectors. A significant development was observed in economic and commercial exchanges, with trade volume increasing from 28.3 billion dollars in 2023 to 39.3 billion dollars in 2024, reflecting a 38.6% growth. Cooperation extended to other domains, including education,

indicating the UAE's aspiration to be a primary partner in Iraq's multifaceted projects, while Iraq sought to leverage the UAE's expertise and investments to advance its economy and educational institutions.

Iraqi-Qatari relations progressed along an enhanced trajectory in 2024. From July 7 to 8, 2024, the Joint Economic, Commercial, and Technical Committee convened its seventh session in Baghdad after a nearly six-year hiatus. Representatives from both countries endorsed the committee's report and discussed strategies to enhance economic and investment relations, improve the investment climate, and facilitate Qatar's participation in the Development Road project. In December 2024, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Fu'ād Ḥusayn visited Doha to participate in the 2024 Doha Forum, engaging in meetings to discuss bilateral relations and deepen partnerships, particularly in developmental fields. Discussions also encompassed regional security, with Qatar playing a mediatory role among conflicting parties. Additionally, Qatar inaugurated a consulate in Erbil Governorate, signaling an expansion of investment interests to include the Kurdistan Region. Cultural and media cooperation also emerged as key areas of collaboration, exemplified by participation in cultural events and the establishment of media partnerships. Strengthening ties with Qatar represents a strategic advancement for Iraq, enhancing its regional standing and leveraging Qatar's extensive relations with influential global powers to foster balanced connections with significant regional and international actors.

Iraqi-Omani relations experienced clear advancements across various domains in 2024. In October 2024, Oman granted visa exemptions to members of the Iraqi national team delegation and Iraqi fans attending a sporting event. Politically and diplomatically, the ninth session of the Joint Omani-Iraqi Committee convened in Baghdad in December 2024, chaired by Iraqi Foreign Minister Fu'ād Ḥusayn and Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Būsa'īdī. During this session, two memoranda of understanding were signed: one concerning political consultations and the other between the Iraqi Foreign Service Institute and its Omani counterpart. These agreements reflect both countries' commitment to deepening diplomatic cooperation and enhancing collaboration in economic, commercial, cultural, academic, and scientific fields. Future orientations indicate continued development of bilateral relations through mutual visits, new agreements, and expanded cooperation across multiple sectors. These initiatives affirm the dedication of both nations to cultivating a strategic partnership that serves their shared interests and promotes regional stability and development.

The collapse of the Syrian regime led by Bashshār al-Asad at the end of 2024 constituted the most prominent concern for Iraq regarding the regional challenges along its borders. Nevertheless, Iraq regarded the new situation in Syria as a *fait accompli* that required containment, and it worked to mitigate the negative impacts on its security and stability. Consequently, in late December 2024, Iraq dispatched the head of its Intelligence Service, Ḥamīd al-Shaṭrī, to Damascus to meet with the new Syrian President, Aḥmad al-Shara' (formerly known as al-Jawlānī). This initiative aimed to alleviate anxieties at both political and popular

levels, particularly concerning border security, the prevention of terrorist infiltration, and the protection of holy sites in Syria, especially those significant to Shia communities. Although this Iraqi initiative sparked controversy within political and popular circles, ensuring the absence of security threats arising from the ongoing changes in Syria remains in Iraq's best interest. While the year 2024 did not fully reveal the nature of the relationship between Iraq and the "new" Syria, the observable dynamics indicated caution, selective cooperation, and efforts by both countries to collaborate amid domestic and regional challenges. Ultimately, the development of bilateral relations will depend on the ability of their respective governments to overcome past differences and establish a genuine partnership grounded in mutual interests.

Iraq's continued openness to international powers was a defining characteristic of its foreign relations in 2024. The country intensified efforts to deepen its engagement with global powers, aiming to reestablish itself within their spheres of interest. The relationship between Iraq and the United States has held significant importance throughout the history of the Iraqi state. This importance increased following the 2003 overthrow of the Ba'athist regime by the United States and the United Kingdom, which led to the installation of a new government. Consequently, a new phase in Iraqi-American relations commenced, persisting to the present day through various developments and stages that have shaped the current dynamics between the two nations.

The issue of the US military presence in Iraq was the primary factor influencing bilateral relations in 2024. Iraqi diplomacy actively engaged in continuous rounds of dialogue with Washington, known as the "Strategic Dialogue." These discussions resulted in mutual agreements to develop a memorandum of understanding and establish a "Higher Military Commission" tasked with evaluating the transition of US forces from direct combat roles to advisory or similar capacities. Both parties agreed on a bilateral plan to conclude the Coalition's military mission in Iraq by September 2025. This plan includes an initial withdrawal of hundreds of troops, while the remaining forces will continue to operate in advisory and logistical roles to support military operations in Iraq and Syria until the end of 2026.

On July 22–23, 2024, the second meeting of the "Joint Security Cooperation Dialogue" took place in Washington, DC. The Iraqi delegation was led by Minister of Defense Thābit al-'Abbāsī, while the US delegation was headed by Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, accompanied by representatives from the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, US Central Command, the Department of State, and the National Security Council staff. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to security cooperation, mutual interests, and regional stability. The meeting focused on determining the timeline and process for concluding the US-led International Coalition's mission in Iraq and transitioning toward a sustained bilateral security partnership.

Despite these developments, the presence of US and other foreign forces on Iraqi soil remains a contentious issue in political and public discourse. Iraq asserts that such presence undermines its sovereignty, emphasizing the importance of

developing trained local capabilities as the primary guarantor of national security. Achieving a practical and sustainable balance necessitates transparent agreements, emergency response mechanisms, and a concerted effort to enhance Iraqi capabilities to reduce dependence on external support.

In 2024, cooperation between Iraq and the United Kingdom in combating cross-border crimes significantly defined the bilateral relations between the two nations. On November 28, 2024, both countries formalized agreements and established security understandings based on the principle of partnership between the two countries. This initiative aimed to enhance cooperation networks in addressing organized cross-border crime by leveraging funding mechanisms and specific programs provided by British law enforcement agencies and other international bodies. The partnership encompassed multiple practical cooperation domains, including combating human smuggling and trafficking, addressing narcotics in all forms, and expanding local capacity-building programs. This collaboration represents a critical practical advancement in combating cross-border crimes, characterized by dimensions of funding, training, and intelligence. However, the success of this cooperation hinges on the establishment of clear human rights frameworks, the activation of effective intelligence channels, and the development of sustainable local capabilities within Iraqi law enforcement agencies.

Iraq's cooperation with the European Union in 2024 continued the partnership initiated in 2003, with the European Union emerging as a primary international donor in humanitarian and service aid, security sector reforms, and development. This cooperation operates within a multifaceted partnership framework, which includes:

- **Institutional and Political Framework:** In 2024, high-level diplomatic initiatives were undertaken through bilateral meetings between the Iraqi Prime Minister and European leaders during the Davos Forum in January 2024, focusing on enhancing economic and military cooperation and contracts with European companies across various sectors.
- **Continued Military and Security Cooperation:** This was realized through the ongoing advisory efforts of the European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM), which provides strategic advice for reforming Iraq's civilian security sector.
- **Trade and Economic Cooperation:** Trade exchanges in 2024 experienced significant growth, with total trade in goods between the European Union and Iraq reaching 22.295 billion.
- **Aid, Reconstruction, and Development.**
- **Cooperation in Migration, Asylum, and Humanitarian Policies:** In 2024, the European Union issued unified directives on this critical issue, adopted by the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). In November 2024, the EUAA released a document containing a comprehensive analysis of the security and humanitarian situation, including the positions of various groups (journalists, activists, minorities, among others) based on

specific files reviewed by Iraq and utilized by EU countries when assessing applications.

Overall, 2024 marked a gradual development in Iraq-European Union relations, particularly as Iraqi decision-makers recognized the European Union's balanced role in developmental and political support alongside technical partnerships in the energy sector. Iraq continues to seek the translation of this cooperation into sustainable and comprehensive growth through internal reforms and improvements in the investment environment.

Iraq remains a significant partner for Russian political decision-makers, who acknowledge the importance of strengthening relations with Iraq across all fronts, especially in energy. The year 2024 witnessed a qualitative advancement in Russian-Iraqi relations, coinciding with the 80th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries (1944–2024). Four primary dimensions characterized Iraq-Russian relations in 2024:

- **Political and Diplomatic Dimension:** On September 12, 2024, the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted an official celebration commemorating 80 years of Iraqi-Russian relations, attended by the Russian Ambassador and Iraqi officials.
- **Economic and Investment Cooperation:** This was evident in substantial Russian investments in the energy sector, particularly oil and gas.
- **Security and Military Cooperation:** Official statements indicated ongoing development in military-technical cooperation between Moscow and Baghdad.
- **Cultural and Media Cooperation:** This cooperation was highlighted within the framework of events held at the Kazan Forum.

X. Environment

This report examines the issue of pollution in Iraq by analyzing the primary causes contributing to this phenomenon, including drought, historical conflicts, industrial waste, and inadequate practices at both private and public levels. It further explores the social, legal, and environmental dimensions associated with these causes. The human role in disrupting the global ecological balance is emphasized, particularly how industrial activities have exacerbated environmental burdens by increasing greenhouse gas emissions, accelerating water evaporation, and triggering heatwaves and forest fires under hot and arid conditions.

One of the most significant impacts of climate change in Iraq is the observed rise in temperatures over recent years, which has adversely affected water resources and devastated agricultural crops. This situation is exacerbated by the scarcity of water resources, as Iraq receives less than half of its annual share from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Consequently, numerous regions, including the Marshes, have experienced desiccation, and the frequency of sand and dust

storms has increased substantially compared to previous decades. Regarding agriculture and food security, climate change has resulted in reduced cultivated areas and diminished crop yields, compelling many farmers to migrate or cultivate smaller land parcels due to severe climatic conditions.

Air pollution constitutes one of the most critical environmental challenges facing Iraq, driven by the proliferation of automobiles, private electricity generators, industrial emissions, and unregulated waste burning. The intensification of dust storms is attributed to desertification, loss of vegetative cover, and soil degradation, all of which negatively impact human health, flora, and fauna. Water resources have also suffered from pollution caused by water scarcity, drought, and the discharge of industrial waste, medical waste, and untreated sewage into rivers, leading to elevated salinity and chemical contamination. Addressing this crisis necessitates the implementation of optimal water management strategies, the construction of treatment facilities, rigorous monitoring of industrial activities, and the promotion of public awareness and education.

Moreover, this chapter dedicates considerable attention to the issue of associated gas flaring in Iraq, which represents a prominent environmental and economic challenge. The continued flaring of gas, rather than its utilization, results in environmental pollution, economic loss, and adverse health effects on the population. In response, the Iraqi government has announced plans to reduce associated gas flaring beginning at the end of 2024 and continuing through 2028.

The report also investigates the role of environmental protection within the demands of popular and civil movements advocating for political and economic reforms. The government's response has manifested through several initiatives, notably the launch of a comprehensive six-year national strategy (2024–2030) aimed at preserving and improving the environment and combating pollution. This strategy prioritizes water protection and recycling, alongside efforts to reduce carbon emissions. While ambitious and essential, the strategy requires clear implementation mechanisms and a genuine commitment to applying these solutions effectively, supported by strong political will and social engagement to ensure sustainability.

Furthermore, the government must undertake immediate and decisive actions to combat environmental degradation. These actions include enforcing stricter environmental regulations on industries, enhancing waste management systems, investing in sustainable infrastructure, maximizing water rationing measures, raising public awareness about environmental conservation, investing in clean energy, and amending and enacting specialized legislation to address climate change.

2. Political Process

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The political process in Iraq during 2024 largely reflects the continuation of a fragile structural framework and the traditional political dynamics that have characterized the country for over two decades following the 2003 political transition and the fall of the authoritarian regime. Nevertheless, 2024 also witnessed notable deviations from the negative trends that previously afflicted Iraq, despite the ongoing presence of corruption and political conflicts. Illustrative examples include the removal of the Speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, disputes among Sunni political factions over this position, internal conflicts within the Coordination Framework, and tensions between some factions and the Prime Minister. Additionally, regional developments, such as the al-Aqşá Flood operation and the evolving political situation in Syria, have had significant repercussions.

Despite relative political stability in 2024, attributed to the withdrawal of certain local actors from the political process following the post-election period of October 10, 2021, the year may be regarded as a precursor to a politically volatile phase susceptible to multiple scenarios. This volatility stems from both internal and external factors. Internally, many structural issues remain unresolved. Externally, events following the al-Aqşá Flood operation on October 7, 2023, have begun to influence Iraq, particularly through the perceived retreat of the "Axis of Resistance." This development impacts the ruling forces, predominantly Shi'i factions affiliated with this axis, amid a resurgence of political actors from other components.

Documenting the political developments in Iraq is crucial as it sets the stage for anticipated political and security dynamics in 2025. These include parliamentary elections and the ensuing competition among political blocs, characterized by various forms of conflict such as character assassination and the use of aggressive tactics in the contest for legislative, executive, and security positions. Key positions of interest include the Prime Minister, deputy ministers, and senior officials.

This analysis addresses these themes and others (such as performance evaluation, the outcomes of elections in the Kurdistan Region, the governorate council elections experience, and the assessment of governors' performance) while attempting to outline the agendas and prospective developments for 2025.

I. al-Sudānī Government: Disputes and Achievements

The Coordination Framework is an alliance of traditional Shi'i political forces, including the State of Law Coalition led by Nūrī al-Mālikī; the al-Faṭḥ Alliance led by Hādī al-Āmirī; the 'Aṭā' Movement led by Fāliḥ al-Fayyāḍ; the 'Aṣā'ib Ahl al-Ḥaqq Movement led by Shaykh Qays al-Khaz'alī; the Ḥuquq Movement led by Ḥusayn Mu'nīs; representatives of the al-Faḍīlah Party; and the National State Forces Alliance led by Sayyid 'Ammār al-Ḥakīm and Ḥaydar al-'Abādī.

This bloc emerged after the October 2021 elections as a counterforce to the Sadrist Movement's project advocating national majority rule. Although it professes principles of partnership and consensus in governance, it comprises diverse backgrounds, agendas, and political objectives. Following the Sadrist Movement's withdrawal from the political process in October 2022 and the formation of a new government led by Muḥammad Shiyā' al-Sudānī under the Coordination Framework, internal disputes surfaced, challenging the bloc's cohesion on two fronts: intra-framework conflicts, and opposition toward Prime Minister al-Sudānī's political ambitions (al-Baghdādī, 2024). Consequently, the Coordination Framework can be categorized into several orientations:

1. al-Sudānī axis and its supporters, including al-Ḥakīm, al-'Abādī, and Aḥmad al-Asadī.
2. al-Mālikī axis, which holds the largest number of electoral seats.
3. The axis led by Shaykh Qays al-Khaz'alī and his allies, who seek to expand influence in southern governorates of Iraq, as well as in Nīnawā, Diyālā, and Ṣalāḥ-al-Dīn.

Other forces oscillate between these orientations based on their political inclinations and influence. While the al-Sudānī government confronts numerous security, political, and economic challenges, it enjoys considerable support from Sunni and Kurdish blocs. However, this support is met with skepticism and hesitation from certain factions within the Coordination Framework, the government's primary base.

To elucidate the internal disputes within the Coordination Framework and their implications for the al-Sudānī government, several conflict cases that have threatened the government at various junctures are examined. Among these is the Coordination Framework's attempt to besiege al-Sudānī. Supporters of the Prime Minister contend that the campaigns against him aimed to diminish his prospects in the parliamentary elections scheduled for late 2025. These campaigns included the "Theft of the Century" case and the "wiretapping scandal and leaked recordings" amid intense media rivalry among political adversaries. The judiciary has yet to announce the outcomes of its comprehensive investigations into these matters.

1. The Escape of the Convict in the "Theft of the Century" Case

Nūr Zuhayr, the principal convict in the "Theft of the Century" case, escaped Iraq during the initial months of al-Sudānī's premiership, citing legal justifications

and political pressures, with assurances of returning to complete investigations and retribute the stolen funds to the Iraqi government. Intense political, media, and public pressures were marshaled to level allegations of complicity against al-Sudānī's government with Nūr Zuhayr and his network (Fākhir, 2024), especially after judicial summons and orders for his surrender were issued, culminating in his escape via a contrived route from Beirut to an unknown destination. This incident provoked widespread public outrage, perceived as government complicity in the largest theft in contemporary Iraq.

Simultaneously, factions within the Coordination Framework sought to exploit this issue to undermine al-Sudānī by mobilizing public discontent as part of the power struggle. However, as internal and external crises accumulated, the repercussions of Nūr Zuhayr's escape diminished in media, public discourse, and political arenas, partly due to concerns that the fallout could implicate not only the al-Sudānī government but also multiple political parties. Consequently, accountability measures, including parliamentary interpellations and judicial proceedings, were not pursued.

2. The Wiretapping Crisis

The wiretapping case implicating the office of Prime Minister al-Sudānī emerged following the dissemination of information concerning leaks involving numerous high-ranking officials in Iraq, including politicians, ministers, consultants, and clerics. Judicial authorities initiated investigations on Muḥammad Jūhī, the head of the wiretapping network and an employee in the communications technology department at the Prime Minister's office. Jūhī's team reportedly operated in multiple locations (al-Bāsim, 2024).

Simultaneously, Yazan Mish'ān al-Jubūrī, a consultant to the Prime Minister, was released after his arrest linked to an audio leak wherein he discussed commissions and financial transactions in exchange for facilitating government signatures for a contractor. Additionally, an audio recording attributed to Sāmī al-Sudānī, a relative of the Prime Minister and consultant for transport and customs affairs, was leaked. This recording revealed the unauthorized entry of medicines through the Port of Umm-Qaṣr without audit, despite violations, in exchange for financial remuneration (BBC, 2024, November 29).

Mustafa Sanad, a member of the Iraqi Parliament affiliated with the State of Law Coalition, asserted that individuals involved in the wiretapping network were employees and associates of Prime Minister Muḥammad al-Sudānī. These included Ḥaydar Layth al-Sudānī, Director of the Eavesdropping Directorate in the Intelligence Service; Ḥaydar Shiyā' al-Sudānī, the Prime Minister's brother; and 'Abd-al-Karīm al-Sudānī, the Prime Minister's military secretary, among others (Raysān, 2024).

Consequently, a leading figure of the Coordination Framework and head of the State of Law Coalition filed a complaint against al-Sudānī in his capacity as Prime Minister, seeking personal redress on the grounds that the network operated from within the Prime Minister's office and had reached unacceptable levels.

Political analysts suggest that the espionage case served primarily as a pretext for factions aiming to obstruct al-Sudānī's rise and prevent the establishment of a rival power center, particularly if he were to secure a second term in the forthcoming elections (al-'Arab, 2024, September 23).

MP Ḥusayn Mu'nīs, head of the Ḥuquq Movement representing Kata'ib Ḥizbullāh, characterized the espionage against officials as a grave violation of the rule of law and described the case as a scandal. He called upon Parliament and relevant authorities to assume a clear role and voice in the matter, noting that the Council of Representatives awaited judicial proceedings and that several MPs had lodged complaints against the accused, Muḥammad Jūḥī. The political bureau of the Ṣādiqūn Movement, affiliated with al-Khaz'alī, stated that the leaders of the Framework had entrusted the espionage file to the judiciary, which continued its investigations, summonses, and arrests of those involved. They emphasized that no compromise or leniency would be granted due to the gravity of the matter, which extended to wiretapping the household of the Marja'iyah (Shi'i religious authority) as well as prominent figures and families (al-'Arab, 2024, September 23).

This case, alongside the "Theft of the Century" scandal, nearly overthrew al-Sudānī's government, were it not for the acceleration of regional events following the al-Aqṣā Flood operation and concerns regarding their repercussions within Iraq. Reports indicate that de-escalation between Prime Minister al-Sudānī and Coordination Framework leaders seeking to dismiss his government was facilitated by Iranian mediation. The existing disputes within the Framework are significant and complex, expected to intensify as parliamentary elections approach, renewing conflicts over power and influence among the "warring brothers" (al-'Arab, 2024, September 23).

Consequently, the parties reluctantly entered a phase of calm intended to temporarily avert the government's collapse, despite calls for its resignation. During this period, the Prime Minister visited Qays al-Khaz'alī, leader of the 'Aṣā'ib Ahl al-Ḥaqq Movement, and Hādī al-'Āmirī, leader of the Badr Organization. Both had temporarily aligned with former Prime Minister Nūrī al-Mālikī, head of the State of Law Coalition, who had initiated efforts to dismiss the government before the completion of its term, despite having been a primary actor in its formation through the Coordination Framework, an entity credited to al-Mālikī himself (Raysān, 2024). The three leaders' opposition to al-Sudānī stemmed from the targeting of MPs and officials within their parties and factions by the wiretapping operation. Therefore, they formed a front with certain leaders in the Popular Mobilization Editorial Board, opposing a minority of Coordination Framework leaders who supported al-Sudānī, represented by former Prime Minister Ḥaydar al-'Abādī and Sayyid 'Ammār al-Ḥakīm, head of the al-Ḥikmah Movement (al-'Arab, 2024, September 23).

Political sources reported that al-Sudānī's visits to the three Framework leaders culminated in a consensus to halt escalation regarding the espionage case and defer its resolution to the judiciary. This followed the Prime Minister attributing responsibility for the operation to specific parties within the Intelligence Service,

denying any personal involvement, and pledging non-recurrence (al-'Arab, 2024, September 23).

The impact of these developments was evident when al-Khaz'alī reminded, addressing the second conference of Ṣādiqūn Movement, that the al-Sudānī government represents the Coordination Framework, commending its management of various files and issues. He noted that the Prime Minister is a leader within the Framework and an active participant in its decisions; thus, the government's successes and shortcomings are attributable to the Framework, which bears responsibility for addressing any deficiencies.

In conclusion, the political disputes within the Coordination Framework in Iraq illustrate the complex challenges confronting Prime Minister al-Sudānī's government, particularly regarding internal conflicts. The wiretapping case involving politicians and MPs forms part of a broader crisis concerning the distribution of power and influence in Iraq. This crisis is expected to intensify as the next parliamentary elections approach, rendering political positions increasingly rigid and competitive.

3. The Crisis of the Statements of the Head of the Commission of Integrity

The third case employed as a political instrument among factions within the Coordination Framework concerns audio leaks attributed to Judge Ḥaydar Ḥannūn, Head of the Commission of Integrity and an associate of al-Sudānī. In 2021, Judge Ḥannūn was appointed Chief of the Maysān Appeals Court and participated in the parliamentary elections held on October 10, 2021, representing the Badr Organization led by Ḥādī al-'Āmirī. Subsequently, on November 13, 2022, he was appointed Head of the Federal Commission of Integrity by al-Sudānī. Shortly before tendering his resignation, Ḥannūn appeared at a press conference in Erbil, visibly distressed, where he accused political blocs (presumed to be factions within the Coordination Framework) of undermining his efforts. He referenced several corruption cases potentially implicating Judge Ḍiyā' Ja'far and appealed to the President of the Supreme Judicial Council to facilitate his request to testify before Parliament in a public session (al-'Ālam, 2024, September 4). Concurrently, audio recordings surfaced, suggesting that Ḥannūn and his staff exerted pressure on employees of the Real Estate Registration and Tax Directorates, threatening them with investigations into "illicit enrichment" should they refuse to assist in the seizure of land plots in al-'Amārah (al-Jibāl, 2024, September 4). The Head of the Commission of Integrity held the Iraqi Council of Representatives accountable for either substantiating claims that the commission was deferential and subordinate to corrupt figures, specifically Judge Ḍiyā' Ja'far and Nūr Zuhayr, or disproving them, while also demanding accountability regarding these cases and the whereabouts of missing funds, asserting that such matters fall within the jurisdiction of Parliament (al-'Arab, 2024, September 23).

Ḥannūn's statements at the press conference elicited a spectrum of popular and political responses. Public opinion ranged from sympathy to perceptions

that his remarks constituted a self-justification narrative. Certain parliamentary factions advocated for an emergency session of the Council of Representatives (Iraq Today, 2024, September 4). MP Ibtisām al-Hilālī asserted the necessity for the Council to convene an emergency session to deliberate on the issues raised by Ḥannūn through the media. She anticipated considerable pressure on the Commission of Integrity to close the cases involving Nūr Zuhayr and the “Theft of the Century,” and demanded that Ḥannūn appear before Parliament to disclose the underlying details of these events (al-Anwār TV 2, 2024, September 5). Conversely, Ḥusām al-Rubayī, spokesperson for the Khadamāt Alliance, criticized the Commission of Integrity Head for his attacks on the judiciary (al-Jibāl, 2024, September 4).

Regarding the judiciary, the Media Center of the Supreme Judicial Council issued a brief statement indicating that the Public Prosecutor had requested the Karkh Third Investigation Court to investigate the audio recordings attributed to the acting Head of the Commission of Integrity, Ḥaydar Ḥannūn, which allegedly involve bribery offenses. Consequently, the Iraqi judiciary announced the initiation of an inquiry into the audio recordings linked to Judge Ḥannūn (INA, 2024, September 9).

While Ḥannūn’s remarks reverberated through the country’s political circles, observers noted that they exacerbated the complexity of the “Theft of the Century” case due to overlapping information and statements concerning the case and its parties, particularly after the defendant, Zuhayr, failed to appear for trial and an arrest warrant was issued. Some commentators argued that Judge Ḥannūn’s case should be viewed within the context of political conflicts among Coordination Framework factions. Ibrāhīm al-Ṣumaydaī, al-Sudānī’s advisor, highlighted that two of three arrests occurred without al-Sudānī’s knowledge within the scope of the “wiretapping network” investigation. He confirmed that the Prime Minister’s office had requested Muḥammad Jūhī to surrender to the authorities and arrested a photographer affiliated with former Prime Minister al-Mālikī. al-Ṣumaydaī characterized Ḥannūn’s actions as a misstep that al-Sudānī would not have sanctioned (964 Media, 2024, September 4), while other perspectives suggested that al-Sudānī simultaneously obstructed efforts to hold Ḥaydar Ḥannūn accountable (Baghdād Today, 2024, October 22).

4. al-Sudānī’s Alliance with Independent Governors

The fourth manifestation of the conflict between the Coordination Framework forces and al-Sudānī was marked by his appearance alongside three southern governors in a photograph following the conclusion of the Arbaʿīnīyah pilgrimage in Karbalāʾ in 2024. This event reignited debates concerning future political alliances and underscored the covert struggle persisting for months within the Coordination Framework, as well as the internal dynamics among its constituents within the Iraqi social mosaic, which includes influential Sunni and Kurdish blocs. It is plausible that al-Sudānī initiated preparations for his electoral map early, subsequent to the announcement of the governorate council election results.

This map reportedly includes the governors of al-Baṣrah, Wāsiṭ, and Karbalā', who independently secured the majority of seats in local governments, apart from the Coordination Framework forces. Additionally, al-Sudānī aims to incorporate approximately 40 members of the current Parliament, alongside emerging political, youth, and tribal leaderships. This early maneuver served as a warning to the Coordination Framework forces and other competing entities.

In analyzing the repercussions of this appearance, researcher Mukhallad Ḥāzīm posits that one perspective suggests al-Sudānī may have distanced himself from the Coordination Framework umbrella, raising concerns about his potential to attract a substantial constituency (al-Baghdādī, 2024). In reality, this alliance (sometimes interpreted as a strategic move within an Iraqi context where political groups wield significant security and economic influence) did not yield successful outcomes on multiple levels. Based on the foregoing, the forms of conflict can be summarized as follows:

- The attempted alliance between al-Sudānī and the three governors was perceived by other Coordination Framework forces, particularly Nūrī al-Mālikī and Hādī al-'Āmirī, as an effort to fracture the Framework's ranks and as government support favoring one political force over another (al-'Arab, 2024, September 23).
- There exists a disparity in support for the al-Sudānī government and a call for early elections by the State of Law Coalition, led by al-Mālikī. Prior to the eruption of disputes, reports indicated that prominent Coordination Framework leaders, spearheaded by the State of Law Coalition, expressed dissatisfaction with the Prime Minister's unilateral decision-making and policy adoption without consultation, which contravened their wills and orientations.
- The relationship with Sunni blocs concerning the election of a new Speaker of Parliament and the passage of contentious laws, including the General Amnesty Law for prisoners, the Personal Status Law, and the State Real Estate Law.
- The dispute with Kurdish forces, notably the Kurdistan Democratic Party led by Mas'ūd Bārzanī, and with the Kurdistan Region more broadly, regarding employee salaries, the Peshmerga forces, and the exportation of the region's oil.
- The relationship between the government and armed factions concerning the presence of United States forces and military bases (al-'Arab, 2024, September 23).

In conclusion, the initiation of crises between al-Sudānī and certain Coordination Framework forces occurs within two contexts: first, the intensifying electoral competition between some Shi'i Coordination Framework forces and al-Sudānī, who seeks to establish an electoral front comprising successful local governors, parliamentarians, and tribal leaders; second, a jurisdictional conflict between the

government and the judiciary, alongside the al-Sudānī administration's management of sensitive legal files.

Following the cessation of political harmony among the Coordination Framework forces that formed the government of al-Sudānī since October 2022, the Iraqi political landscape is witnessing unprecedented confrontations, including “wiretapping” operations by government agencies targeting politicians. These developments are accompanied by corruption allegations, some inherited from previous periods and others newly emerged, as well as confrontations between the judiciary and the al-Sudānī government. The government faces challenging scenarios: the least detrimental would involve comprehensive containment of the escalating confrontation through compromises among all parties, enabling the current government to maintain stability for its remaining term. The most severe scenario would entail al-Sudānī's dismissal, resignation, or entanglement in legal cases that could undermine his electoral project, which he has actively pursued in recent months and which appears to have contributed to the escalation.

It is probable that political forces, in the absence of the Sadrist Movement, a major political actor, will succeed in containing the current contentious atmosphere and the issues raised by either mutual concessions or by revealing more extensive and perilous files than those previously disclosed. Nonetheless, the residual effects of this crisis are expected to weaken the current government, while forthcoming elections will necessitate a new political deal to form a new government (Emirates Policy Center, 2024).

Future Scenarios

The future trajectory of this relationship can be elucidated by outlining several potential scenarios, as detailed below:

Scenario One: The Dismissal or Resignation of al-Sudānī and the Advancement of Early Elections

This scenario hinges on the nearly daily developments concerning wiretapping allegations and reciprocal corruption accusations, alongside political and popular pressures. Nevertheless, it remains an improbable outcome for various reasons, including the acute regional crisis and the risks associated with a governmental vacuum in Iraq. Such a vacuum could have adverse repercussions during the current fragile equilibrium, as both the United States administration and Iran, in addition to the regional and international milieu, necessitate an Iraqi government with which to engage or through which to convey mutual communications. Consequently, this scenario is unlikely to materialize, as it would inflict damage on the Coordination Framework forces prior to affecting al-Sudānī himself. This concern is heightened by the acceptance al-Sudānī has maintained throughout his tenure (Emirates Policy Center, 2024), as well as the presence of rivals with significant acceptability and grassroots support, such as the Sadrist Movement and certain civil factions.

Coordination Framework meetings may serve as a potential avenue for resolving the crisis between al-Sudānī and the judiciary on one side, and between him and

certain Framework leaders, most notably al-Mālikī and al-‘Āmirī, on the other. The possibility of resetting the cases remains viable, either through legal means or by restoring the trust that has been severely undermined among the involved parties. Similarly, with the elections approximately one year away, each entity is preparing its political and propaganda strategies (Emirates Policy Center, 2024).

Scenario Two: Reaching a Settlement for De-escalation and Undermining al-Sudānī

The Iraqi political experience since 2003, coupled with the manner in which the primary internal and external power centers have managed the political process in Iraq, supports the plausibility of this scenario. This approach would prevent the crisis from escalating, whether among political forces or between the government and judiciary, to a critical breaking point. Instead, it would involve presenting certain government officials to the judiciary, dismissing them, or altering some secondary judicial positions. The core of the anticipated containment strategy is to impose a more defined pattern of political conduct on al-Sudānī's faction during the election preparation phase. This would pave the way in the forthcoming months to diminish his electoral prospects and embroil him in multiple cases that cast doubt on his entire governmental tenure, thereby reducing his electoral base to its minimal extent (Emirates Policy Center, 2024). This moment of confrontation is considered, within the Iraqi political context, a “point of no return” for the head of government. Every prime minister since 2003 has reached this juncture at some stage, irrespective of their parliamentary strength (Nūrī al-Mālikī), popularity (Ḥaydar al-‘Abādī), proximity to Iran (‘Ādil ‘Abd-al-Mahdī), or international relations (Muṣṭafā al-Kāzimī).

Position of the State Administration Coalition Forces Toward the Performance of the al-Sudānī Government

The State Administration Coalition constitutes an Iraqi parliamentary alliance comprising the Coordination Framework, prominent Sunni factions, and the two Kurdish parties. Established on September 25, 2022, following the withdrawal of the Sadrist Bloc MPs from the Iraqi Council of Representatives, it served as a precursor to the formation of a delayed Iraqi government, occurring one year after the parliamentary elections held on October 10, 2021. Representing a parliamentary majority, the coalition encompasses all major parliamentary blocs, with opposition limited to a few independent MPs. The State Administration Coalition government was formed on October 27, 2022, under the leadership of Muḥammad Shiyā’ al-Sudānī, commanding approximately 270 MPs. The Coordination Framework had to convince Sunni and Kurdish blocs to enter into a parliamentary alliance with them; these blocs agreed, provided their participation was contingent upon the following demands:

1. Sunni Conditions

- The withdrawal of Popular Mobilization Forces from Sunni governorates, to be replaced by local police forces, alongside the recruitment of local residents into security services. Although this condition was included in

the memorandum of understanding, it remains unfulfilled despite recent internal and external pressures.

- Addressing the issue of displaced persons, particularly concerning the “Jurf al-Naṣr” (formerly Jurf al-Ṣakhr) area in Bābil Governorate, with the aim of facilitating the return of approximately 80,000 displaced individuals who left eight years prior. This demand was incorporated into the government program but remains unmet despite pressures from Sunni blocs.
- The abolition of the Accountability and Justice Commission, resolution of specific cases, and referral of matters to the judiciary.
- The repeal of Article 4 of the Counter-Terrorism Law and the release of innocent detainees. On January 9, 2023, coalition members, including Muthannā al-Sāmarrāī, convened their seventh meeting, emphasizing the necessity for relevant authorities to execute death sentences in cases where judgments have reached finality.

2. Kurdish Conditions

- Resolution of the oil and gas issue through the expedited legislation of the Oil and Gas Law.
- Non-compliance with the Federal Court’s decision mandating the transfer of regional oil to Baghdād, a matter that continues to be contentious.
- The activation of Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution concerning Kirkuk Governorate and disputed territories, including the reconstitution of the Higher Committee responsible for implementing this article, which has been stalled since 2014.

Since the establishment of the al-Sudānī government, multiple disputes have arisen among the State Administration Coalition forces regarding perceived breaches of agreements and understandings reached during al-Sudānī’s appointment. Consequently, divergent interpretations have emerged concerning the coalition’s future and the implications of its potential dissolution on the government and political process. Shaykh Ḥaydar al-Lāmī, a leader within the coalition, dismissed assertions that internal conflicts would destabilize the government, noting that such challenges have persisted since the coalition’s inception and that political agreements continue to guide their trajectory (al-Ma’lūmah, 2024).

During a coalition meeting, Khamīs al-Khanjar, leader of the ‘Azm Alliance, presented the political agreement document, criticizing the failure to implement demands related to the Sunni component and cautioning against further delays. al-Khanjar, who resigned from the al-Siyādah Alliance following his inclusion in the Accountability and Justice case, affirmed that the signed demands encompassed amendments to the General Amnesty Law to ensure the release of innocent individuals (al-Sūmarīyah, 2024, November 9).

Moreover, the Iraqi Supreme Federal Court’s decision to suspend fund transfers to the Kurdistan Region posed a threat to the coalition’s stability, eliciting

sharp criticism from Erbil, which characterized the decision as a threat to the nation's political process. While the preceding government under Muṣṭafá al-Kāzīmī had transferred several installments in 2021 and 2022, the al-Sudānī government announced the dispatch of 400 billion dinars in December 2024. The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) maintains that the government formation agreement included provisions for continued funding. Mas'ūd Bārzānī, KDP's leader, expressed regret over what he described as another "hostile stance" by the Federal Court, asserting that securing financial entitlements for the region constitutes a legitimate right and forms part of the political agreement. The Kurdistan Regional Government, led by Masrūr Bārzānī, urged the federal government to resist the court's decision and fulfill its commitments regarding fund transfers (al-Ḥurrah, 2023, January 26).

Coordination Framework leaders, including Shaykh Qays al-Khaz'alī, commended the Federal Court's rulings and underscored the importance of adherence to judicial decisions. al-Khaz'alī emphasized that constitutional compliance is essential for political stability, advising against tension and precipitous actions. According to the Iraqi Constitution, the Kurdistan Regional Government is entitled to a portion of the national budget; however, this arrangement collapsed in 2014 when Kurdish forces seized major oil fields in Kirkuk from ISIS and commenced independent oil sales. 'Adnān al-Sarrāj advocated for a more measured approach to the issue, cautioning that attacks on the judiciary exacerbate the crisis (al-Ḥurrah, 2023, January 26).

Political analyst Najm al-Qaṣṣāb posited that the Federal Court's decision would likely impact the coalition and pre-government agreements, contending that negotiations between Baghdād and Erbil represent the optimal resolution (al-Ḥurrah, 2023, January 26). Muṣṭafá al-Gar'āwī, a Member of Parliament and Finance Committee member, stressed the binding nature of judicial decisions and warned that politicizing the judiciary would precipitate chaos (Rudaw, 2023, January 29).

'Alī al-Ghānimī, a former MP, observed that Kurdish demands often intensify prior to budget approvals, contributing to political tension (Rudaw, 2023, January 29). Ḥasan al-Jubūrī of the Siyādah Alliance reiterated that Sunni participation was contingent upon demands including "the General Amnesty, abolition of the Accountability and Justice Commission, return of displaced persons to Jurf al-Ṣakhr and other areas, and removal of armed groups from liberated cities" (al-'Arabī al-Jadīd, 2023, April 12). MP Muthanná Amīn called for the formal incorporation of the 2023 agreements into the general budget, urging that disputes between the federal government and the region be addressed with an open mind prioritizing the welfare of the people over oil company interests (al-'Arabī al-Jadīd, 2023, April 12).

II. al-Sudānī Government: Achievements and Challenges

Since assuming office as Prime Minister of Iraq in October 2022, al-Sudānī has encountered numerous challenges and opportunities. He took office amid political instability and significant social and economic tensions, endeavoring to present a series of achievements aimed at enhancing his governmental leadership. Although progress on the reforms outlined in his government program has been inconsistent, as documented in previous analyses (ʿAbd-Allāh & Shabīb, 2023), several areas have demonstrated relative advancement.

1. Restoration of Political Stability

Upon al-Sudānī's accession, Iraq was experiencing a severe political crisis characterized by prolonged popular protests and difficulties in establishing a stable government. Nevertheless, al-Sudānī succeeded in forming a consensus government encompassing all major political factions except the Sadrist Movement, which had secured the highest number of seats in the elections and advocated for a "national majority government." A significant achievement was the improvement of relations between the federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, culminating in negotiated agreements on oil resource sharing that alleviated longstanding tensions between Baghdād and Erbil.

2. Anti-Corruption and Financial Reform

Combating corruption remains one of Iraq's most complex challenges. al-Sudānī prioritized this issue in his government agenda, initiating multiple measures to prosecute corrupt officials and recover misappropriated funds. In October 2023, he unveiled an anti-corruption strategy focused on strengthening oversight and accountability institutions. Additionally, awareness campaigns were launched to foster a culture of integrity within governmental bodies. Despite these efforts, corruption concerns have reportedly intensified during the government's tenure, attributed to the structural composition of power. This occurred notwithstanding the financial resources inherited from his predecessor, al-Kāzīmī, alongside stable oil prices and increased exports, which financed infrastructure projects such as roads and bridges.

3. Enhancement of Public Services

Efforts to improve public services have concentrated on allocating substantial budgets to rehabilitate electricity and water infrastructure damaged by prolonged conflict, neglect, and corruption, as well as expanding communication and internet networks. Despite these initiatives, these sectors continue to face significant challenges. The electricity crisis has worsened, with increasing power outages exacerbated by Iraq's extreme winter and summer weather conditions (al-Sūmarīyah, 2024, September 30).

4. Social Welfare

According to data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, notable progress includes:

- The inclusion of 962,000 families in social protection programs, representing an 85% increase and encompassing approximately 7,600,000 individuals.
- The distribution of 130 million monthly food baskets since the government's formation over two years.
- Government interventions contributed to reducing Iraq's poverty rate from 23% to 17.6%.

Future Challenges

al-Sudānī administration faces significant challenges, including:

- The failure to implement promised cabinet reshuffles and personnel changes for deputy ministers and special grades who underperformed.
- The entrenched nature of corruption within many state institutions and the protracted timeline required for structural economic reforms to yield tangible outcomes.
- Internal political conflicts and the predominance of "non-state" actors influencing political decision-making.
- Regional tensions potentially impacting Iraq's stability, particularly in light of ongoing conflicts in Lebanon and Gaza, and the anticipated repercussions following the political transition in Syria after the fall of al-Asad's regime on December 8, 2024 (al-Sūmarīyah, 2024, September 30).
- Difficulties in executing the critical "Development Road" project, with the Grand Faw Port initiative poised to alter Iraq's historical geographical status (Shafaq News, 2024, November 7).
- Administrative inefficiencies resulting from careless hiring practices, inadequate organization of the mixed sector, and challenges in absorbing graduates and addressing unemployment.
- The impact of external crises and events on Iraq's domestic situation.
- The management of the forthcoming 2025 electoral process and its potential consequences.

III. Selecting Governors: Between Apportionment and Political Consensus

The experience of governorate councils in Iraq has been a contentious issue among political groups and forces, remaining under scrutiny since the early stages of these elections due to a prevailing negative perception among public opinion. By 2021, the political groups and forces constituting the current government and parliament sought to reorganize their positions and delineate their

political presence by exerting control over the governorates. To achieve this, they operated on two fronts (Shabīb, 2023):

- The first front involved fulfilling the legal and political prerequisites by enacting an election law that would secure their political existence. They adopted the Sainte-Laguë method, previously tested, whereas the October 2021 elections were conducted using a different formula based on individual voting across multiple districts within each governorate. The results favored some forces while disadvantaging others, provoking rejection of the election outcomes that escalated to the point of threatening civil peace. Subsequently, the forces contesting the election results succeeded in forming the government following the withdrawal of the Sadrists from Parliament and the political process.
- The second front entailed redrawing political influence through governorate council elections. Political groups and forces in Iraq aimed to reshape their influence and assert control through these elections or, at minimum, secure new gains by governing the governorates, particularly the Coordination Framework forces, the two Kurdish parties (the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Democratic Party), and the Sunni component forces, ranging from al-Ḥalbūsī to his rivals. Certain political forces, especially within the Coordination Framework, sought to capitalize on the absence of the Sadrist Movement, a grassroots movement that constitutes a significant competitor in every electoral cycle. Conversely, other forces, including some within the Coordination Framework, emphasized the importance of the Sadrist Movement's return and participation in governorate council elections to prevent any single force from dominating.

Regarding the stance of political groups and forces across the political and ideological spectrum toward holding governorate council elections, most supported the resumption of the councils' functions, except for certain Tishrīn (October) forces and the Sadrist Movement. The latter perceived the reinstatement of governorate councils as a new avenue for corruption, embezzlement of public funds, and power struggles. Other forces contended that the electoral method would extinguish any prospects for the emergence of new forces, particularly at a time when existing forces were experiencing divisions and lacked coherent political and strategic visions, projects, and programs.

Concerning the "silent majority" of the Iraqi people, they maintained a negative view of governorate councils and all outputs of the ruling political class, and were expected to continue their stance by exhibiting low voter turnout.

It appears that the political forces within the government prioritized redrawing their influence over establishing substantive priorities. Even when intending to implement solutions, these were pursued through redrawing influence or via apportionment and power-sharing, as is customary in every political occasion. This approach aimed to resolve conflicts before and after the governorate council

elections by distributing governorships among the major blocs within each alliance, particularly the forces forming the government, as well as allocating other positions, such as the chairmanship of the governorate council, deputy governors, and various directorates within each governorate. This resulted in a recurrence of past patterns characterized by apportionment, poor management, and party bloc control over the governorates, exacerbated by a scarcity of expertise, professionalism, and integrity (Shabīb, 2023).

Similar to the formation of the federal government and its affiliated institutions, sectarian and party apportionment dominated the election mechanisms and the selection of individuals leading those governorates. Alliances between political blocs enabled them to overcome low electoral representation and secure sovereign positions. Many perceived the elevation of certain political figures accused of corruption as a negative indicator, reinforcing favoritism and political financing as the basis for attaining office (al-Ṭāī, 2024). Consequently, governors were selected through apportionment among influential blocs in several governorates. However, some governorates deviated from this pattern by dismissing their governors after incumbents secured sufficient seats to substantiate their claims to the governorship, particularly since they had previously presented themselves to citizens under the legitimacy of merit. Moreover, these incumbents employed intelligence and tactics surpassing those of traditional political forces allied against them, successfully attracting some members to their entities. This enabled them to renew their terms, as exemplified by the Governor of al-Baṣrah, As'ad al-Īdānī; the Governor of Karbalā', Naṣīf al-Khaṭṭābī; and the Governor of Wāsiṭ, Muḥammad al-Mayyāhī, representing a novel tactic and understanding by these governors.

Based on the foregoing, the selection method for governors in other governorates followed the trajectory of these parties and political forces in their management of the Iraqi political landscape. These can be summarized as follows:

1. Maintaining the Apportionment Approach

Political forces and parties persisted in the apportionment approach by distributing positions across administrative, executive, and consultative levels in the governance of Iraqi governorates. This was evident prior to the announcement of election results and through the mechanisms by which local administrations were formed in several governorates, allocating the positions of governor and his two deputies among these forces, followed by the distribution of other positions such as the governorate council chairman and first deputy. Committees within the governorate council were further divided according to a quota system, extending this distribution to service and executive directorates among these forces.

2. Criteria of Selection

The selection process in this instance was not solely grounded in principles of apportionment or law standards of competence and experience. Instead, it was influenced by narrower criteria: candidates were presented by the party leader based on their proximity and loyalty to him. Consequently, individuals

within the party who may have been considerably more qualified were excluded. It is important to recall the conflict between social forces and traditional political parties concerning the renewal of their programs and political conduct, emphasizing the prioritization of supreme national interests over narrow party agendas and placing the citizen's welfare above considerations of loyalty to the party or individual. Indeed, the sacrifice of hundreds of citizens, particularly youth, was made in pursuit of rectifying these misguided paths.

Nevertheless, many influential political actors appear to persist in managing the internal Iraqi political landscape with the same narrow approach previously employed. Despite these challenges and the implications they suggest, some remain hopeful that these governors will prioritize the paramount interests of their governorates above all else and that their performance will rise to meet the expectations of their constituents in service delivery, reconstruction, and the rectification of their deteriorating conditions (Shabīb, 2024).

IV. Impact of the Kurdistan Region Elections on Political Alliances in Baghdād

On October 30, 2024, the Independent High Electoral Commission announced the final results of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament elections, commending the discipline, professionalism, and transparency that characterized the electoral process. The Chairman of the Board of Commissioners stated during a press conference that the Commission had implemented a series of measures to ensure the integrity of the elections within a secure environment. The election results were welcomed by local political entities as well as international actors, including the European Union and the United States of America.

The Kurds successfully conducted elections across the region's governorates: Erbil, al-Sulaymānīyah, Duhok, and Ḥalabjah. The allocation of seats was as follows: Erbil received 34 seats, al-Sulaymānīyah Governorate 37 seats, and Duhok Governorate 25 seats. The distribution of results is presented in the following four tables (Najm, 2024).

Table 2-1: Size of Political Blocs in Erbil Governorate.

Party and Political Bloc	Number of Seats	Percentage
Kurdistan Democratic Party	17	50.00%
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan	6	17.65%
New Generation	5	14.71%
Halwest Bloc	1	2.94%
Islamic Union	1	2.94%
Kurdistan Justice Group	1	2.94%
People's Front	1	2.94%
Christian Quota	1	2.94%
Turkmen Quota	1	2.94%

Table 2-2: Size of Political Blocs in al-Sulaymānīyah Governorate.

Party and Political Bloc	Number of Seats	Percentage
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan	15	40.54%
New Generation	8	21.62%
Kurdistan Democratic Party	3	8.11%
Islamic Union	3	8.11%
Islamic Justice Group	2	5.41%
Gorran (Change) Bloc	1	2.70%
People's Bloc	1	2.70%
Kurdistan Alliance Bloc	1	2.70%
Christians	1	2.70%
Turkmen	1	2.70%

Table 2-3: Size of Political Blocs in Duhok Governorate.

Party and Political Bloc	Number of Seats	Percentage
Kurdistan Democratic Party	18	72.00%
New Generation	2	8.00%
Islamic Union	2	8.00%
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan	1	4.00%
Halwest Bloc	1	4.00%
James Hasdo (Christian)	1	4.00%

Table 2-4: Size of Political Blocs in Ḥalabjah Governorate.

Party and Political Bloc	Number of Seats	Percentage
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan	1	33.33%
Kurdistan Democratic Party	1	33.33%
Islamic Union	1	33.33%

Based on the aforementioned, the results confirmed the influence of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), led by Mas'ūd Bārzānī. It is followed by a significant margin by its political rival, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), led by Qubād, the eldest son of the late Jalāl Ṭālabānī, indicating its popular presence in the region. This remains true despite the fact that government formation in the region will be subject to the same consensus mechanism used previously, involving understandings with the closest winner, the PUK. In this context, the President of the Kurdistan Region, Nēchīrvān Bārzānī, stated that the ruling parties in the region would not split into two administrations, noting that the Kurdistan Region possesses a legal framework in accordance with the Iraqi Constitution.

Generally, the victory of the Kurdistan Democratic Party reflected positively upon it, providing it with greater impetus than it possessed in current and previous stages at the level of the Kurdistan Region and key positions in Baghdād. In the previous stage, the orientations of the two main parties in the region differed regarding their alliances with the major forces in Baghdād. While the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan aligned with traditional Shi'i forces under the Coordination Framework, the Kurdistan Democratic Party entered into an alliance described

as exceptional and qualitative in terms of participating forces, goals, and political projects under the "Saving the Homeland" alliance. This alliance included the Sadrist Movement, led by Sayyid Muqtada al-Ṣadr, and the Taqaddum Party, led by Muḥammad al-Ḥalbūsī, alongside the KDP. It was on the verge of forming a government based on a national majority, were it not for the opposing front's persistence in employing rejection tools and the opposition of well-known regional states to the project. This ultimately led to the withdrawal of one of its most important pillars, the Sadrist Movement, from Parliament and the political process, while the KDP proceeded with steady steps in implementing its agendas and political strategy starting from Baghdād (Najm, 2024).

In light of the above, a question arises regarding the form of alliances to be shaped in the coming stage, especially since Iraq is approaching national general parliamentary elections. The question remains whether active parties at the Shi'i and Sunni levels, specifically the Sadrist Movement and the Taqaddum Party, can return to the political scene, particularly the Sadrist Movement, which continues to maintain its rejection of participating in elections. This would then involve redrawing opposing political goals, especially as the second party of the alliance, Taqaddum, led by Muḥammad al-Ḥalbūsī, witnessed tension with the Kurdistan Democratic Party following statements regarding the Kurdish role and its internal and external relations.

Furthermore, the Kurdistan Democratic Party is monitoring the level of responsiveness from traditional Shi'i parties to its demands and conditions. Meanwhile, there will be an important variable for the KDP: the entry of Prime Minister al-Sudānī into the upcoming parliamentary elections with an independent list. If his list secures a majority, it would make him closer to the KDP than others, particularly since the PUK remains in an existing alliance with the Coordination Framework poles. This appears set to continue into the next stage leading up to the outcomes of the 2025 parliamentary elections.

V. Performance of the Council of Representatives

The performance of the Iraqi Council of Representatives during 2024 can be analyzed through the following files:

1. The Crisis of Selecting the Speaker of Parliament and its Repercussions on Political Blocs (Sunni Blocs as a Model)

The Iraqi political environment following the change in 2003 has been characterized by conflicts over leadership and power within political components in Iraq, including the Sunni political component. This conflict-driven reality may be considered part of the outputs of the political process. We have previously noted that the repercussions of the conflict over high sovereign positions included the post of Speaker of the Council of Representatives. It was expected that Speaker Muḥammad al-Ḥalbūsī would be removed from his position in one way or another, given the political attractions and alliances characterizing the political process, in addition to regional dimensions that cast a shadow over the Iraqi scene.

The removal or exclusion of al-Ḥalbūsī from the speakership of the Council of Representatives can be attributed to a confluence of political, legal, and electoral factors, intertwined with the broader contestation over leadership and the near-total dominance of al-Ḥalbūsī, or others, within the Sunni political arena. Prior to the October 2023 elections, the Iraqi political landscape experienced a transition from component-based blocs to vertical alliances composed of specific parties and groups within each component. This pattern is likely to recur in any forthcoming early parliamentary elections, potentially positioning al-Ḥalbūsī once again in opposition to the ruling Shi'i Framework. The Framework maintains a political rivalry with the Sadrist Shi'i bloc and seeks to marginalize the Sadrist Movement's allies while bolstering its own Sunni and Kurdish supporters. Evidence of this strategy includes the appointment of a President of the Republic aligned with the Framework and the exclusion of the Speaker of Parliament, following the successful formation of a government after contesting the Sadrist Movement's "national majority" initiative.

The decision to terminate al-Ḥalbūsī's membership in the Council of Representatives has been characterized as politically motivated and beyond the exclusive jurisdiction of the Supreme Court as delineated by the Constitution and relevant legislation. Instead, it appears to reflect intra-Sunni conflicts and personal disputes involving al-Ḥalbūsī, notably with the plaintiff al-Dulaymī (formerly a member of al-Ḥalbūsī's party who shifted his stance for reasons not publicly disclosed) as well as personal rivalries with MP Bāsim Khashshān. The prospect of al-Ḥalbūsī resuming the speakership is fraught with complexity and difficulty, despite interventions from both internal and external actors. The Court has reiterated that the termination decision is final and binding, precluding any appeals. Concurrently, other political factions are endeavoring to present al-Ḥalbūsī with alternatives that would enable him to accept the Court's ruling. These alternatives include:

- Option One: This approach involves selecting the Speaker of the Council of Representatives from within al-Ḥalbūsī's own party, contingent upon al-Ḥalbūsī's acceptance of the decision, particularly in light of the political, party, and popular opposition to the Court's ruling among his supporters. This option also appears to be a source of contention within the Coordination Framework factions, which seek to nominate a Sunni figure for the speakership from among their own allies.
- Option Two: Should the first option fail and the Coordination Framework persist in efforts to completely undermine the political standing of al-Ḥalbūsī and his party, this may provoke political and popular escalation by al-Ḥalbūsī through several measures. Chief among these would be a total withdrawal from legislative and executive participation, abstention from governorate council elections, and the initiation of street protests.

2. Parliamentary Performance during 2024: Navigating the Obstacle of Speaker Selection and the Persistence of the Legislative Crisis

The Iraqi Council of Representatives is the highest legislative and oversight authority in the country, endowed with extensive powers to hold the government accountable and monitor its performance. Nevertheless, the Council's oversight function faces mounting challenges that have frequently impeded its effective constitutional operation. Several factors contribute to the weakening of the Council's oversight role, as evidenced by declining performance across five consecutive parliamentary terms. These factors include political consensus and apportionment, which have rendered many decisions and issues subject to political bargaining; consequently, party interests hinder the investigation of matters or the accountability of individuals affiliated with influential blocs. Party pressures and external interventions have steered oversight decisions in directions that align with their interests. Moreover, regional and international interventions occasionally affect the independence of parliamentary decisions, particularly on strategically significant issues.

Despite the availability of constitutional accountability mechanisms, such as interpellation and votes of no confidence, the absence of political will and seriousness in addressing corruption have rendered these tools largely ineffective. Interpellation sessions frequently devolve into media spectacles without yielding substantive decisions (al-Khazraji, 2025). This is compounded by deliberate obstruction of parliamentary sessions, as the Council often experiences repeated boycotts, either due to political disputes or to prevent the passage of certain decisions. Additionally, some blocs intentionally disrupt the legal quorum when sensitive issues are raised, thereby undermining the oversight function. Another challenge following the formation of the current Council, subsequent to the Sadrist Movement's withdrawal, is the absence of a genuine parliamentary opposition, as the Council predominantly comprises political blocs represented within the government.

The Iraqi Council of Representatives in 2024 is unlikely to differ significantly from its characteristics over the past two decades since the political transition, marked by persistent divisions and shortcomings. The year 2024 may be regarded as one in which the Council experienced considerable disruption, not only in its legislative responsibilities but also regarding the speakership following the termination of Muḥammad al-Ḥalbūsī's membership due to his dispute with the defecting MP from the Taqaddum Party, Layth al-Dulaymī. Furthermore, there are escalating calls for the passage of numerous laws that have been stalled by political crises affecting the democratic process since 2003. These laws require political consensus and agreements before being enacted under the auspices of the Council of Representatives, which has seen legislation delayed for nearly two decades.

Based on the foregoing, the evaluation of the Iraqi Council of Representatives' performance can be summarized under the following themes:

A. Continued Proxy Management of the Council and the Failure to Elect a Speaker

Iraq has experienced significant legislative confusion since the formation of the Parliament following the 2021 elections. This situation was further complicated by judicial intervention in the Council's affairs and decisions, culminating in a political crisis expected to affect the remainder of this Council's term and to exacerbate tensions and party conflicts, as is customary prior to electoral cycles in the country.

Following the withdrawal of the Sadrist Bloc (73 seats) and the judicial termination of al-Ḥalbūsī's membership and speakership in November 2024, resulting from a lawsuit filed by MPs Layth al-Dulaymī and Bāsim Khashshān, the Council has been managed by the First Deputy, Muḥsin al-Mandalāwī, who is aligned with the Coordination Framework, acting as Speaker by proxy. This arrangement has significant implications, particularly given the Council's repeated failure to elect a Speaker. Neither of the leading candidates, al-ʿĪsāwī and al-Mashhadānī, secured a majority during a contentious session characterized by political disputes and party divisions that obstructed the process, although it ultimately concluded in favor of al-Mashhadānī.

This situation exemplifies the prevailing political environment in Iraq, which is dominated by deal-making and power-sharing arrangements rather than strategic planning.

B. Continued Legislative Crisis and the Obstruction of Passing Proposed Bills

Numerous laws concerning security, the economy, and the Iraqi citizen have been deferred from previous parliamentary terms to subsequent ones due to ongoing political tensions and disputes. Among these, the Oil and Gas Law, which has remained unenacted since 2005, is particularly notable. Certain laws are regarded as contentious by political factions, especially the General Amnesty Law, which is supported by some groups and opposed by others.

According to sources within the Legal Committee of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, over 150 draft laws have accumulated on committee agendas. Additionally, several "controversial" laws face obstruction due to the absence of consensus among the political blocs controlling the Council, as well as disagreements involving the Speaker, the blocs, and committee chairs regarding legislative passage. When the Council has succeeded in passing legislation, it has occasionally employed an "innovative" strategy of voting on a "single package" to approve multiple laws simultaneously. Controversial laws include the Oil and Gas Law, the General Amnesty Law, the recently enacted Personal Status Law, the State Real Estate Law, and the Federal Court Law.

ʿAlī al-Jammālī, a member of the Iraqi Parliament representing the al-Faḥ Alliance, underscored Iraq's urgent need for the enactment of critical legislation, including the Federal Oil and Gas Law. He urged the government to expedite the submission of essential bills for parliamentary deliberation and approval,

highlighting that government archives contain numerous stalled laws due to a prevailing lack of political consensus. He further noted that Iraqi citizens are eagerly awaiting the passage of laws related to public services and the economy. Moreover, Mujāshi’ Muḥammad ‘Alī asserted that the prospect of a parliamentary initiative aimed at resolving long-delayed controversial laws is unrealistic. He contended that the issue is primarily political rather than legal, citing the Federal Oil and Gas Law, which delineates the economic relationship between Baghdād and Erbil, as a prime example. Although an agreement had been reached to pass the law, it subsequently encountered political obstacles, prompting the Prime Minister to convene a meeting to secure a political settlement to facilitate its advancement (Zaydān, 2023).

The Iraqi Parliament has engaged in deliberations concerning an amendment to the contentious Personal Status Law, which seeks to regulate matters of marriage, divorce, custody, and inheritance in accordance with Shi’i jurisprudence. Concurrently, the Parliament ratified in April 2024 a revision to the “Anti-Prostitution Law.” Enacted, these amendments criminalize same-sex relations, prescribing prison sentences ranging from 10 to 15 years. Additionally, the legislation mandates imprisonment for one to three years for individuals undergoing gender reassignment procedures. Furthermore, it imposes penalties of up to seven years of incarceration and a fine amounting to 15 million dinars (approximately \$11,450) for the “promotion of sexual deviance” (Zaydān, 2023).

C. Performance Indicators for the Council of Representatives During 2024

During the year 2024, the Council of Representatives convened 46 general sessions, which included interventions from 533 speakers. In terms of committee operations, specialized committees conducted approximately 2,322 meetings and produced 724 reports. Among these, 677 reports were subjected to formal debate in the Council’s general sessions (Zaydān, 2023), alongside the organization of one official hearing.

Table 2-5: Statistical Review for the Work of the Council of Representatives during 2024.

Works	Number	Observations
Number of General Sessions	46 sessions	At a rate of approximately one session per week.
Number of Speakers in General Sessions	533 speakers	An average of 11.6 speakers per session.
Number of Committee Meetings	2,322 meetings	Intense activity indicating effective legislative and oversight work.
Number of Reports Prepared by Committees	724 reports	Diverse technical and legislative reports.
Number of Reports Discussed in Sessions	677 reports	93.5% of the prepared reports were discussed.
Number of Hosting Sessions	1 hosting	Limited use of the hosting tool.

VI. Performance of Governorate Councils

After more than a year since the Iraqi governorate council elections held in December 2023, the general performance evaluation of these councils reveals significant challenges in achieving political stability and service delivery. This reflects the persistence of structural crises within the local governance system and raises questions regarding the causes of their operational stalling and whether power-sharing plays a role in this failure. Consequently, the evaluation of governorate council performance can be summarized through the following points:

- **Political Disputes and Dismissals:** Several local councils witnessed intense party conflicts, such as the dismissal of the Chairman of the Baghdād Governorate Council, 'Ammār al-Qaysī, and his subsequent reinstatement by judicial decision, reflecting the fragility of political consensus.
- **Obstruction of Service Projects:** In governorates such as Kirkuk, Diyālā, and al-Najaf al-Ashraf, among others, the majority of service and health projects were not implemented because the formation of local governments was not finalized. This resulted in the freezing of thousands of jobs and delays in budget expenditures.
- **Weak Popular Participation:** Despite the official announcement of a participation rate of 41%, the actual percentage is likely significantly lower. This indicates a widespread public disillusionment and a lack of confidence in the effectiveness of these councils.
- **Absence of Tangible Achievements:** Several months after their formation, the governorate councils have failed to record significant progress in infrastructure development or public service delivery. This has reinforced the perception among many citizens that these councils represent a "redundant link" in the administrative chain.
- **Persistence of Power-Sharing and Corruption:** Power-sharing remains an obstacle to the councils' functionality. Favoritism in the allocation of senior positions and resources continues to hamper efficiency and transparency, impeding the effective delivery of essential services.

In light of the aforementioned, the problems facing governorate councils in Iraq necessitate legal and administrative reforms. These include structural reforms such as enacting new laws to organize their work, clearly defining their powers, and strengthening oversight and accountability to ensure transparency and efficiency. Empowering local governments is essential; they should be granted broader powers to address the economic and social problems in their governorates, thereby easing the pressure on the central government and enhancing local development.

Observers have attributed the governorate councils' failure in performing their duties to several reasons. Political analyst Muḥammad Zanganah argued that

Table 2-6: Evaluation of Governorate Councils' Work during 2024.

Indicator	Analytical Description	Evaluation (0-100)	Percentage (%)	Performance Level
Political Stability	Frequent disputes and dismissals (e.g., Baghdad); fragile consensus.	30	30%	Weak
Administrative & Executive Performance	Stalled projects; frozen appointments; budget disbursement delays.	35	35%	Weak
Popular Participation	Official rate 41%; estimated actual rate between 25-30%.	28	28%	Very Low
Developmental Achievements	Lack of clear project implementation or tangible outcomes.	25	25%	Very Weak
Governance and Integrity	Continued power-sharing, corruption, and favoritism in appointments.	32	32%	Weak

the governorate council election mechanism was completely detached from any political agreements that could contribute to stability. He noted that the formation of these councils relied heavily on threats and party influence, in addition to local agreements between certain parties. He stated that blocs possessing a small popular base but significant political influence were the ones that controlled the formation of governorate councils. This is clearly evident in Kirkuk and Ninawá, as well as in the threats witnessed in Diyálá and some southern governorates. Zanganah further noted the absence of oversight on the performance of these councils and confirmed that power-sharing persists through new methods, specifically via agreements between certain parties to disrupt consensus and achieve a majority (Shafaqna Iraq, 2024, September 16).

Political activist 'Alī al-Qaysī suggested that governorate councils in Iraq are facing major challenges that hinder their service and oversight roles, as they are dominated by political forces that entrench party and factional power-sharing. Consequently, the councils have been emptied of their true substance. al-Qaysī emphasized that there is confusion in service delivery due to attempts to impose specific wills and exceed the granted powers. He also attributed the lack of any reformist role for these councils to the fact that they were established under a law enacted by influential forces in power to suit their interests. Furthermore, Aḥmad al-Kīkī, a member of the Ninawá Governorate Council, confirmed that the situation in Ninawá Governorate has not witnessed significant change thus far, noting only slight development in some areas. al-Kīkī stated that the local councils have not played a real role in improving conditions in the governorate due to the internal conflicts plaguing them, concluding that the council itself requires a comprehensive evaluation. Maḥmā Khalīl, a member of the Parliamentary Services Committee, stated that the committee responsible for evaluating the performance of governors is the Services and Reconstruction Committee according to the Constitution, and it is responsible for holding accountable

those governors who have failed to implement their programs or misused public funds. He pointed out that services in the governorates remain very poor and that local governments have failed to deliver the message of the government program presented by the Prime Minister, who termed his cabinet a "government of services" (Shafaqna Iraq, 2024, September 16).

For his part, Bāqir al-Sa'dī, a member of the Parliamentary Services and Reconstruction Committee, confirmed that there is no formal evaluation of governors and that the current government is perceived as better than its predecessors in terms of providing services to citizens. He noted that while there is ongoing work on the ground in most governorates, it remains insufficient, and citizens have the right to expect better services. He indicated that compared to the past, the situation is better, particularly regarding infrastructure, roads, and bridges; however, financial allocations may have been delayed in some governorates, causing some stagnation (al-Ālam al-Jadīd, 2024, August 21). Regarding the evaluation of governors, al-Sa'dī mentioned that some governors are affiliated with political blocs that undertake their evaluation, and there is also the possibility of dismissing negligent governors through the follow-up of the Services Committee in the Council of Representatives. Another member of the Services Committee, 'Abbās al-Jubūrī, emphasized that conducting professional and technical evaluations of the work and performance of directors in service positions and others within local governments is essential. He stressed the necessity of periodic changes to foster development in the work.

Furthermore, crisis management expert 'Alī Jabbār suggested that the performance of executive institutions, including the governorates, remains a significant burden on the service, developmental, and economic structure of the Iraqi state. He argued that parties insist on selecting individuals for service positions based on power-sharing without considering previous experiences or the loss of large sums of money. He added that some international reports place Iraq in very late ranks regarding service levels due to poor performance and the waste of allocations and budgets. He pointed out that the individuals occupying these positions are often not specialists in senior management or the project management required by the governorates; thus, it is natural for there to be a decline in performance, which reflects on the management of projects and services. He concluded that the problem persists as long as the appointment and replacement of governors remain a political decision, and Iraq lacks a clear and fixed strategy for professional performance evaluation; therefore, the problem is complex and cannot result in a positive service structure (al-Ālam al-Jadīd, 2024, August 21).

Based on the aforementioned, al-Sudānī was expected to hold negligent governors accountable according to his promises in the government program regarding those who caused the loss of the opportunity to advance the service reality of the governorates (al-Ālam al-Jadīd, 2024, August 21). Some governorates, particularly in the central and southern regions, are experiencing a poor service reality; in June 2024, specifically in the governorates of Dhī-Qār and al-Muthanná, protests were witnessed against poor services and the lack of job opportunities.

VII. Position of Political Blocs on Holding Parliamentary Elections and the Election Law

The election law in Iraq, under which the 2025 parliamentary elections are scheduled to be held, remained a focus of political controversy. Sainte-Laguë is an electoral system that adopts a mathematical method for distributing seats in parliaments among competing parties or electoral lists. It involves dividing the number of votes for each party by a series of odd numbers (1, 3, 5, 7, etc.), then arranging the results descendingly, with seats allocated to the parties with the highest results. The law was modified according to the so-called "Iraqi method" by setting the first divisor at 1.7 and 1.9. Subsequently, the arena witnessed sharp discussions between political and social forces on the necessity of amending it or keeping it before the parliamentary elections scheduled for November 11, 2025.

Muḥammad 'Unūz, a member of the Legal Committee in the Parliament, denied that his committee had received any official proposal to amend the election law from the government, the Speakership, or the parliamentary blocs. He stated that the existing disputes between political blocs obstruct agreement on the proposed amendments, as each party seeks to amend the law in a way that achieves electoral gains for itself. He explained that the current trend points toward the possibility of adopting the same electoral system applied in the recent governorate council elections, which is a single-district system for each governorate with the application of the (Sainte-Laguë) proportional mechanism and an electoral divisor of 1.7, which favors large blocs and reduces the chances of independents (al-Ālam al-Jadīd, 2024, August 21).

It is important to note that Iraq began with the 2005 law, which adopted closed lists and 18 electoral districts. It was amended several times, the latest being in 2023, where the 2021 system was abolished and returned to multiple districts (83 districts) and the Sainte-Laguë system, which enhances the chances of traditional parties. The various electoral frameworks and methodologies utilized in Iraq from 2005 through the 2025 Council of Representatives election law are detailed in Table 2-7.

In response to the observations concerning the proposed election law for the 2025 parliamentary elections, political blocs have expressed divergent perspectives. Ḥaydar al-Salāmī, a member of the Imtidād Movement in Parliament, articulated strong support for the direct individual election of candidates, opposing the list system which he contended favors large parties at the expense of independent candidates. al-Salāmī argued that amendments to the election law tend to benefit major parties and blocs while marginalizing independents, whose presence disrupts political consensus that primarily serves narrow party interests. He acknowledged that although political consensus may occasionally be necessary for the public good, it is often rejected by independents and emerging parties when it advances party or personal interests. According to al-Salāmī, there are calls to amend the parliamentary election law by adopting the mechanism used in recent governorate council elections, provided it is fair and ensures the victory

Table 2-7: Electoral Methods and Laws in Iraq (2005-2025).

Year	Law / Amendment	Electoral System	District Type	List Style	Key Observations and Impacts
2005	First Election Law after 2003	Proportional Representation	18 Districts (Each governorate is one district)	Closed Lists	Clear dominance of major parties; weak representation for independents and local society.
2010	Amendment to 2005 Law	Proportional Representation	18 Districts	Partially Open Lists	Partial availability for candidate selection; limited rise of independent figures.
2013	Parliamentary Election Law No. 45	Proportional Representation + 2% Threshold	18 Districts	Open Lists	Continued advantage for large blocs; difficulty for small parties to enter.
2018	Law Amendment	Proportional Representation	18 Districts	Open Lists	Decline in popular participation; broad public pressure on parties; general dissatisfaction.
2019	New Commission Law + Demands for Change	No radical system amendment	-	-	Tishrīn protests demanded the abolition of the existing system and the adoption of fairer representation.
2020	New Election Law (No. 9 of 2020)	Semi-Nomination Individual System	83 Multiple Districts (Each district is a constituency)	Individual Nomination	Empowered independents; increased local representation but led to vote fragmentation.
2023	New Amendment Restoring Sainte-Laguë	Proportional Representation - Sainte-Laguë	One district for each governorate (18 districts)	Open Lists	Electoral divisor (1.7) favors traditional blocs and reduces independent chances.
2025 (Anticipated)	Has not been amended yet	Modified Sainte-Laguë (Likely)	One district for each governorate	Open Lists	Broad debate among forces regarding change; lack of official consensus to date.

of legitimate candidates rather than the unjust transfer of votes. He criticized the current system, asserting that the optimal solution is individual elections in which candidates with the highest votes prevail, with party and bloc affiliations determined post-election rather than beforehand.

Moreover, Umīd Muḥammad, representing the Kurdish component in the Parliamentary Legal Committee, affirmed that most political forces in Iraq favor holding elections on the scheduled date, describing this as the most appropriate course given the prevailing political challenges. He noted that only one proposal has been presented to amend the parliamentary election law, which involves allocating 30% of seats to candidates with the highest votes, while the remaining 70% would be distributed according to the Sainte-Laguë system, a novel approach not previously employed in electoral cycles. Political blocs have yet to articulate a definitive stance on this proposal, as the law has not undergone its first and second readings in the Council of Representatives; formal proposals are typically submitted during the second reading (al-Jazīrah, 2025, April 20).

In contrast, Sunni factions oppose any amendments to the election law that was applied in the recent governorate council elections. ‘Azzām al-Ḥamdānī, a leader within the ‘Azm Alliance, remarked that frequent amendments to the law undermine public confidence in the political system and process, suggesting that laws are modified to suit the interests and moods of political forces. al-Ḥamdānī emphasized the absence of political consensus regarding amendments and highlighted the practical difficulties of implementing changes given the limited time before the parliamentary elections. MP Ṭalāl al-Zūbaī confirmed that the Legal Committee rejected the amendment proposal, indicating that elections will proceed as scheduled under the current law. This scenario is likely to benefit Prime Minister al-Sudānī, enabling him to expand his electoral alliances, especially considering the anticipated absence of the Sadrist Movement. Iḥsān al-Shammārī proposed the possibility of a Lebanese-style scenario during government formation and presidential selection in Iraq, noting that Parliament holds primary responsibility for legislating election laws, while the Electoral Commission is tasked with developing technical mechanisms for their implementation (al-Jazīrah, 2025, April 20).

At the level of political blocs, division remains a defining characteristic, particularly within the Coordination Framework, where factions are split between those advocating for amendments to certain articles of the election law and those insisting on adherence to constitutional timelines without modifications. The dispute over amending Law No. 12 of 2018 represents a significant challenge for the Coordination Framework, especially as Sunni forces and other influential blocs reject amendments on constitutional grounds and in accordance with Federal Court rulings.

VIII. Configuration of Future Political Alliances

Following the governorate council elections and in anticipation of the forthcoming parliamentary elections, disputes and conflicts are escalating among ruling political blocs. These tensions have culminated in the public disclosure of scandals and mutual accusations, a political behavior that has become customary among various political actors, parties, and forces involved in Iraq’s legislative and executive branches, particularly around electoral cycles. This dynamic persists despite calls from some government-participating blocs, such as the State of Law Coalition and its leader Nūr al-Mālikī, advocating for early parliamentary elections (al-A’rajī, 2024). Based on the evidence and assumptions presented, political contestation surrounding the upcoming parliamentary elections has already commenced, notwithstanding the remaining year before the elections, reflecting the government’s and most constituent parties’ preference for elections to occur after the constitutional term of al-Sudānī’s government concludes.

Observers indicate that the timing of al-Sudānī’s announcement of his candidacy from the “al-Sulaymānīyah Forum” platform was deliberate and strategically planned. This timing aimed to convey multiple messages, primarily signaling

his intention to remain a significant political actor in direct opposition to Nūrī al-Mālikī, who seeks to reclaim the position of Prime Minister and consolidate his authority. al-Sudānī explicitly framed the elections as an opportunity to advance a reform agenda for Iraq, highlighting his government's accomplishments in public services, economic initiatives, renewable energy projects, infrastructure development, and the cessation of gas flaring, among other performance indicators intended for his electoral campaign. Conversely, al-Mālikī appears to be in a disadvantaged position, as the resurgence of the Sadrist Movement seems improbable, and his popular support may shift toward the incumbent Prime Minister or emerging political forces. Consequently, the State of Law Coalition is anticipated to experience a significant reduction in parliamentary representation and potentially lose its standing within the Coordination Framework.

The regional dynamics are equally complex. Iran, historically a steadfast ally of al-Mālikī, confronts a new reality that limits its capacity to support him with previous vigor. Pressures from the United States and Gulf countries, coupled with Tehran's desire to avoid direct confrontation with Washington in Iraq, favor al-Sudānī, who is perceived as a regionally and internationally acceptable figure and less problematic for Tehran during this sensitive period. Analysts suggest that Iranian policy currently embraces "pragmatic realism," prompting support for al-Sudānī or, at minimum, non-impeding, especially when choosing between a figure capable of safeguarding Iranian interests through state mechanisms and another associated with contentious internal issues. It is expected that the majority of popular votes, particularly within Shi'ī and centrist constituencies, will align with alliances led by al-Sudānī or reformist entities, benefiting from declining public confidence in traditional political powers.

Former Parliament Rapporteur Muḥammad al-Khālīdī disclosed a covert conflict within the Coordination Framework, describing systematic campaigns orchestrated by political factions apprehensive about losing influence in the forthcoming elections and aiming to marginalize al-Sudānī. al-Khālīdī noted that despite varying assessments of governmental performance among parties, tangible progress has been achieved in nine critical sectors, including public services, energy, and anti-corruption efforts, alongside initiatives to de-escalate tensions with the Kurdistan Region and balanced stances on regional crises. He further asserted that these factions have resorted to covert tactics, notably smear campaigns on social media, to hinder the emergence of any new political movement associated with al-Sudānī.

A central question concerns whether the Coordination Framework will emerge from the upcoming meeting with a unified stance or whether internal divisions will escalate into a schism, accelerating the alliance's dissolution. This alliance, initially formed to address street protests, later evolved into a governing coalition. It is posited that the incumbent Prime Minister's success in consolidating his electoral position, while maintaining regional and international backing, may facilitate a reconfiguration of power balances within and potentially beyond the Framework, inaugurating a new phase of political competition. This phase would

likely exclude leaders from the previous era whose legitimacy has been undermined by allegations of poor performance and corruption. As Iraq approaches the critical 2025 elections, attention is focused on the "Shi'i House," which is undergoing one of its most politically sensitive periods.

In light of these developments, political parties appear to be adopting aggressive strategies, including the exploitation of legal mechanisms and character assassination, involving the Iraqi judiciary in political disputes from which it would be prudent to remain detached. Notably, the conflict transcends sectarian and ethnic divisions, as intra-bloc rivalries have intensified. Following disputes within Sunni blocs after the termination of al-Ḥalbūsī's membership in the Council of Representatives, discord has emerged among Shi'i Coordination Framework parties concerning the selection of the next Prime Minister. The issues raised intermittently seem to serve political expediency rather than genuine efforts to address corruption and governance challenges. These include the case of smuggling the convict in the "Theft of the Century," Nūr Zuhayr, revelations of espionage within the Council of Ministers, and statements by the Chairman of the Commission of Integrity, Ḥaydar Ḥannūn, regarding political and judicial pressures to halt investigations into corruption involving political figures and parties.

Consequently, a pivotal question remains regarding the configuration of future political alliances and whether al-Sudānī will contest them. Political sources suggest that al-Sudānī is endeavoring to form an alliance with the governors of al-Baṣrah, Karbalā', and Wāsiṭ, who garnered the highest votes in the 2023 local elections. Additionally, there is speculation about the inclusion of three prominent ministers from the current government, including Minister of Interior 'Abd-al-Amīr al-Shammārī, who reportedly plans to engage in political activities during the next parliamentary term. Parallel discussions consider a potential alliance between al-Sudānī and the al-Ḥikmah Movement led by Sayyid 'Ammār al-Ḥakīm, as well as the al-Naṣr Alliance headed by former Prime Minister Ḥaydar al-'Abādī. Furthermore, sources close to al-Sudānī indicate ongoing efforts to attract independent deputies in the current Parliament in preparation for a coalition in the forthcoming elections. It is also reported that the al-Furātayn Movement, led by al-Sudānī, will present a joint list with the Badr Organization, led by Hādī al-'Āmirī, alongside the Chairman of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), Fāliḥ al-Fayyāḍ, the Sayyid al-Shuhadā' Brigades under Abū-Ālā' al-Walāṭī, and the Anṣār Allāh al-Awfiyā' Movement led by Ḥaydar al-Gharrāwī.

Furthermore, the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Na'im al-'Abbūdī, an influential figure within the 'Aṣā'ib Ahl al-Haqq Movement, declared that the movement is inclined to participate in the elections with an independent list, while retaining the possibility of forming limited alliances with specific blocs and individuals. Nonetheless, analysts argue that the movement is unlikely to risk contesting without allies, given their assessment that it lacks sufficient popular support to secure a comfortable number of parliamentary seats. Additionally, Thā'ir Mukhīf al-Jubūrī, an MP from the State of Law Coalition, indicated that electoral alliances have yet to mature. He observed that several representatives have

defected from their blocs after being informed that their re-candidacy would not be endorsed. al-Jubūrī further stated that the State of Law Coalition prefers to contest the elections independently, consistent with its approach in previous electoral cycles.

It is further clarified that the lists contesting the elections independently, in addition to those previously mentioned, include the State of Law Coalition led by al-Mālikī, which also incorporates the al-Faḍīlah Party; the al-Ḥikmah Movement led by al-Ḥakīm; the 'Aṣā'ib Ahl al-Ḥaqq Movement led by al-Khaz'alī; and the Islamic Supreme Council led by Shaykh Humām Ḥammūdī, alongside the First Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Muḥsin al-Mandalāwī. Notably, the Shaykhīyah sect, represented by the head of the Taṣmīm Alliance, 'Āmir al-Fāyiz, will also participate independently due to its popular base in al-Baṣrah.

Regarding Sunni participation, the forthcoming elections will feature lists grounded in political, sectarian, or ethnic foundations. The pluralistic state within the "Sunni House" mirrors that of the Shi'i and Kurdish "houses." It is noteworthy that political divisions fragmented the Sunni alliances early on, which will alter the composition of these alliances during the sixth parliamentary term. Sunni political forces intend to enter the elections with three or four electoral lists (Ibādah, 2025).

Concerning the Kurdish component, the potential reunification of the two principal Kurdish parties (the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Democratic Party) into their traditional alliance, known as the Kurdistan Alliance, is regarded as a strong possibility. This alliance, prevalent in electoral cycles following 2003, had previously disintegrated due to internal disputes, prompting each party to seek alliances with Sunni and Shi'i Arab forces. It appears that the leadership of both parties has acknowledged the potential for significant shifts in the Iraqi political landscape, motivating this move toward reconciliation (Ibādah, 2025). According to a senior figure within the Kurdistan Democratic Party, there is a serious effort to revive this strategic alliance, which could potentially secure between 50 and 60 parliamentary seats, thereby affording the Kurdish component substantial negotiating power.

The forthcoming sixth parliamentary term is likely to reflect further fragmentation within the Shi'i and Sunni political spheres. Meanwhile, the Kurds are focused on reconstructing the Kurdistan Alliance, a process contingent upon the eventual formation of the Kurdistan Regional Government. While Sunni political forces aim to consolidate their electoral lists around four principal figures (Muḥammad al-Ḥalbūsī, Khamīs al-Khanjar, Usāmah al-Nujayfī, and Maḥmūd al-Mashhadānī) the Shi'i arena is expected to witness six or seven electoral lists led by prominent figures such as al-Sudānī, al-Mālikī, al-Khaz'alī, and potentially Sayyid Muqtada al-Ṣadr (al-Ālam al-Jadīd, 2025, March 22).

In light of these developments, a critical question arises concerning the political blocs' stance on the potential re-candidacy of al-Sudānī in 2025. Reports indicate that an informal agreement existed between al-Sudānī and leaders of

the Coordination Framework in 2024, stipulating that he would not contest the upcoming parliamentary elections. It is believed that this arrangement was part of a broader political deal whereby al-Sudānī agreed not to seek a second term in exchange for the approval of the three-year budget (2023-2025). Although al-Sudānī and his party abstained from participating in the 2023 governorate council elections, it appears that he has since reconsidered. This shift has intensified political tensions with certain factions within the Coordination Framework, who have begun to exploit various political missteps to undermine his electoral prospects. The announcement of his candidacy has reportedly caused disarray within the Framework; its leaders fear that his relative popularity among certain segments of Iraqi society could translate into significant electoral success (Arabic Post, 2025, May 2). Furthermore, critics within the Framework have accused al-Sudānī of intending to utilize state resources to finance his campaign, viewing this as his sole viable path to victory (Ḥannūsh, 2025). Unofficial statistics suggest that an alliance led by al-Sudānī could potentially secure approximately 50 seats in the next parliament, representing more than one-third of the Shi'i seats, thereby significantly enhancing his political leverage in forming alliances.

IX. Agenda for 2025

The forthcoming year, 2025, is anticipated to be dominated by a range of priorities spanning political, economic, developmental, and social domains. A primary political agenda in 2025 involves the efforts of political parties and factions in Iraq to reorganize their internal structures in preparation for the parliamentary elections scheduled for late 2025. This process includes candidate selection and the formation of political alliances, with traditional parties and factions across various partisan, political, and demographic orientations striving for a strong presence amid shifting positions of other entities and political forces.

The stances of these political forces and factions regarding the elections can be delineated as follows:

1. The Sadrist Movement and Its Continued Refusal to Participate in Parliamentary Elections

Based on the Sadrist Movement's positions in previous phases, it currently appears disinclined to participate in the upcoming parliamentary elections. This is evident in several statements issued by Sayyid Muqtada al-Ṣadr, the movement's leader, who renamed it this year as the "National Shi'i Movement," symbolizing the representation of the masses in the central and southern governorates and the capital, Baghdād. While maintaining a boycott of the elections and the political process, the Sadrist Movement urges its grassroots supporters to update their electoral registrations. Nonetheless, all scenarios remain possible, including al-Ṣadr sustaining his rejection of the current political landscape and elections, which he consistently characterizes as dominated by corrupt blocs controlling Iraqi state resources.

From another perspective, some observers suggest that the Sadrist Movement might reconsider its refusal to participate, potentially opting for direct or indirect involvement. This could entail announcing an electoral bloc representing its political and social direction, akin to its performance in the 2021 parliamentary elections where it secured the highest number of seats. Alternatively, the movement might contest the elections through multiple lists indirectly representing the Sadrist Movement and its grassroots base.

2. Coordination Framework Forces and the Multiplicity of Electoral Lists

Political data indicate, as previously noted, that the Coordination Framework is fragmented on several levels, including the nature and freedom of contesting the upcoming elections. Prime Minister al-Sudānī opposes the desire of Coordination Framework forces regarding his non-candidacy but intends to contest the elections vigorously through an alliance comprising several political forces. These include the al-Furātayn Movement under his leadership, the National Contract Alliance (al-'Aqd al-Waṭanī) led by the Chairman of the Popular Mobilization Forces, Fāliḥ al-Fayyāḍ, the Iraqi National Coalition led by Iyād 'Allāwī, the (Ibdā') Alliance in Karbalā' led by Muḥammad Naṣīf al-Khaṭṭābī, among others.

Meanwhile, other forces prefer to run independently. It is probable that al-Ḥakīm and al-'Abādī will enter the elections together in a joint alliance, as in previous elections. The State of Law Coalition is expected to contest alongside other forces aligned with its political and ideological orientation, as well as several tribal figures. The State of Law Coalition is considered one of the most dissatisfied political blocs within the Coordination Framework regarding the policies and approaches adopted by the Framework's forces following the formation of the al-Sudānī government. Additionally, the 'Aṣā'ib Ahl al-Ḥaqq Movement, led by Shaykh Qays al-Khaẓ'alī, may employ an electoral strategy involving participation with multiple electoral lists, aiming to benefit from the presence of 'Aṣā'ib leader Na'im al-'Abbūdī heading the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

The Badr Organization, led by Hādī al-'Āmirī, might contest the elections in several governorates alongside the State of Law Coalition, particularly in Sunni-majority governorates, while running independently in central and southern governorates and Baghdād. First Deputy Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Muḥsin al-Mandalāwī, who leads the Iraqi Foundation Alliance (Asās), is also attempting to leverage his political presence in parliamentary leadership to contest the elections alongside several political forces such as the Iraqi Wedge Gathering (al-Watad), the Iraqi National Congress, the Islamic Action Organization, and the Faylī Kurds Gathering. Similarly, the Islamic Supreme Council, led by Shaykh Humām Ḥammūdī, heads a political alliance titled "Abshir yā 'Irāq" alongside forces such as Iqtīdār Waṭan, led by 'Abd-al-Ḥusayn 'Abṭān, and the al-Da'wah Party-Internal Organization, led by 'Abd-al-Karīm al-'Anzī.

Governors close to al-Sudānī are expected to contest elections independently in their governorates and may ally with him post-election based on seat distribution and power balance. This includes the Governor of Wāsiṭ, Muḥammad al-Mayyāḥī, and possibly the Governor of al-Baṣrah, Asʿad al-ʿĪdānī, who may enter with a supportive list, the Taṣmīm Alliance, led by ʿĀmir al-Fāyiz.

Based on the above, potential election outcomes for the Coordination Framework forces may vary in seat numbers. The alliance led by Prime Minister al-Sudānī is likely to secure the highest number of seats among Coordination Framework forces, followed by the State of Law Coalition. Other political forces such as ʿAṣāʾib, Badr, and Asās may achieve closely aligned results. Some forces may maintain their previous electoral levels, including those led by al-Ḥakīm and Ḥammūdī.

Observers also note concerns among Shiʿi parties regarding a potential recurrence of the “Triple Alliance” scenario post-elections, involving an undeclared coalition of Shiʿi, Sunni, and Kurdish parties. Proposals within the Coordination Framework aim to preempt surprises, including maintaining the current government formation or continuing the al-Sudānī government without a comprehensive agreement. This is particularly relevant as Shiʿi forces enter elections independently with tactical alliances in Sunni areas, as observed in the 2023 governorate council elections. al-Sudānī is reportedly moving closer to Sunni and Kurdish parties amid indications of a new triple alliance formation post-election, countered by divisions within the Sunni “House.” al-Sudānī seeks to obtain 50 seats to establish political leadership, with some suggesting the return of the “Obstructing Third” scenario (al-Madā, 2025, May 25).

3. Sunni Forces

An analysis of Sunni political positions regarding the elections suggests that the former Speaker of the Council of Representatives, al-Ḥalbūsī, is likely to participate in the elections with an independent list named the Progress Party (Taḡaddum). This alliance is expected to advance relative to other Sunni factions, as evidenced in the previous governorate council elections, particularly following a judicial ruling that cleared him of forgery charges related to his dispute with former MP Layth al-Dulaymī, which had resulted in his removal from the speakership. Additionally, he may be supported by affiliated lists overseen by party leaders, including an alliance led by the Minister of Industry in the al-Sudānī government, Khālīd al-Najm.

Additionally, Khamīs al-Khanjar is anticipated to contest the elections through the (Siyādah-Tashrīʿ) Alliance, in coalition with certain Sunni political entities such as the National Path Party, the Legislation (Tashrīʿ) Party, and the Citizen Current, amidst intense competition with al-Ḥalbūsī. This dynamic also applies to other Sunni actors, notably the Sunni figure aligned with the Coordination Framework, Muthanná al-Sāmarrāʾī, who aspires to prominent positions within the Sunni political landscape. His participation includes contesting in the Ṣalāḥ-al-Dīn and al-Anbār governorates alongside other groups such as the Iraq Awakening

Conference and the Prestige (Haybah) Party, as well as additional forces in certain governorates like the United (Muttaḥidūn) Party, led by the al-Nujayfī brothers.

4. Kurdish Forces

Kurdish political forces appear to have clearer and more realistic positions regarding their prospects in the forthcoming 2025 parliamentary elections. The outcomes of the Kurdistan Region elections serve as a proximate indicator of potential results in the national parliamentary elections. Accordingly, the Kurdistan Democratic Party, led by Mas'ūd Bārzānī, is expected to maintain its parliamentary representation and the consequent distribution of positions across various executive and legislative bodies. Conversely, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, led by Bāfel Ṭālabānī, has not experienced significant shifts in its popular support; absent its alliance with the Coordination Framework, it might have lost even the Presidency of the Republic. This situation may persist depending on the configuration of political alliances post-elections, potentially resulting in the Presidency being allocated to the Kurdistan Democratic Party, especially given the party's expressed interest in the position and its nomination of multiple candidates during its alliance with the Sadrist Movement following the October 2021 elections. Additionally, there may be unexpected developments involving non-traditional Kurdish parties and movements, such as the Gorran (Change) Movement and the faction led by Shāswār 'Abd-al-Wāḥid.

5. Civil and Tishrīn (October) Forces

The civil and Tishrīn forces lost the positive outcomes achieved following the historic October 2019 movement, particularly after their notable successes in the October 2021 elections. Despite this advantageous position, these forces failed to secure any significant roles, including governorships or chairmanships of provincial councils.

As political entities prepare for the 2025 governorate council elections, an intellectual political current representing the civil and Tishrīn forces, capable of earning the endorsement of the Iraqi people, has yet to fully materialize, aside from the formation of political alliances. Among these is the announcement of the Alternative (al-Badīl) Alliance, which includes the al-Wafā Movement led by 'Adnān al-Zurufī (a figure associated with political forces active for over two decades), the Iraqi Communist Party led by Rā'id Fahmī (representing leftist civil factions), the Independence (Istiqlāl) Party led by Sajjād Sālim, and the National House Party led by Ḥusayn al-Ghurābī (both linked to the Tishrīn movement). Additionally, the alliance comprises the Republican Gathering led by Sa'd al-Janābī, the Kafā (Enough) Movement led by Raḥīm al-Darrājī, the Civil Movement led by Shurūq al-'Abāyichī, the Shurū' (Commencement) Movement led by Tishrīn activist Aḥmad al-Washshāh, alongside other emerging groups.

X. Obligations for 2025

The year 2025 is unlikely to be decisive for blocs, parties, and political forces in achieving their demands or obligations for several reasons, including temporal constraints. The parliamentary elections are scheduled for the end of the year, while the process of selecting a Prime Minister and forming the government cabinet is expected to extend over several months due to conflicts and disagreements concerning names, quotas, and related issues. Nevertheless, the electoral weight of the blocs and political forces is anticipated to become apparent within days following the elections. This will provide a fundamental basis for delineating the political landscape and the characteristics of the Iraqi government's formation, beginning with the selection of the Prime Minister and extending to the appointment of cabinet members, deputy ministers, and all special grades.

All scenarios remain plausible, particularly if variables arise concerning the nature of popular participation. The competition for the position of head of government may be confined to two primary factors that will influence the selection of the Prime Minister:

1. International and Regional Influences

This factor pertains to the influences and pressures exerted by the United States and its regional allies on the Iraqi political sphere, encompassing various political forces and figures. These influences are subject to fluctuations depending on developments in the regional context, particularly the hierarchy of negotiations between the US and Iran. The latter, as in every electoral cycle, endeavors to ensure that its allies remain in power to sustain its political, economic, and security influence. Other regional actors, such as Turkey and several Arab Gulf states, similarly attempt to exert influence to varying degrees.

2. Internal Determinants

These determinants can be observed through the following positions:

1. **The Position of the Sadrist Movement:** The movement appears to distance itself from the polemics and complexities accompanying the formation of the government and the selection of its head, assuming the scenario of its election boycott is excluded.
2. **The Position of the Coordination Framework Forces:** This position is characterized by the following directions:
 - a. **The First:** Represented by al-Mālikī, who seeks to impose a new Prime Minister rather than re-select al-Sudānī for a second term. Conversely, he aims to appoint a Prime Minister aligned with his coalition, particularly if he secures a substantial number of seats.
 - b. **The Second:** Represented by the incumbent Prime Minister, al-Sudānī, who is actively pursuing a second term. His success depends not only on the Coordination Framework but also on his ability to garner increased support from the Sunni and Kurdish components.

- c. **The Third:** Represented by certain Coordination Framework forces aspiring to achieve greater gains and consolidate their influence by capitalizing on the Sadrist Movement's withdrawal.
3. **The Position of the Sunni and Kurdish forces:** Should the formation of an alliance akin to the "Triple Alliance" established by the Sadrist Movement recur, the Sunni and Kurdish groups may not oppose al-Sudānī, provided he obtains a majority within the Shi'i component and satisfies the conditions and demands of the Sunnis and Kurds.
4. **The Position of Civil, Tishrīn, and Independent Forces:** These forces may be better positioned if they organize their efforts as a "kingmaker" and secure a percentage of seats, contingent upon a high rate of electoral participation.

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3. Economy

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Despite the passage of two decades since the political transition, the Iraqi economy continues to be characterized by its rentier nature. Oil remains a dominant sector, accounting for approximately 50% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), nearly 90% of general budget revenues, and constituting the majority of total exports. Nevertheless, the Iraqi economy has experienced tangible development, particularly in infrastructure, despite delays in the approval of the 2024 federal budget schedules. These schedules were approved under Cabinet Resolution No. 24360 of 2024, ratified by the Council of Representatives under Resolution No. 64 of 2024 (Committee Affairs), and signed by the President of the Republic on June 27 of the same year. However, the schedules were not published in the Official Gazette (al-Waqā'i' al-'Irāqīyah) due to allegations of manipulation amounting to 14 trillion dinars, as stated by a member of the Parliamentary Finance Committee. The events of 2024 demonstrate the government's commitment to the program it presented to the Council of Representatives, encompassing not only economic matters but also other sectors.

The current government has undertaken efforts to implement economic reforms and redirect the existing trajectory. Emphasis was placed on the gas industry, which is a fundamental challenge due to its critical role in electricity production. Additionally, attention was directed toward refining industries to reduce imports that deplete national resources, as well as the pharmaceutical industry, which received special governmental support through encouragement of the private sector.

I. Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

The Iraqi government proceeded in accordance with its program, upon which it secured confidence, by adopting "citizen satisfaction" as a primary indicator of governmental institutional performance. This success was maintained for the

Table 3-1: Percentage Contribution of Economic Sectors to GDP for 2023 and 2024.

Sector	2023					2024				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing	2.11	5.6	1.51	2.1	2.79	2.56	6.30	1.96	2.62	3.39
Mining and Quarrying	46.53	41.76	47.04	44.16	44.88	41.71	39.27	37.52	31.50	37.36
Crude Oil	46.35	41.76	46.86	43.62	44.6	41.65	39.19	37.43	31.32	37.25
Other Mining	0.18	0.21	0.18	0.54	0.28	0.06	0.08	0.09	0.19	0.11
Manufacturing	2.56	3.51	3.64	4.53	3.55	4.27	4.01	4.28	3.82	4.09
Electricity and Water	1.12	1.3	1.43	0.74	1.14	2.43	3.02	4.46	2.25	3.04
Construction	3.58	4.16	3.62	10.75	5.66	4.28	5.03	6.26	12.36	7.09
Transport, Storage, and Communication	11.33	11.33	11.33	6.39	10	9.66	9.14	9.84	9.32	9.48
Wholesale/Retail Trade, Hotels, etc.	7.63	7.48	6.87	6.67	7.14	8.61	7.76	8.20	7.70	8.05
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	6.47	6.37	5.9	5.05	5.91	6.58	6.09	6.36	6.11	6.27
Banking and Insurance	1.1	1.1	1.1	0.62	0.97	1.21	1.21	1.21	1.21	1.21
Ownership of Dwellings	5.37	5.27	4.8	4.43	4.95	5.37	4.88	5.15	4.90	5.06
Social and Personal Development Services	18.67	18.5	18.66	19.79	18.93	20.63	20.11	21.85	25.06	21.96
General Government	14.28	14.09	14.44	15.9	14.71	16.46	16.33	17.86	21.25	18.03
Personal Services	4.39	4.41	4.22	3.89	4.22	4.17	3.78	3.99	3.81	3.93
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Prepared by researchers based on data from the Statistics and Geographic Information Systems Authority, National Accounts Directorate.

second consecutive year following the approval of the triennial budget for 2023, 2024, and 2025. The government conveyed several reassuring messages to the markets, including:

- Strengthening the Iraqi dinar despite the disparity between the nominal exchange rate and the parallel exchange rate.
- Offering multiple commitments to achieve development and reconstruction.
- Identifying solutions for previously stalled projects.
- Continuing engineering efforts to provide services in various areas of Baghdad and several governorates.
- Persisting in the evaluation of officials from the rank of Director General and above.
- Preparing strategic project plans such as the “Development Road” and the al-Nibrās petrochemical project.

- Prioritizing the completion of infrastructure, particularly roads, bridges, and alleviation of traffic congestion in the capital and governorates, with many projects already completed.
- Assigning special importance to the pharmaceutical industry, which now satisfies 35% of local market needs, an increase from 10% in 2023.

To assess the impact of governmental performance on economic activity, GDP indicators can be reviewed and compared with those of the previous year. While growth in the oil sector remains the primary driver of economic expansion, the non-oil real GDP grew by 2.5% in 2024, following a robust growth of 6% in 2023 (IMF, 2025). This growth coincided with a reduction in the inflation rate to 2.8% at 2022 prices, compared to 4.4% in 2023, according to the Statistics and Geographic Information Systems Authority.

Despite these developments, the dominance of oil in economic activity remains evident. According to Table 3-1, the oil sector's contribution to GDP reached 37.3% in 2024, a decline from 41.6% in 2023. This decrease is attributed to lower oil prices and production cuts implemented under the OPEC+ agreement. The subsequent largest contributions were from social and personal development services, accounting for 18.93% and 21.96%, respectively. The agricultural sector exhibited slight improvement, with its contribution rising to 3.93% compared to 2.79% in 2023. Furthermore, manufacturing performance improved, with its contribution increasing from 3.55% in 2023 to 4.09% in 2024.

II. The Federal Budget

The administration led by Prime Minister Muḥammad Shiyā' al-Sudānī successfully gained approval for a federal budget spanning three fiscal years (2023, 2024, and 2025). This budget was ratified and published in the Official Gazette, Issue No. 4729, on June 26, 2023, following a duration of 177 days. This triennial budget represents the largest financial plan in Iraq's history. According to Article 77, Section Two of the budget, the Council of Ministers was required to submit the budget schedules for 2024 and 2025 to the Council of Representatives for approval prior to the conclusion of the preceding fiscal year. However, the government failed to meet this deadline. Instead, the Council of Ministers approved the schedules under Resolution No. 24360 of 2024 and forwarded them to the Council of Representatives, who approved the schedules under Resolution No. 64 of 2024, and the President of the Republic ratified them on June 27, 2024. Despite this, the schedules were not published in the Official Gazette due to the detection of manipulation, estimated at approximately 14 trillion dinars, as reported by a member of the Parliamentary Finance Committee. Table 3-2 presents the most significant budget items.

The 2024 budget represents the largest financial allocation in Iraq's history and constitutes the second year of the triennial budgeting framework. Table 3-3 presents a comparative analysis of the budget schedules for 2023 and 2024. Although the 2023 budget was substantial, the 2024 budget surpasses it by an increase

Table 3-2: Key Items of the 2024 Budget Schedules (Billion IQD).

Item	Amount	Notes
General Revenues	147,837	
Total Oil Revenues	120,496	Based on \$70 per barrel and an exchange rate of 1,300 IQD/USD
Other Revenues	27,341	
Total General Expenditures	210,861	
Current Expenditures	156,843	
Employee Compensation	63,339	
Total Capital Expenditures	55,018	
Planned Deficit	64,024	

Source: Letter of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, dated March 20, 2024.

Table 3-3: Difference Between Actual Current Spending for 2023–2024 (Billion IQD).

Item	2022	2023	Difference
Employee Compensation	59,174	63,339	4,165
Service Requirements	4,886	4,690	-196
Commodity Requirements	12,343	12,759	416
Maintenance of Assets	1,206	1,109	-97
Grants, Subsidies, Interest, and Other Expenses	24,486	26,861	2,375
External Obligations and Contributions	581	646	65
Social Welfare	24,703	27,284	2,581
Capital Expenditures	55,366	55,017	-349
Indebtedness (Debt Service)	12,751	16,724	3,973
Special Programs	3,410	3,430	20
Total	198,910	211,861	12,951

Source: Prepared by researchers based on the 2023 budget and 2024 schedules.

of 12,951 billion dinars. This augmentation reflects the government's commitment to advancing its program; however, it overlooks the operational capacity of implementing agencies and the practicality of funding, resulting in a considerable planned deficit amounting to 64,024 billion dinars. Notably, the expenditure increase of 12,951 billion dinars in 2024 compared to 2023 is primarily attributed to employee compensation, which rose by 4,165 billion dinars due to an expansion in public sector employment. Additionally, grants, subsidies, interest payments, and other expenses accounted for the largest share of the increase at 2,375 billion dinars, followed by debt obligations, which increased by 3,973 billion dinars.

Table 3-4 illustrates the discrepancy between projected and actual revenues. The realization rate exceeded 95.22%, primarily attributable to the rise in oil prices. Nevertheless, realization rates exhibit significant variability; the lowest rates were observed in fees, which accounted for 18.6%, followed by other reve-

Table 3-4: Planned and Actual Revenue for 2024 (Billion IQD).

Ietm	Planned Revenue	Actual Revenue	Realization Rate (%)
General Revenues	147,837	140,774	95.22
Oil Revenues	120,496	125,285	103.97
Total Other Revenues	9,818	4,986	50.78
Taxes on Income and Wealth	6,432	3,927	61.05
Commodity Taxes and Excise Duties	2,014	2,075	103.03
Fees	6,802	1,265	18.60
Budget Share of Public Sector Profits	2,275	3,236	142.24

Source: Prepared by researchers based on the state account published on the website of the Ministry of Finance (www.mof.gov.iq).

nues (including miscellaneous and capital revenues) with a realization rate of 50%. Taxes on income and wealth registered a realization rate of 61%, suggesting instances of tax evasion and fraud, as the low realization rates reflect inaccuracies in revenue estimation.

III. The Financial Situation for 2024 (Comparison with 2023)

Figure 3-1 illustrates the variation in total realized revenues between 2024 and 2023, revealing a nearly identical trend in oil revenues. It is important to note that the federal government did not receive any revenues from the Kurdistan Regional Government due to the suspension of oil exports through the Turkish port of Ceyhan and the absence of an agreement concerning the utilization of oil extracted from the region for refining purposes. The figure also demonstrates a notable increase in “other revenues” (which encompass revenues from petroleum products) in 2024; however, these remain relatively low, constituting only 11% of total revenues.

An analysis of general expenditures indicates that total spending amounted to 150,527 billion dinars, with current expenditures comprising 125,214 billion dinars and investment expenditures accounting for 25,313 billion dinars. Current expenditures represent 83%, while investment expenditures constitute 17%, maintaining the same proportions observed in 2023. Figure 3-2 provides a detailed breakdown of current expenditures, where employee compensation accounted for 50% of current spending, followed by social welfare at 21.3%, and grants, subsidies, interest, and other expenses at 13.2%.

Employee compensation and social welfare together accounted for 71.3% of current expenditures. This exceptionally high percentage is inconsistent with the government’s vision for economic reform. Addressing this issue requires exceptional measures aimed at diversifying the economy by promoting the private sector or adopting a partnership model between the government and the private

Figure 3-1: General Revenues for the Years 2023–2024.

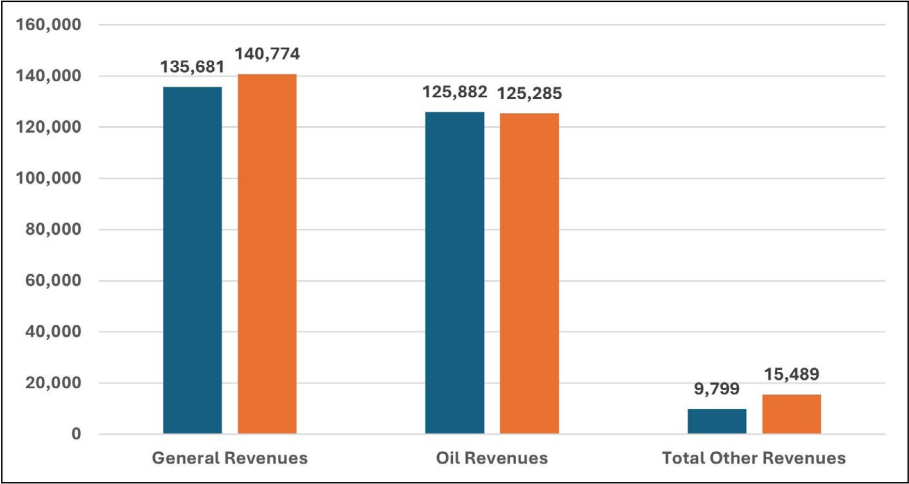
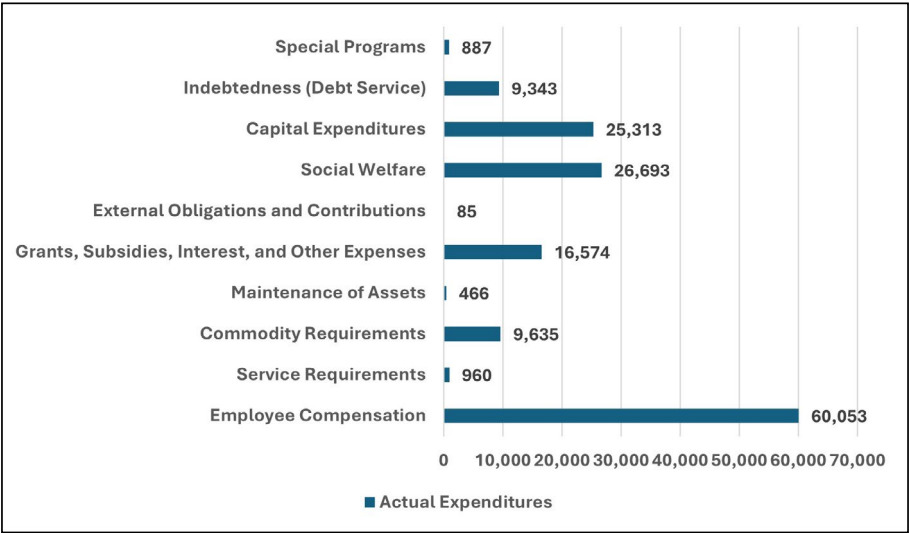


Figure 3-2: Current Budget for the Fiscal Year 2024 (Billion IQD).



Source: Ministry of Finance, State Accounts for 2024.

sector. It is noteworthy that the increase in general expenditures was not driven by a rise in oil prices, as the average price in 2024 was \$79 per barrel, which is lower than the 2023 average of \$82.95 per barrel.

The principal source of general revenue is oil, constituting approximately 91% in 2024. This indicates that general revenue estimates are contingent upon projections of crude oil export volumes and anticipated global oil prices, both of which are subject to fluctuations, sometimes severe. Consequently, caution is warranted when estimating both general expenditures (particularly current operational spending) and general revenues. The predominance of oil revenues over general

Table 3-5: Iraqi Oil Selling Price and Export Rate During the Months of 2024.

Month	Average Monthly Price (\$/barrel)	Daily Export Rate* (Thousand barrels/day)
January	78.90	3,213
February	79.09	3,659
March	82.27	3,303
April	87.45	3,413
May	82.97	3,359
June	82.57	3,410
July	83.43	3,486
August	76.54	3,414
September	72.52	3,329
October	73.45	3,327
November	71.97	3,296
December	72.19	3,259
Average	78.61	3,372

Source: <https://plattsconnect.spglobal.com>.

(*) The daily export rate was extracted by the researchers by dividing the total volume of exports by the number of days in each respective month.

income and the minimal contribution of non-oil activities reflect the significant and persistent structural imbalance that has characterized Iraqi budgets for several decades. This situation underscores the fragility of the Iraqi economy and its increasing dependence on oil. The negligible contribution of non-oil revenues contradicts the government's stated policy aimed at diversifying income sources. According to official government data, annual realized revenues from crude oil sales reached approximately \$96.190 billion in 2024, an increase from \$87.6 billion in 2023. Table 3-5 presents the monthly average price and the daily export rate.

Table 3-6 illustrates high implementation rates for budget items, with employee compensation achieving an approximate implementation rate of 95%, closely followed by social welfare at 98%. Conversely, the lowest implementation rates were observed in external contributions at 13.16% and service requirements at 20%. The overall implementation rate stood at 71%. These findings suggest inaccuracies in budget preparation, as demonstrated by the evident discrepancies in execution, where expenditure volumes surpass the capacities of spending units or where there is a failure to adhere to scientific principles in budget formulation. Consequently, it is imperative to transition from this traditional preparation method to a "programs and performance" budgeting framework.

The calculation of the actual deficit, as presented in Table 3-7, reveals a figure of 9,753 billion dinars, in contrast to the planned budget deficit of 64,024 billion dinars. When considering the granted advances totaling 18,084 billion dinars, the overall deficit amounts to 27,837 billion dinars. This deficit phenomenon reflects the executive bodies' inability to effectively implement the budget. It is important to highlight that the budget deficit remains within acceptable limits, constituting 2.7% of GDP, which is below the conventional threshold of 3%.

Table 3-6: Planned and Actual Expenditures for 2024 (Billion IQD).

Item	Planned Expenditures	Actual Expenditures	Implementation Rate (%)
Employee Compensation	63,339	60,053	94.81
Service Requirements	4,690	960	20.47
Commodity Requirements	12,759	9,635	75.52
Maintenance of Assets	1,109	466	42.02
Grants, Subsidies, Interest, and Other Expenses	26,861	16,574	61.70
External Obligations and Contributions	646	85	13.16
Social Welfare	27,284	26,693	97.83
Capital Expenditures	55,017	25,313	46.01
Indebtedness (Debt Service)	16,724	9,343	55.87
Special Programs	3,430	887	25.86
Total	211,861	150,527	71.05

Table 3-7: Surplus/Deficit Account for the Year 2024 (Billion IQD).

Details	Actual
Total Revenues	140,774
Total Expenditures	150,527
Deficit	9,753
Deficit to GDP Ratio (%)	2.7

Source: Compiled by the researchers based on state accounts for 2024.

Table 3-8: Investment Expenditures at the Governorate Level for 2023–2024 (Billion IQD).

Governorate	2023	2024	Difference
al-Baṣrah	1,458	890	-568
Nīnawá	748	476	-272
Baghdād	507	915	408
Dhī-Qār	461	326	-135
Diyālá	284	115	-169
Bābil	184	328	144
al-Anbār	378	351	-27
Maysān	345	209	-136
Wāsiṭ	354	234	-120
al-Najaf al-Ashraf	344	282	-62
al-Dīwānīyah	128	324	196
al-Muthanná	243	158	-85
Karbalā' al-Muqaddasah	387	354	-33
Ṣalāḥ-al-Dīn	319	270	-49

Source: Ministry of Finance, State Accounts for the years 2023–2024.

Investment expenditures declined across all governorates except Baghdād, Bābil, and al-Dīwānīyah, as indicated in Table 3-8. The most significant decreases were observed in al-Baṣrah, followed by Nīnawá and Diyālá. This pattern suggests an inequitable distribution of investment expenditures among governorates, a disparity potentially influenced by political factors.

IV. The Development Road

The Development Road represents one of the most prominent initiatives proposed by the al-Sudānī government. This project functions as a complementary extension to the al-Fāw Grand Port, linking it to the Turkish port of Mersin, and aligns strategically with China's Belt and Road Initiative. The consultancy and supervisory responsibilities for the project were entrusted to the Italian firm PEG. The road extends approximately 1,200 kilometers from al-Fāw to the border junction with Turkey, while the railway component spans 1,176 kilometers.

The estimated cost for the initial phase of the project ranges between \$17 billion and \$20 billion, with the entire project timeline projected to extend until 2050. The route traverses eleven Iraqi governorates and several major cities, incorporating fifteen stations. Completion of the first phase is anticipated by 2028, with the second phase scheduled for ten years subsequent to the first phase's conclusion. The project aims to invigorate transportation activities within Iraq, serving as a critical conduit between the East and West, enhancing trade relations between Iraq and Turkey, and fostering spatial development. Notably, it is expected to generate approximately 100,000 employment opportunities and facilitate the establishment of industrial cities along the corridor.

V. Monetary Policy in 2024

1. The Central Bank, Digital Transformation, and Financial Inclusion

The Central Bank of Iraq (CBI) has spearheaded digital transformation efforts aimed at promoting financial inclusion within the Iraqi economy. These efforts encompass the development of electronic payment infrastructures and the modernization of financial and banking institutions. The CBI has also overseen the banking sector and related institutions in integrating digital technologies into banking operations. Despite facing numerous challenges, the CBI has made significant strides in expanding financial inclusion over recent years. The following measures illustrate the CBI's progress in this transformation (Ṭāhir, 2025, p. 116):

1. Modernizing state-owned and private commercial banks by replacing outdated systems with contemporary frameworks, thereby phasing out obsolete policies and practices.
2. Increasing the balance volumes of state-operated banks and raising capital requirements for licensed private banks.

3. Revitalizing the Iraq Stock Exchange through the adoption of electronic trading systems.
4. Expanding the banking sector by licensing numerous private banks in order to increase the number of active institutions, and establishing branches across Iraqi governorates, villages, and sub-districts to enhance banking accessibility.
5. Authorizing numerous domestic and international money transfer companies.
6. Enacting the Electronic Payment Law in 2012 to improve the financial and banking sector's performance, alongside issuing service instructions and augmenting the capital of banks, exchange companies, and money transfer firms.
7. Implementing Law No. 43 of 2015 to regulate Islamic banks and foreign bank branches practicing Sharia-compliant banking, thereby safeguarding the banking system's integrity.
8. Executing the "decentralization of employee salaries" project in collaboration with state-owned banks under Resolution No. 313 of 2016. This initiative transitioned salary payments to electronic formats to regulate public expenditure, streamline financial operations, and consolidate the universal banking system. The al-Rafidain Bank led this project alongside the al-Rasheed, Industrial, Agricultural, and Real Estate banks. Additionally, the CBI Strategy (2016–2022) was launched as the first national strategy to enhance financial inclusion and advance the banking sector through integrated strategic planning.
9. Enhancing banking supervision by evaluating branch performance against international standards to merge underperforming branches, as well as developing risk management, adopting supervisory requirements, and standardizing account numbers via the International Bank Account Number (IBAN).
10. Strengthening proactive supervision of banking operations by monitoring liquidity and net stable funding to promote financial stability and inclusion. This included establishing specialized evaluation forms for banks, transfer companies, and electronic payment service providers. Other initiatives involved founding the Iraqi Deposit Insurance Company, depositing state employee salaries into state-owned and private banks, and improving payment systems by enabling mobile phone usage in clearing and settlement operations. The National Credit Bureau was also established. Since 2017, the CBI has implemented policies to absorb cash held outside the banking sector and integrate it into the formal financial system to enhance lending effectiveness and support small project financing.
11. Formalizing a cooperation agreement in 2018 with the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF) to develop the financial inclusion strategy, and establishing joint agreements with various central banks, the World Bank, the Inter-

- national Monetary Fund (IMF), and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to advance and evaluate the Iraqi banking system.
12. Implementing measures in 2019 to reorganize the banking sector, including applying Basel Accord requirements related to credit, market, and operational risks. Licensed Islamic banks were also permitted to use leasing contracts to finance housing units and real estate projects.
 13. Adopting measures in 2020 to strengthen banks' roles in financing economic activities, notably by enhancing loan facilities for private institutions, banks, and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) through debt rescheduling, extended repayment periods, and reduced interest rates; allowing money transfer companies to convert into Islamic banks contingent upon capital requirements; and bolstering microfinance institutions to finance projects not exceeding 5 million IQD.
 14. Launching a 2021 strategy to increase Automated Teller Machine (ATM) deployment across Iraq to support financial services and improve financial inclusion indicators.
 15. Initiating projects to support renewable energy financing through both private and state-owned banks.
 16. Presenting a strategic plan (2012–2023) aimed at achieving financial, monetary, and economic stability, strengthening the banking sector, fostering digital transformation of financial institutions, protecting the public, and enhancing the CBI's institutional and regulatory framework.
 17. Launching a 1 trillion IQD initiative in 2022 to finance SMEs and housing loans, contracting international firms to advance financial inclusion, reviewing the Iraqi payment system, and promoting women's empowerment. This included soft loan initiatives (15 million IQD), support for specialized banks, and health-related loans (15 million IQD). The payment system transitioned from paper-based transactions to smart cards and mobile-based smart card issuance. The CBI also implemented measures to activate Anti-Money Laundering protocols through the deployment of liaison officers within state-owned banks. These initiatives are further supported by improvements in cross-border risk monitoring systems. Additionally, the bank has authorized the establishment of "accreditation accounts" for electronic payment service providers at multiple outlets, aiming to strengthen the national strategy for financial inclusion.
 18. Completing the strategic plan's sub-objectives in 2023, aligning financial soundness indicators with IMF requirements. Sub-accounts for electronic payment providers were opened at JP Morgan via the CBI's main account for electronic smart card settlements.
 19. Formulating the National Strategy for Financial Inclusion in Iraq (2025–2029) in 2024, aiming to increase bank or electronic payment account ownership to 50% by 2030, reduce the gender gap in account ownership to 3.5%, and increase the proportion of Iraqis conducting digital payments to 85%.

20. Establishing a plan for adopting Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDC) by forming a specialized task force, attending seminars, preparing studies, and contracting a consultancy firm to draft the transition requirements.

The initiatives undertaken by the CBI, as previously discussed, have led to substantial advancements in financial inclusion and digital transformation metrics. The CBI employs three principal dimensions to evaluate trends in financial inclusion within Iraq:

- **First Dimension:** Access. This dimension pertains to the extent of banking penetration and density, including the number of Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) and bank branches distributed geographically.
- **Second Dimension:** Usage. This dimension measures banking financial depth, specifically the volume of loans and deposits as a percentage of the GDP.
- **Third Dimension:** Quality. This dimension concerns the CBI's role in marketing and promoting banking products to enhance the financial inclusion strategy. Due to the absence of appropriate analytical tools, quality levels are inferred based on the strategies implemented by the CBI.

A. Indicators of Access to Financial Services

1. Banking Penetration and Density Indicators

Data presented in Table 3-9 indicate that the number of operational bank branches in Iraq increased to 905 in 2022. This growth contributed to a marginal improvement in the banking penetration indicator, reaching 2.34, and the banking density indicator, which rose to 45.88. However, the number of commercial bank branches per 100,000 adults declined to 3.4, attributable to population growth. In 2023, all aforementioned indicators experienced a decline.

Table 3-9: Access Indicators (Banking Penetration and Density) in Iraq (2020–2023).

Year	Number of Bank Branches	Banking Penetration Rate	Banking Density	Number of Commercial Bank Branches per 100,000 Adults
2020	884	2.21	45.42	3.6
2021	876	2.2	44.1	3.6
2022	905	2.34	45.88	3.4
2023	891	2.17	44.27	3.2

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on: CBI, Research and Statistics Department, Annual Statistical Bulletins for the years (2013–2022); World Bank Sustainable Development Indicators, Financial and Monetary Indicators for the Years (2013–2024).

2. Automated Teller Machine (ATM) Development Indicators

ATMs facilitate beneficiaries' access to their deposited funds at any time through the use of smart cards, eliminating the necessity to visit bank branches. This mechanism reduces the risks associated with carrying cash and streamlines financial transactions via the widespread deployment of ATMs, which operate 24

Table 3-10: Banking Penetration of ATMs within Iraq (2020–2024).

Year	Number of ATMs	Number of ATMs per 100,000 Adults	Number of ATMs per 1,000 km ²
2020	1,340	5.920	3.5
2021	1,566	6.898	3.57
2022	2,223	9.97	5.7
2023	3,100	12.7	7.7
2024	4,021	16.4	10

Source: CBI, Statistical Portal.

Table 3-11: Penetration of Electronic Payment Services and Electronic Wallets (2020–2024).

Year	Number of POS Terminals	Number of POC Terminals
2020	2,226	13,796
2021	7,540	7,540
2022	8,329	17,610
2023	10,718	17,610
2024	23,066	17,610

Source: CBI, Statistical Portal.

hours daily in markets, shops, and malls. The CBI aims to promote the use of electronic payment tools to curtail cash usage. Data in Table 3-10 demonstrate a gradual increase in the number of ATMs in Iraq, reaching 3,100 in 2023. The number of ATMs per 100,000 adults in the same year was 12.7, while the number of ATMs per 1,000 km² was 7.7. The total number of ATMs rose to 4,021 in 2024. It is noteworthy that the total number of ATMs in Iraq remains low and disproportionate to the number of electronic smart cards issued.

3. Penetration of Electronic Payment Services

The number of Point of Sale (POS) terminals in Iraq increased to 10,718 in 2023, while the number of Point of Cash (POC) terminals reached 17,610 in the same year. The number of POS terminals doubled in 2024, reaching 23,066, whereas the number of POC terminals remained constant.

B. Usage Indicators (Banking Financial Depth)

These indicators reflect the extent to which individuals utilize financial and banking services. They also indicate the level of development and efficiency of these services, as well as the effectiveness of existing financial and banking institutions in promoting and encouraging such usage. These indicators serve as a summary and outcome of the CBI's efforts in implementing the financial inclusion strategy.

1. Banking Depth Indicator for Loans

The banking sector plays a crucial role in advancing the financial inclusion strategy by converting dormant financial resources held by individuals into liquid assets. This process enables banks to reallocate these funds to finance domestic projects. Accordingly, this indicator serves as a measure of the Iraqi banking sector's effectiveness in credit creation and economic stimulation. Specifically,

the banking depth indicator for loans quantifies the volume of loans extended by banks relative to the GDP. As shown in Table 3-12, this indicator exhibited variability during the period from 2020 to 2023, beginning at 13.3% in 2020, declining over the subsequent two years, and increasing again to 13.4% in 2023.

These findings suggest fluctuations in credit extension rates throughout the study period, with no substantial progress observed. Moreover, the data indicate a limited contribution of loans to GDP composition. This outcome falls short of the objectives set by the CBI, primarily because GDP growth outpaced loan growth. Additionally, heightened credit requirements and risk-related factors imposed by banks have further constrained credit availability. Such conditions hinder the effective implementation of the financial inclusion strategy, as they imply the presence of unutilized financial surpluses outside the formal banking system. Furthermore, considerations of risk and return have deterred individuals and project owners from pursuing credit or expansion.

2. Banking Depth Indicator for Deposits

This indicator reflects the banking sector’s capacity to attract deposits from individuals. Enhancements in banking services, coupled with reductions in bureaucratic obstacles and associated costs, could significantly improve this indicator and increase individual deposit levels. According to Table 3-12, the indicator experienced a modest rise to 14.6% in 2021, followed by a decline in 2022, and a subsequent increase to 16.7% in 2023.

Overall, the trend for this indicator remains weak, highlighting the minimal contribution of deposits to total economic output and the fact that GDP growth has outpaced deposit growth. This trend reflects a deficient public financial culture and a lack of confidence in private banking institutions, prompting individuals to invest in real estate, gold, or foreign currencies as alternatives to formal banking procedures. Consequently, there is a preference for cash transactions, resulting in generally low deposit volumes. Despite a substantial proportion of individuals holding accounts in financial institutions or possessing credit cards, these resources are often underutilized and reserved for urgent needs.

Table 3-12: Usage Indicators (Banking Financial Depth) in Iraq (2020–2023) (%).

Year	Banking Depth Indicator for Loans (%)	Banking Depth Indicator for Deposits (%)
2020	13.3	13.5
2021	11.1	14.6
2022	9.5	13.6
2023	13.4	16.7

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on World Bank Sustainable Development Indicators, Financial and Monetary Indicators for the Years (2013–2024).

3. Growth in the Number of Bank Accounts

Between 2020 and 2024, the banking sector in Iraq experienced substantial growth in the number of bank accounts across all financial institutions. Specifically, the total number of savings accounts increased markedly from 1.4 million

Table 3-13: Growth in the Number of Bank Accounts in Iraq (2020–2024).

Year	Current Accounts (Corporate/Institutional)	Fixed-Term Deposit Accounts	Savings Accounts	Current Accounts (Individual)
2020	355,904	83,612	1,446,969	1,153,037
2021	470,074	186,036	3,489,040	1,981,826
2022	573,205	191,955	3,915,175	2,016,322
2023	655,828	226,223	4,999,188	2,914,652
2024	758,172	253,413	7,699,596	4,578,151

Source: CBI, Statistical Portal.

in 2020 to 7.6 million in 2024. Concurrently, individual current accounts rose from 1.1 million to 4.5 million during the same period. This pattern indicates a growing preference among individuals for savings accounts, which are favored for fund preservation and ease of access, targeting specific individual demographics rather than primarily businessmen or corporate entities. In contrast, corporate and institutional current accounts expanded to 758,000 in 2024, up from 355,000 in 2020. Fixed-term deposit accounts reached their peak in 2024, totaling 253,000 accounts. This figure suggests a persistent hesitancy among individuals and institutions to commit funds for extended periods, which adversely affects banks' liquidity bases. Savings accounts remain the most popular choice among individuals, as detailed in Table 3-13.

4. Growth in the Number of Smart Cards and Electronic Wallets (Mobile Payment Services)

Since 2017, the CBI has implemented the National Financial Inclusion Strategy to promote and encourage the adoption of modern financial services, aligning with global advancements. Several initiatives have been undertaken, including the development of electronic payment infrastructure within Iraqi banks, particularly state-owned institutions, through mobile platforms. These efforts aim to facilitate peer-to-peer transactions, reduce cash dependency, and foster competition among banks and financial institutions to enhance service quality. In this context, the CBI granted licenses to Zain Cash and Asia Hawala in 2017, and to Nass Wallet in 2020, authorizing them to provide various financial services such as fund transfers and electronic payment card issuance. Zain Cash has maintained a dominant position in these operations from 2017 to 2024.

As shown in Table 3-14, the number of electronic wallets increased from 403,797 in 2020 to approximately 4.9 million by early 2024 across all Iraqi governorates, due to the ease of mobile transfers and the avoidance of theft risks and transportation costs. Additionally, the issuance of credit, debit, and prepaid cards has expanded significantly since 2017. Credit cards increased from 38,883 in 2020 to 126,491 in 2024, debit cards rose from 1,460,891 in 2020 to 6,484,402 in 2023, and prepaid cards surged from 147,850 in 2017 to 13,143,336 in 2024.

These trends reflect a growing preference for card-based transactions as individuals seek to minimize cash usage for bill payments and purchases. The shift towards digital payment methods is driven by considerations of security, convenience, and the growing digital literacy of the population.

Table 3-14: Growth in the Number of Smart Cards and Electronic Wallets (2017–2024).

Year	Debit Cards	Credit Cards	Prepaid Cards	Number of E-Wallets
2020	1,460,891	38,883	9,006,951	403,797
2021	2,811,503	46,469	8,891,436	122,635
2022	5,083,997	50,927	9,771,371	2,107,265
2023	5,430,434	61,320	10,711,017	2,970,390
2024	6,484,402	126,491	13,143,336	4,980,427

Source: CBI, Statistical Portal.

nience, and efficient settlement of financial obligations, supported by notable advancements in the electronic infrastructure of both public and private banking sectors.

2. The Final Days of the Foreign Currency Selling Window and New Arrangements

The Foreign Currency Buying and Selling Auction, commonly referred to as the “Currency Window,” was initiated in 2003 as a monetary policy and trade finance instrument intended for a limited duration not exceeding two years. Despite this initial timeframe, its operation extended for over two decades, as the CBI adopted it as a tool for open market operations within monetary policy. However, persistent challenges, particularly those related to regulating dollar smuggling and the submission of inaccurate commercial documentation, ultimately led to its discontinuation. Consequently, in 2023, the CBI established an electronic platform to enhance the accuracy of fund transfers, serving as a transitional measure toward the permanent abolition of the currency selling window. The CBI officially decided to terminate the window’s operations by the end of 2024, transitioning to a new trade finance mechanism based on agreements between Iraqi commercial banks and trusted foreign correspondent banks.

Data presented in Table 3-15 reveals that the window’s purchases from the government during 2023 amounted to \$64,000 million, reflecting an increase of \$10,645 million compared to the previous year. This figure represents a substantial surplus over sales within the same period, with the difference reaching \$30,501 million, approximately five times the differential recorded in 2022. The table further indicates that the decline in cash sales was marginal relative to the prior year; rather, the most pronounced decrease occurred in remittance sales, attributable to the implementation of the new electronic platform system. Notably, in 2023, the CBI authorized the sale of currencies other than the US Dollar, commencing in April to circumvent challenges associated with settling trade with countries where dollar transfers are prohibited. These alternative currency sales reached \$47 million in April and expanded significantly thereafter, culminating in \$4,547 million by December. According to the CBI, these currencies include the Indian Rupee, Chinese Yuan, Euro, UAE Dirham, Saudi Riyal, and Jordanian Dinar, which are utilized alongside the US Dollar to strengthen bank balances.

The implementation of the SWIFT system in Iraq, which accurately monitors fund movements via the electronic platform, impeded the window’s operations,

Table 3-15: Window Purchases and Sales for 2023 and 2024 (Million USD).

Month	2023					2024				
	Pur-chases from Gov.	Remit-tance Sales	Cash Sales	Other Curren-cies	Total	Pur-chases from Gov.	Remit-tance Sales	Cash Sales	Other Curren-cies	Total
January	5,500	647	1,106	—	1,753	4,800	2,385	335	5,255	7,975
February	4,000	978	1,030	—	2,008	2,000	2,520	283	3,768	6,571
March	2,500	2,522	1,163	—	3,685	7,000	1,815	269	3,134	5,218
April	5,500	2,938	844	47	3,829	5,500	1,163	284	3,962	5,409
May	4,000	2,631	998	276	3,905	7,000	1,522	384	3,357	5,263
June	2,000	2,827	673	1,863	5,363	5,500	859	210	3,231	4,300
July	3,000	2,619	479	2,520	5,618	9,599	1,574	241	4,759	6,574
August	7,500	2,109	738	3,239	6,087	4,739	1,632	201	4,180	6,013
September	7,000	1,956	420	2,969	5,345	4,978	1,442	250	5,444	7,136
October	10,000	2,469	312	3,279	6,060	6,882	1,781	199	6,143	8,123
November	3,900	1,761	293	3,863	5,917	4,437	1,432	210	4,845	6,487
December	9,100	1,689	297	4,547	6,533	6,219	1,223	313	7,047	8,583

Source: CBI, Statistical Portal.

particularly sales conducted through remittances, which finance trade and constitute approximately 90% of the window's daily sales. This disruption prompted merchants to resort to the "cash market" to fulfill their commercial demand for US Dollars, resulting in a sharp increase in the exchange rate during late 2022 and early 2023. However, following an agreement with the US Department of the Treasury and the Federal Reserve concerning arrangements for the financial transfer platform and the use of non-dollar currencies, the escalation in the dollar's value was controlled. Sales through these alternative methods, which comply with transfer system requirements, increased markedly. As illustrated in Table 3-15, 2024 experienced a significant expansion in the sales of other currencies, surpassing the combined total of cash and remittance sales multiple times.

With the conclusion of 2024 and the onset of 2025, the foreign currency window mechanism for trade finance was discontinued. It has been supplanted by reliance on correspondent banks operating in coordination with Iraqi private commercial banks. The number of such banks has increased to over twenty institutions that have established accounts with correspondent banks for trade finance and financial transfers. Consequently, the CBI has withdrawn from direct involvement in the trade finance mechanism, delegating this responsibility to private banks.

3. Reserves, Exchange Rate Policy, and New Arrangements

At the outset of 2023, the newly appointed management of the CBI undertook initial measures by adjusting the foreign exchange rate against the Iraqi dinar, effectively revaluing the currency. This adjustment entailed a reduction of approximately 10.3%, with the official exchange rate decreasing from 1,450 IQD to 1,300 IQD per US Dollar. Table 3-16 presents the parallel market exchange rates for 2023, highlighting a peak in November when the rate reached 1,603 IQD per dollar. Throughout 2024, the parallel exchange rate exhibited fluctuations,

Table 3-16: Development of Foreign Reserves and the Parallel Exchange Rate (2023–2024).

Month	2023		2024	
	Reserves (Billion IQD)	Exchange Rate (IQD/USD)	Reserves (Billion IQD)	Exchange Rate (IQD/USD)
January	148,414	1,598	140,529	1,527
February	134,397	1,526	138,572	1,522
March	141,849	1,558	141,693	1,494
April	143,118	1,455	142,533	1,476
May	141,900	1,455	141,728	1,464
June	142,105	1,471	142,274	1,469
July	142,451	1,498	144,577	1,494
August	143,406	1,519	143,957	1,498
September	143,614	1,548	142,950	1,500
October	148,323	1,597	139,687	1,527
November	147,055	1,603	136,877	1,508
December	145,748	1,548	130,347	1,510

Source: CBI, Statistical Portal; Ministry of Planning, Central Statistical Organization, Consumer Price Indices and Inflation Rates in the Iraqi Economy for 2022, 2023.

alternating between increases and decreases, while maintaining a substantial disparity from the official rate over the two-year span.

The volatility observed in the dollar exchange rate can be attributed to two principal factors. The first relates to trade interactions with countries under economic sanctions imposed by the United States, which aims to restrict the flow of its currency to nations engaged in commerce with Iraq. Consequently, Iraqi importers dealing with these sanctioned countries are compelled to acquire dollars outside the official “window” to facilitate their transactions. This necessity exerts considerable upward pressure on the dollar price within the parallel market, as such transactions cannot be financed through the official window under the SWIFT system. The second factor involves speculative actors holding substantial quantities of Iraqi dinars who manipulate the parallel exchange rate to capitalize on “triangular arbitrage” opportunities among the dinar, the dollar, and the currencies of certain neighboring countries where dollar transactions are permitted under the SWIFT system. These speculators leverage electronic technologies and foreign transfer mechanisms to execute their strategies.

These dynamics are reflected in the fluctuations of foreign reserves. As detailed in Table 3-16, reserves amounted to 145,748 billion IQD at the conclusion of 2023, declining to 130,347 billion IQD by the end of 2024. This reduction in reserves is attributable to two main causes: firstly, the foreign exchange rate adjustment led to increased demand for the dollar and heightened sales through the official window to stabilize the dollar price; secondly, government borrowing to cover the budget deficit further strained reserve levels.

4. Monetary Base, Money Supply, and Inflation

The sterilization operations conducted by the CBI via foreign currency window sales, intended to absorb the liquidity generated by extensive government spending following the approval of the triennial budget for the years (2023, 2024, 2025), did not effectively constrain the growth of the monetary base or the expansion of the money supply. As demonstrated in Table 3-17, the currency issued exhibited a continuous increase throughout 2023 and 2024. At the outset of 2023, the monetary base was 149,052 billion IQD, rising to 165,612 billion IQD by year-end, reflecting a growth rate of 11.11%. Concurrently, the narrow money supply increased by 6.8%, and the broad money supply rose by 5.3%.

Conversely, data for 2024 reveal a decline in the monetary base, which stood at 149,482 billion IQD at the beginning of the year and decreased to 142,320 billion IQD by the end, indicating a negative growth rate of -4.79%. Similarly, the narrow and broad money supplies recorded negative growth rates of -2.4% and -1.8%, respectively. The reduction in the growth rates of monetary aggregates in 2024 compared to the previous year is attributed to the contraction of the monetary base resulting from the CBI's sterilization policy.

The escalation in government expenditure resulting from the 2022 Emergency Support Law and preceding legislation led to an expansion in the volume of currency issued, which doubled due to the money multiplier effect. This surplus money supply in the economy influenced inflation and price levels, which were already affected by imported inflation as a result of the rising parallel exchange rate of the dollar against the dinar following the revaluation in early 2023. It has been observed that increased dollar sales aimed at withdrawing dinars from circulation were effective in 2024, resulting in a reduction in the monetary base as well as the narrow and broad money supplies.

Table 3-17 Monetary Base and Money Supply for 2023 and 2024 (Billion IQD).

Month	2023			2024		
	Monetary Base	Narrow Money	Broad Money	Monetary Base	Narrow Money	Broad Money
January	149,052	150,067	171,852	149,482	156,675	177,251
February	150,021	149,914	171,451	145,273	155,089	175,503
March	152,727	149,373	170,464	144,667	152,396	172,696
April	153,331	151,623	173,116	143,060	154,352	174,817
May	155,604	153,622	173,486	145,408	157,565	178,269
June	156,141	155,769	177,771	155,674	158,282	179,110
July	147,706	154,956	176,784	156,234	159,891	181,092
August	149,789	152,569	174,315	155,011	159,171	180,302
September	155,669	152,418	173,950	150,828	158,594	179,766
October	163,754	155,427	176,305	147,114	156,418	177,391
November	156,538	158,635	178,890	140,743	152,620	173,727
December	165,612	160,322	180,977	142,320	152,906	174,044

Source: CBI, Statistical Portal.

Table 3-18: Annual and Core Inflation for 2023 and 2024.

Month	Annual Inflation 2023 (2022=100)		Annual Inflation 2024 (2022=100)	
	General	Core	General	Core
January	7.5	7.3	0.1	0.8
February	6.9	6.4	0.6	1.6
March	5.3	5.0	1.6	2.7
April	3.9	4.1	3.0	4.2
May	3.4	3.7	3.4	4.1
June	3.4	3.7	3.6	3.5
July	3.5	3.7	3.7	3.1
August	3.7	3.8	3.7	2.8
September	3.6	3.9	3.1	2.9
October	4.1	4.5	2.9	2.9
November	1.0	4.6	2.9	2.3
December	4.0	4.5	2.7	2.3
Annual	4.4	4.6	2.6	2.8

Source: CBI, Statistics and Research Department, Inflation Analysis Report in Iraq for 2024.

Table 3-18 illustrates a decline in inflation rates for 2024 compared to 2023. The 2024 rates demonstrate clear price stability for goods and services, attributable to the control over money supply indicators. This stability has approached levels that may be characterized as deflationary; the annual inflation index was 4.4% in 2023, decreasing to 2.6% in 2024.

VI. Iraq’s Indebtedness

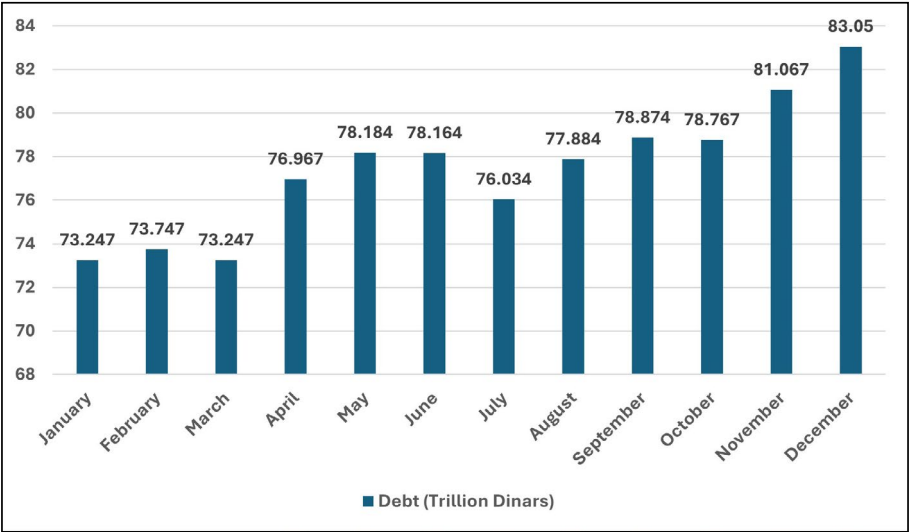
In 2024, Iraq’s external debt did not present a significant challenge, as it remained within internationally accepted thresholds. As demonstrated in Table 3-19, the debt-to-GDP ratio was approximately 3%, consistent with established benchmarks for indebtedness indicators. The external debt declined from roughly \$16 billion to nearly \$10 billion, attributable to governmental efforts to reduce foreign liabilities.

Conversely, domestic debt exhibited an increasing trend throughout 2024, rising from 70.6 trillion IQD in December 2023 to 83 trillion IQD in December 2024. This corresponds to a monthly growth rate of 1.5%, a notably high rate reflecting the extent of governmental influence on monetary policy via indirect internal borrowing from the CBI. This borrowing was facilitated through the discounting of treasury bills and government bonds sold to commercial banks at the CBI.

Table 3-19: Gross Domestic Product and External Debt (Billion USD).

Year	Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	External Debt	Debt/GDP Ratio (%)
2023	255.519	15.976	6.3
2024	279.641	8.9	3.2

Figure 3-3: Domestic Public Debt during the Months of 2024 (Trillion IQD).



Source: CBI, Statistical Portal.

According to Modern Monetary Theory, internal debt is generally not considered problematic provided it is denominated in a sovereign currency. Internal borrowing typically becomes concerning only if it induces inflation. Given that inflation in Iraq remains within acceptable limits, the internal debt is not regarded as a serious issue. The subsequent figure illustrates the progression of internal debt during 2024.

VII. Iraqi Oil: Reserves and Production in 2024

1. Overview and Licensing Rounds

According to conservative estimates by the US Energy Information Administration, Iraq possesses approximately 145 billion barrels of proven crude oil reserves, representing about 18% of the total reserves in the Middle East and ranking fifth globally. However, unofficial assessments suggest that Iraq’s actual reserves may be substantially higher. In October 2010, the Iraqi Ministry of Oil revised its official estimate of proven reserves upward and simultaneously reported that Iraq’s undiscovered resources could amount to approximately 215 billion barrels.

In 2024, the Iraqi Ministry of Oil initiated 29 oil and gas projects across 12 governorates as part of the supplementary fifth and sixth licensing rounds. Twenty-two companies, including eight Chinese firms, acquired information packages to participate in the bidding process for these fields. The Ministry projected that the volumes of oil and gas to be added through these rounds would contribute significantly to meeting the country’s imported gas requirements.

The supplementary fifth and sixth licensing rounds continued the efforts of the previous rounds (first through fifth). Projects unawarded in the fifth round were

incorporated into its annex, comprising fields and exploration blocks with considerable oil potential. The sixth round focused on fields promising “free gas.” These rounds aimed to augment Iraq’s oil reserves and increase natural gas production to an expected 3,450 million standard cubic feet per day (MMSCFD), while raising oil output by over one million barrels.

In the latest contracting process, Chinese companies secured 10 of the 13 awarded fields. Of the 13 projects offered, seven received no bids, and one received a bid but was not awarded. The prominent presence of Chinese firms in Iraq’s oil sector aligns with China’s strategic pursuit of stable and long-term oil supplies to satisfy its expanding economic demands. China is currently the world’s largest oil importer, consuming over 11 million barrels per day, while Iraq ranks as the third-largest crude oil exporter to China. This dynamic explains the predominance of Chinese companies as primary operators in many Iraqi fields.

Most Chinese companies with awarded projects are already established in Iraq. ZhenHua Oil operates the East Baghdād field through its local subsidiary, EBS, while CNOOC manages multiple oil fields in Maysān. Anton Oil, which acquired the al-Ẓafariyah oil field in Wāsiṭ, serves as the principal oil services contractor for the Majnūn field, managed by the al-Baṣrah Oil Company (BOC) since Shell’s exit in 2018. GeoJade participates in a consortium proposing development of the al-Ṭūbah oil field in al-Baṣrah, also managed by BOC.

Winning bids in these rounds were determined by the “remuneration percentage,” wherein companies offering the lowest profit margins secured contracts. Notably, the al-Ẓafariyah field contract was awarded with a profit margin of 29.16%, exceeding those for the al-Fāw and Block 7 exploration areas. This is atypical given that al-Ẓafariyah is a discovered but undeveloped (non-producing) field, presenting minimal risk.

The fifth and sixth licensing rounds failed to attract foreign investment in most gas exploration blocks, primarily due to the high-risk nature of these blocks, many of which are situated in the Western Region.

Despite Iraq’s ambitions to increase oil production capacity, domestic challenges persist, including limited export capacity caused by aging and deteriorating infrastructure and water acquisition difficulties. Additionally, disputes over production control in the Kurdistan Region have adversely affected crude oil production and export volumes from northern fields. The Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline was closed in March 2023, prompting Iraq to boost production in other fields to offset northern output losses.

The pipeline between Iraq and Turkey remains closed, preventing exports of oil produced in the Kurdistan Region to international markets, despite amendments to Article 12/Second/C of the 2023 budget, which equalized production and transport costs for Kurdistan’s oil with those produced under the Federal Ministry of Oil. The amendment commissioned a consultancy to determine costs for each Kurdistan field; meanwhile, the Ministry of Finance agreed to pay \$16 per barrel to Kurdistan as an advance for production and transport costs for oil

delivered to SOMO, to be reconciled later. The production and transport cost for oil produced by the Federal Ministry of Oil is \$6.9 per barrel, whereas Kurdistan demands approximately \$32.9 per barrel, broken down as follows:

- Oil production cost: \$24.32 per barrel
- Oil transport cost via the Ceyhan pipeline: \$8.59 per barrel

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) delegation criticized the Iraqi Ministry of Oil, arguing that the budget law's mechanism for calculating production and transport costs neglected several critical factors, including:

- The nature of oil contracts in the Kurdistan Region as "production-sharing contracts" with producing companies, given that the Region lacks a national oil company.
- Oil pipelines under the Federal Government are public assets owned by the Federal Ministry of Oil, whereas the KRG does not own pipelines; existing pipelines are private assets developed through private investment.
- The production costs determined by the Federal Ministry of Oil differ from actual costs incurred.

International oil companies have urged the federal government to recognize their commercial contracts and ensure payment for past and future oil exports, alongside full implementation of federal budget provisions concerning the KRG.

In 2024, Iraq signed a memorandum of understanding with the British BP group to rehabilitate and develop four fields operated by the North Oil Company (NOC) in Kirkuk. Iraq and BP agreed to invest in the Kirkuk, Bāy Ḥasan, Khabbāz, and Jambūr fields, collectively adding approximately 112,000 barrels per day and utilizing associated gas. This agreement follows a "profit-sharing" model, effectively mirroring the production-sharing agreements employed by Kurdistan in 55 contracts with foreign companies. Observers note the irony that the Ministry of Oil, which has historically criticized Kurdistan's contracts, is now entering into similar agreements for already producing fields, unlike Kurdistan's discovered but undeveloped fields. This approach is viewed as a dissipation of oil wealth, as companies' net revenue shares are expected to exceed half; experience in Kurdistan indicates foreign companies receive approximately 56% of oil revenues as "cost oil" and "profit oil."

2. Iraqi Oil Exports and Revenues

In 2024, Iraq's crude oil exports averaged approximately 3.372 million barrels per day (bpd), representing a decline from 3.422 million bpd in 2023. The Asian market accounted for roughly 73% of Iraqi oil exports through Gulf ports, equivalent to 2.464 million bpd. The European market was the second largest, comprising 20% of exports at approximately 675,000 bpd, followed by the American market at 6%, with about 191,000 bpd. Africa accounted for approximately 41,000 bpd in 2024.

China was the leading importer of Iraqi crude oil in 2024, receiving approximately 1.180 million bpd. Iraq ranked as the third-largest oil exporter to China, following Russia and Saudi Arabia. India was the second-largest importer from Iraq, with 921,000 bpd, followed by South Korea at 291,000 bpd and the United States at 185,000 bpd.

Iraqi oil exports to the United States declined from 228,000 bpd in 2023 to 185,000 bpd in 2024. This reduction is attributed to refineries on the US West Coast substituting heavy Iraqi crude with more affordable oil from Canada. Approximately 590,000 bpd of Canadian oil sands were transported to Vancouver for export via the Trans Mountain pipeline, providing West Coast refineries with a cost advantage that would otherwise have required paying premiums for Iraqi crude. Concurrently, US imports of Iraqi "Basma Heavy" crude decreased to 3,587 bpd from 76,000 bpd. According to Bloomberg index pricing, Western Canadian Select (WCS) heavy crude in Alberta trades at approximately \$13 less than the US West Texas Intermediate (WTI), while Basma Heavy trades at about \$5.55 less than the Brent benchmark.

Iraq prioritizes exporting its oil to Asia to maximize revenues, as transport and insurance costs are borne by the buyer and thus excluded from the pricing formula for oil exported to Asia. Conversely, Iraq incurs a portion of transport and insurance costs when exporting to European markets (approximately \$3 per barrel) and \$3.3 per barrel for the American market. These costs result from the long distances involved and transit fees imposed on oil tankers passing through the Suez Canal.

Given that the Iraqi economy is a rentier economy heavily reliant on oil revenues to finance its income, there has been a decline in the diversification of non-oil income sources. Moreover, public revenues remain volatile and almost entirely dependent on oil proceeds. These revenues constitute the primary source of financing for the Iraqi budget, rather than the state pursuing alternative income sources to strengthen the treasury and its resources. Consequently, the general budget is significantly influenced by the external variable of crude oil prices, which substantially impacts the Iraqi economy.

3. Oil Refining Industry in Iraq

Iraq ranks among the world's leading crude oil producers, with production exceeding 4 bpd. However, its oil refining sector remains underdeveloped and fails to meet domestic market demands adequately. Although the country's refining capacity surpasses 1.1 million bpd, actual output is approximately 800,000 bpd. Notably, half of this output comprises residual fuel, commonly referred to as heavy fuel oil or "black oil," which holds a lower market value compared to crude oil. In 2024, Iraq achieved self-sufficiency in diesel and kerosene production but continues to rely on imports for gasoline.

The Ministry of Oil is actively pursuing an increase in the total production capacity of the South Refineries Company to approximately 280,000 bpd by developing and expanding units within its affiliated refineries. Additionally, the

operationalization of the Karbalā' Refinery in 2023 presents an opportunity to augment production capacity. As Iraq's most advanced refinery, it is designed to process 140,000 bpd of both heavy and light crude oils to produce "white products," thereby reducing the nation's dependence on imported gasoline and diesel. Should the Karbalā' Refinery achieve a production rate of 9 million liters of gasoline per day, total refinery output would increase to 27 million liters per day (following the commissioning of the North Refinery). This expansion would satisfy approximately 90% of domestic gasoline consumption, reducing gasoline imports to 3 million liters per day, which currently constitute three-quarters of imported petroleum derivatives.

The Ministry of Oil's strategic objective is to convert 40% of Iraq's crude oil exports into light petroleum derivatives. Achieving this goal necessitates expanding the refining capacity from 1 million bpd to 2.5 million bpd, which would require constructing ten new refineries comparable to the Karbalā' facility, with an estimated investment of up to \$60 billion. Consequently, Iraq's crude oil exports would decrease from 3.5 million to 2 million bpd. However, the Ministry has yet to specify the timeline or the implementation approach, including whether the initiative will be financed through internal resources, the general budget, or foreign investment.

In 2024, Iraq's petroleum product exports totaled approximately \$2.907 billion, whereas imports reached \$4.021 billion. Heavy fuel oil (black oil) constitutes the majority of exports, in addition to smaller quantities of naphtha and jet fuel. Conversely, gasoline remains the primary component of petroleum product imports.

VIII. Electricity in Iraq: Reality and Prospects

On March 8, 2025, the administration of US President Donald Trump revoked the waiver permitting Iraq to pay Iran for gas and electricity imports. This action aimed to prevent the Iraqi financial system from being used to circumvent US sanctions, as part of the administration's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran. The campaign seeks to isolate Iran economically and eliminate its oil export revenues to impede its advancement in various sectors, particularly military and nuclear domains. Iraq depends heavily on Iranian gas and electricity, especially during summer months, rendering US waivers critical for maintaining energy supply stability.

1. Iraqi Gas: Production and Import

Iraq ranks twelfth globally in gas reserves but fortieth in production. Currently, Iraq produces 3.1 billion standard cubic feet (BSCF) of natural gas daily, of which 1.8 billion is utilized and 1.3 billion is flared. Consequently, Iraq's gas flaring rate stands at 42%, with 58% captured for use. According to World Bank estimates for 2022, Iraq ranks third worldwide in gas flaring at approximately 17.7 billion cubic meters (BCM) annually, following Russia (28.4 BCM) and Iran (20.4 BCM).

The International Energy Agency (IEA) characterizes Iraq's progress in reducing gas flaring as slow but steady.

In 2024, Iraq reduced gas flaring rates by 1.6%, with flaring-related emissions declining to 35.1 million tons. The British Energy Institute reports that Iraq decreased gas flaring from its oil fields by 1.6% to 17.37 BCM in 2024, compared to 17.6 BCM the previous year (Shafaq News, 2025, July 6).

Iraq commenced gas imports from Iran in 2017. In March 2024, the Iraqi government renewed a contract with Tehran to import 50 million cubic meters (MCM) of gas daily for five years. According to Majid Chegeni, Iranian Deputy Oil Minister for Gas Affairs, Iran exported approximately 52 BCM of gas to Iraq between 2017 and 2024, valued at \$15 billion. However, Iranian gas imports declined to approximately 8 MCM per day starting in November 2024 via the pipeline supplying southern Iraq. Iran cited pipeline maintenance as the reason, though this explanation is widely regarded as unconvincing and possibly a pretext for Iran's inability to meet its 50 MCM daily commitment. The actual cause is a domestic gas shortage in Iran due to extreme temperature drops and increased heating demand, coupled with insufficient domestic production. The crisis led to daily electricity outages lasting several hours in Tehran and other provinces, as approximately 80 of Iran's 600 power plants ceased operations due to reduced natural gas and liquid fuel supplies.

2. Alternatives to Iranian Gas

A. National Gas Investment

If Iraq successfully achieves its goal of "zero flared gas" by 2028, it will be capable of adding 5.2 thousand megawatts (MW) to the electrical grid. Nevertheless, Iraq will still require an additional gas production rate of 700 million standard cubic feet (MMSCF) to attain self-sufficiency. This demand may be met either by increasing oil production by an average of one million barrels per day and utilizing the associated gas or by exploiting free gas reserves in the 'Akkāṣ, al-Manṣūriyah, and Khashm al-Aḥmar fields, assuming that gas-dependent electricity production remains constant (i.e., no new gas-fueled power plants are constructed).

B. Import of Floating Platforms

One prominent option available to Iraq involves utilizing Qatari gas to supply and operate power plants through the importation of a gas receiving station at the Khawr al-Zubayr port in al-Baṣrah. The government is inclined toward importing a floating platform for gas supply to meet electricity demands; this system converts liquefied gas back into a gaseous state for pipeline injection. Concurrently, the Oil Projects Company has commenced construction of a 40-kilometer gas transport pipeline, expected to be completed within 120 days, to convey gas from the floating platform in Khawr al-Zubayr to power stations in al-Baṣrah. The distance between the Iraqi Umm Qaṣr port in al-Baṣrah and the Hamad International Port is approximately 650 kilometers, with a transit time of around 48 hours. Through this floating platform, Iraq could import 600 MMSCF of Qatari gas as part of diversifying the gas sources necessary for power plant operations.

The Iraqi government is engaged in extensive negotiations with companies to secure a specialized vessel to serve as a Floating Storage and Regasification Unit (FSRU); however, the installation of such units may require more than a year. Even those rapidly constructed in Europe following the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine took several months to build, and high global demand has resulted in a shortage of these floating vessels.

C. Importing Gas from Turkmenistan

In October 2024, Iraqi and Turkmenistani representatives signed an agreement and contract in Baghdād for the supply of Turkmenistani gas to Iraq. The Iraqi delegation was represented by the Minister of Electricity, Ziyād Fāḍil, while the Turkmenistani delegation was represented by Maksat Babayev, State Minister and Chairman of the state gas company. The agreement includes the following provisions:

- The agreement has not yet entered into force; negotiations continue regarding the selection of an intermediary company to ensure the uninterrupted arrival of Turkmenistani gas. No confirmed information is available regarding the commencement date for pumping. Financial arrangements are being organized in Iraq, specifically at the Trade Bank of Iraq (TBI), to fulfill funding requirements.
- Iraq will import approximately 10 million cubic meters (MCM) of Turkmenistani gas via Iran during the winter and 20 MCM during the summer, with supplies expected to increase in subsequent years to meet rising annual demand.
- Iraq will purchase the Turkmenistani gas on behalf of Iran, meaning it will pay Turkmenistan but will not physically receive the gas. Instead, the gas will be delivered to northern Iran, while Iran provides an equivalent amount of its domestic gas to Iraq.
- An intermediary company will be responsible for transporting the gas to Iraq.
- The Turkmenistani side is obligated to deliver the gas to Iraq via Iranian pipelines. An agreement exists between Turkmenistan and Iran for gas transit in exchange for providing Iran with 20% of the Turkmenistani gas passing through its territory, with Iraq bearing the associated costs.
- Should the pumping of Turkmenistani gas to Iraq be interrupted at any time, the yet-to-be-selected intermediary company will compensate Iraq either financially or with fuel from another source.

In this context, the official spokesperson for the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity, Aḥmad Mūsá, stated that the Ministry is completing audit procedures regarding the intermediary company. He noted that the Ministry has nominated several companies, and the TBI is currently auditing their acceptability, provided they are not subject to US sanctions. Once implemented, this agreement would supply half the quantity of gas currently imported from Iran (al-Marsūmī, 2025).

D. Reliance on Solar Energy

Reliance on renewable energy constitutes a vital solution to the electricity crisis and plays a significant role in reducing emissions in the energy sector. Despite efforts to utilize renewable energy sources such as biomass, wind, solid waste, and solar for electricity generation in Iraq, their contribution to total generation remains minimal.

Iraq aims to produce 12,000 MW of solar energy by 2030, of which 7,500 MW has been contracted to companies. Proceeding with solar projects in collaboration with TotalEnergies (France), ACWA Power (Saudi Arabia), and Masdar (UAE) could inject 3,000 MW into the grid within a maximum of three years. The al-Bilāl Company is implementing a 300 MW solar plant in Karbalā', while work is underway on a 250 MW plant in al-Iskandariyah. Iraq has also signed a contract with Total to construct a 1,000 MW solar plant in al-Baṣrah. Actual construction has commenced on a 750 MW solar plant in al-Muthanná Governorate with PowerChina. In 2021, Iraq reached an agreement with Masdar to build five solar plants with a combined capacity of 1,000 MW.

E. Electrical Interconnection with Neighboring Countries

- Accelerating the completion of the transmission line linking the al-Fāw station in Iraq to the al-Wafrah station in Kuwait. The first phase, with a capacity of 500 MW, is expected to supply al-Baṣrah Governorate in 2025 and beyond.
- Completing the 340-kilometer Iraqi-Jordanian interconnection project, which links the national grid to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Interconnection Authority. The first phase has entered service with a capacity of 54 MW, bringing electricity to al-Ruṭbah District after 11 years of reliance on generators. Work is underway on the second phase to link the al-Qā'im station with the al-Rishah station in Jordan. The project includes advanced stages for synchronous interconnection between Iraq, Jordan, and Egypt.
- Activating the interconnection project with Saudi Arabia; the technical consultancy contract has been signed, and connection points have been identified for an initial capacity of 1,000 MW, expected to be completed within three years.
- Resuming electricity imports from Turkey after a three-year hiatus, following the opening of a 115-kilometer transmission line in July 2024.
- Iraq is currently seeking to increase the power transmitted via interconnection lines, including the Jordanian link (aiming for an additional 150 MW during summer peak loads) and the Turkish link (expected to rise from 300 MW to 600 MW). Efforts are also focused on completing the Gulf interconnection to provide 500 MW to al-Baṣrah Governorate before the summer peak.

F. Infrastructure at the al-Fāw Grand Port

Accelerating the establishment of infrastructure at the al-Fāw Grand Port and constructing fixed platforms to facilitate the import of Qatari liquefied gas is essential in the years following 2024. The Iraqi Ports authority will allocate land for this platform, the first of its kind in Iraq's oil and gas infrastructure. Implementing fixed platforms requires approximately two years and four months, alongside determining platform capacities and strategic storage.

2. Rapid Solutions to the Electricity Problem

- The rapid solutions addressing the electricity shortage can be summarized as follows, with potential positive impacts on the Iraqi economy and a reduction in its strain in the years following 2024:
- Conversion of several gas-powered plants to operate on heavy fuel oil or diesel, promotion of domestic solar power system installations, and provision of banking facilities and loans to citizens to support these initiatives.
- Utilization of floating power plants, such as the Turkish Karpowership, to secure a substantial portion of the electricity supply.
- Rationalization of electricity consumption and implementation of programmed outages. According to the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity, approximately 50,000 MW is required to meet the country's energy demands during the summer. Given the US sanctions, Iraq is anticipated to face additional challenges if Iranian gas (which currently supplies about 40% of the electrical grid's production) is discontinued.
- The Ministry of Electricity has reported that Iraq produces approximately 27,000 MW of power, primarily through gas-operated plants; however, production capacity occasionally declines to 17,000 MW.
- To maintain the continuity of the electrical grid and enhance service quality, it is crucial to rationalize demand by enforcing the collection of electricity consumption fees. This measure is particularly important considering the government subsidizes electricity prices for residential areas by 75% to alleviate the financial burden on citizens.
- Imposition of high customs tariffs on energy-intensive imported goods, especially heating and cooling units and water heaters, to reduce overall electricity consumption.
- Exploration of negotiations with Iran to continue supplying Iraq with gas through a new "deferred payment" arrangement. This strategy would not violate US sanctions, which specifically aim to prevent the flow of US dollars into Iran.

IX. Prospects for the Year 2025

Projections indicate a further entrenchment of the rentier characteristics within the Iraqi economy. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) anticipates a modest growth rate of 1% in the oil sector during 2025, which will impose additional pressures on the economy due to an expansionary fiscal policy, particularly in current expenditures where wages and salaries constitute the largest portion. For Iraq to attain a balanced budget, assuming an export volume of 3.5 million barrels per day (bpd) and maintaining the exchange rate at 1,300 IQD per US dollar, the oil price would need to reach \$111 per barrel. This target is considered challenging, suggesting the persistence of a real deficit in the 2025 budget.

Iraq entered 2024 amid a deepening economic crisis, exacerbated by oil prices falling below the \$70 per barrel threshold established in the triennial budget. At this price and estimated revenue, the planned deficit was approximately 64 trillion IQD; however, the fiscal year concluded with an actual deficit of 9,753 billion IQD excluding advances, and 27,837 billion IQD including them. This situation signals a precarious financial state, particularly given forecasts of a global economic recession and the impact of the US government's tax imposition measures. Additionally, the OPEC+ coalition plans to increase supply by approximately 411,000 bpd in July 2025, which may further depress oil prices.

Moreover, it is improbable that the general budget schedules will be approved punctually, partly due to political factors, as 2025 is an electoral year. This presents a significant challenge for the Iraqi economy, as the budget deficit has become a tangible reality. In this context, it is imperative to reconsider the budget size to align with fiscal capabilities, substantially reduce operational expenditures, and expand investment spending, provided that such expansion does not undermine the private sector and focuses on infrastructure development. There is an urgent need to expedite the approval of the 2025 budget schedules and to continue projects aimed at alleviating traffic congestion while sustaining and expanding service and engineering efforts across all governorates, maintaining standards of efficiency and quality.

The disparity between the nominal and parallel exchange rates remains substantial, exceeding 100 points despite governmental and Central Bank of Iraq (CBI) interventions. These efforts have been insufficient to bridge the gap due to factors such as smuggling, fraud, money laundering, and speculation. The CBI could address this issue more effectively by establishing appropriate mechanisms for financing trade with Iran and mandating small merchants to utilize electronic platforms rather than resorting to the parallel market.

Current evidence suggests ongoing challenges with the Kurdistan Region, stemming from the Region's refusal to remit realized revenues, both oil and non-oil, as well as its refusal to decentralize the salaries of its employees. This raises concerns about the accuracy of data regarding the actual number of workers in the Region. Resolving these issues necessitates expediting a settlement concerning the oil sector and other revenues with the Kurdistan Region,

alongside addressing the problem of unofficial border crossings, which significantly contribute to the deterioration of the exchange rate. The optimal resolution for all parties involves enacting the Oil and Gas Law, which would safeguard the rights of all stakeholders.

Government actions in 2024 indicate a focus on the gas sector and reducing resource wastage through flaring, with the objective of utilizing gas for electricity generation. It is anticipated that the CBI will continue its financial inclusion initiatives and implement the National Strategy for Financial Inclusion 2025–2029, which mandates government entities to adopt electronic payments and encourages the private sector to comply with the strategy.

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4. Security

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In 2024, Iraq experienced a multifaceted security environment influenced by regional tensions arising from the Palestinian-“Israeli” conflict and the involvement of regional and international actors in the ongoing struggle. These dynamics generated a complex array of threats that overshadowed Iraq’s internal security. Iraq occupies a strategic position as a focal point and zone of influence, placing it at the center of the security landscape, particularly amid the escalating conflict between the United States and the “Israeli” occupation entity on one side, and Iran alongside armed factions on the other. The “Israeli” entity threatened to bombard sites where these factions are stationed within residential areas. Additionally, Iraq’s internal security faced threats from Turkish military operations in northern Iraq and the repercussions of unstable security developments in Syria, which foster an environment conducive to the growth of terrorism and its potential cross-border export into Iraq. These challenges are further compounded by the persistence of organized crime networks, petroleum derivative smuggling mafias, and the proliferation of weapons beyond state control. This chapter examines the most significant regional and border security threats, as well as internal challenges, and their impact on Iraqi security in 2024.

I. Consequences of Regional and Border Conflicts on the Security Scene in Iraq

The state’s capacity to manage its internal security is demonstrated through its response to potential threats arising from its regional and international context. Amid escalating regional tensions in 2024, Iraq remains a critical fault line and overlapping zone of influence. The country finds itself in a challenging position concerning complex regional issues, necessitating the development of strategies that balance ensuring internal security and stability while avoiding direct involvement in regional conflicts. The following subsections explore these dynamics:

1. Turkish Military Operations in Northern Iraq

The Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) represents the primary challenge to Turkish national security. Founded by Abdullah Öcalan in Turkey in 1978, the PKK is based in the mountainous border region between Iraq and Turkey, particularly in the Gāra and Qandīl mountains, exploiting the terrain to conduct operations against

the Turkish government. Despite Öcalan's arrest and imprisonment, he shifted his ideology toward promoting confederalism and advocated for the establishment of an independent Kurdish state. In 2007, the PKK adopted a cross-border organizational structure, encompassing several affiliated parties: the Democratic Union Party (PYD) in northern Syria, the Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party (PÇDK) in northern Iraq, and the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK) in northern Iran. The PKK has consistently executed attacks against Turkish security forces, employing suicide bombings, kidnappings, and assassinations targeting civilians, foreign tourists, and politicians to pressure for the creation of an autonomous region in Turkey akin to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Uslu, 2008, p. 2).

Since 2008, Turkish forces have conducted airstrikes targeting PKK strongholds in northern Iraq, utilizing intelligence sources and drones. Significant efforts have been made over subsequent years to diminish the strategic depth achieved by the PKK. Since 2014, Turkish forces have undertaken temporary incursions and established permanent bases, notably Zilkan, located over 80 kilometers from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Long-term campaigns involving special forces, helicopters, and drones have covered approximately 1,553 square kilometers. Additionally, strikes have extended 281 kilometers into Iraqi territory, targeting areas such as al-Mawşil and Sinjār, resulting in resident displacement and casualties (Knights, 2022). Military operations intensified in subsequent years, including airstrikes, drone usage, and ground operations, causing mass displacement from over 170 villages in the Kurdistan Region. Border tensions have persisted intermittently, particularly during spring and autumn seasons coinciding with PKK movements, continuing into 2024 despite Iraqi government demands for respect of national sovereignty (Wilgenburg, 2025).

In 2024, Turkish forces launched numerous airstrikes against PKK strongholds within Iraqi territory, conducting at least 1,076 air and artillery strikes between January and July 2024. These attacks were distributed across the governorates of Erbil, Duhok, al-Sulaymānīyah, and Nīnawá: 526 strikes in Duhok, 405 in Erbil, 135 in al-Sulaymānīyah, and 10 in Nīnawá. Notably, 93% of these attacks were executed by warplanes and resulted in the deaths of eight civilians, according to the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT). The strikes caused the burning of 20,000 dunams of agricultural land, particularly in the villages of Kūharzah, Balāfī, Bārjī, Sīrjīlah, Kānyah, and Āshkī-Darah in the al-ʿImādīyah district of Duhok governorate, alongside the evacuation of 162 villages (CPT, 2024).

Turkey maintains numerous observation centers and military outposts deep within Iraqi territory, extending up to 30 kilometers, including locations such as the Ba'shīqah sub-district and other areas. However, in 2024, Turkey established additional military bases on the slopes of Mount Matīn and near Mount Gāra, as well as observation points within Duhok governorate. Prior to 2024, Turkish incursions were limited to 5-10 kilometers under an agreement signed during the previous Iraqi regime, with operations primarily concentrated near the Turkish border on the outskirts of Duhok Governorate and the Qandīl region. In contrast, 2024 saw an escalation of Turkish incursions, reaching depths of up to 40 kilo-

meters within the Kurdistan Region. These operations extended to the town of al-ʿImādiyyah, situated 20 kilometers from the center of Duhok Governorate (al-Jazīrah, 2024, July 14).

In pursuit of a resolution, and following a high-level meeting between Iraqi and Turkish officials in Baghdad on March 14, 2024, the National Security Council officially designated the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) as a prohibited organization within Iraq. This decision facilitated new avenues for Iraqi-Turkish rapprochement and was positively received by Turkey. On April 22, 2024, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan conducted his first visit to Iraq since 2011, during which agreements were reached on various matters, notably security cooperation (Iliās, 2024). This visit paved the way for the expansion of Turkish military operations in the Kurdistan Region through security understandings with the Iraqi government; however, these operations exceeded the previously agreed border limits between the two countries. Beginning on July 10, 2024, the Iraqi government intensified diplomatic engagements with Turkey to discuss the limits of Turkish military operations, particularly as the displacement of village residents in Duhok increased due to the expansion of military activities involving diverse forces and weaponry, including air and special forces, drones, armored vehicles, tanks, and long-range artillery. On July 11, 2024, Turkish Defense Minister Yaşar Güler confirmed Turkey's intention to establish a "safe zone" extending 30-40 kilometers along its borders with Iraq and Syria to eliminate terrorism in the region. This declaration indicated Turkey's intent to continue and expand operations to the Syrian border, contingent upon political agreements with the Syrian government and active international stakeholders (al-Jazīrah, 2024, July 14).

In August 2024, an Iraqi delegation visited Ankara and signed a memorandum entitled "Memorandum of Understanding on Military and Security Cooperation and Counter-Terrorism." The memorandum encompassed security cooperation, exchange of expertise and consultation, and coordination of intelligence efforts between the two nations. It also stipulated the establishment of a joint cross-border security coordination center and the transfer of the Turkish Zelikan Base in Ba'shīqah (northeast of Nīnawá Governorate) to the Iraqi Armed Forces for conversion into a joint training center, alongside the establishment of two additional security centers for coordination and training (Iliās, 2024). Table 4-1 presents the most significant aerial operations conducted by Turkish forces targeting the PKK in northern Iraq.

Table 4-1: Key Turkish Aerial Operations in Northern Iraq for 2024.

No.	Date	Strike Type	Casualties/Impact
1	Jan 2-30	Raids on 29 PKK sites in Matīn, Hākūrk, Gāra, and Qandīl, as a response to the killing of nine Turkish soldiers.	9 killed, 4 injured, plus material losses
2	Feb 2-26	Bombardment of villages in ʿImādiyyah sub-district, and the villages of Rīzānah, Sārkalī, Kīrzi, and Kāfiyā, as well as Mount Matīn.	2 civilians killed; displacement of residents

Table 4-1 (continued)

No.	Date	Strike Type	Casualties/Impact
3	Feb 29	Targeting Mount Matīn and a vehicle in Zarāfkah village, Sinjār	Death of Sa'dūn Mīrzā, member of the Families of Martyrs Council
4	Mar 1	Bombardment of Mount Matīn and a house in Kalār	1 citizen killed
5	Mar 8	Targeting Sakīniyah village belonging to Sinjār Protection Forces	1 member of the protection forces killed
6	Apr 2	Drone strike on a Kurdish military leader's vehicle in Sinjār	Death of the Kurdish military leader
7	Apr 14	Warplanes targeted a house in Jalālā (al-Sulaymāniyah) and the villages Kūharzah and Balafā	Death of Muḥammad Sa'īd, a local resident
8	Apr 28	Targeting Kurdish citizens near Sīdakān	2 citizens from Sardasht (Eastern Kurdistan) killed
9	May 9-30	Targeting various villages; over 20 consecutive raids on Matīn and Zāb	16 PKK members killed; fires and displacement
10	Jun 2-21	Targeting Mount Matīn, Darābī, al-'Anzah, Sillī, and Dayralūk	Material losses, fires, and displacement
11	Jul 8	Raids in Sinjār targeting journalists	Death of journalist Murād Mīrzā due to injuries
12	Jul 9	Airstrikes on areas of al-'Imādiyah district	Destruction of over 40 agricultural dunams
13	Jul 18-29	Targeting Bīrīskah, Tūtaqalī, Binār Qandīl, and Sīnīn plains	Death of shepherd 'Uthmān Rijdī Rīkānī (32 years old)
14	Aug 7-22	Raids near Kūharzah, Kalālah, and Matīn; targeting houses in al-'Imādiyah	17 PKK members were killed; damage to orchards and houses, and displacement of residents.
15	Aug 23	Airstrike on a vehicle of Kurdish journalists east of al-Sulaymāniyah	2 female journalists killed; 6 others injured
16	Sep 5	Drone strike on a civilian vehicle in Rāniyah (al-Sulaymāniyah)	3 people killed, including a father and his child
17	Sep 9	Over 10 raids on villages Sūrādah, al-'Anzah, and Kamsūrān; house targeted in Makhmūr camp	Major destruction; 3 women injured
18	Oct 23	Airstrike following the attack on TUSAŞ headquarters in Ankara	5 killed, 22 injured
19	Oct 25-27	Raids on Sinjār Resistance Units (YBŞ) center in Bārīh and other areas in Sinjār	6 YBŞ fighters killed
20	Nov 10	Drone strikes on Sinjār mountains	1 youth and leader Hīwī Umīd killed

Table 4-1 (continued)

No.	Date	Strike Type	Casualties/Impact
21	Nov 11	Strike on Duhok mountains and a YBŞ vehicle	5 killed, including a senior PKK official
22	Nov 24	Bombardment of Mount Kūharzah and villages in Duhok	Extensive destruction in the region
23	Dec 4	Mortar and helicopter fire near Hîrûrah village	1 citizen killed; 2 others injured
24	Dec 15-25	Warplanes bombed Majî village Mount Kûlî Târ, and Nalmah Hills	Fires and major material damage

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on data collected from ROJ News (2024, December 31), and other news websites.

2. Iranian Bombardment of Northern Iraq

Several Iranian Kurdish armed factions operate within the Iraqi-Iranian border areas and the territory of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. These groups originate from what is known as the “Kurdish struggle” in Iran. The Iranian government designates these factions as terrorist organizations and has targeted their bases in Erbil and al-Sulaymānīyah through drone and missile attacks. Prior to 2024, Iran conducted multiple cross-border assaults against opposition groups, notably the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, and the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK) (Berman, 2016, pp. 3-4).

In 2024, Iran intensified its military operations in northern Iraq following twin explosions on January 3 in the Iranian city of Kerman. These blasts occurred near the burial site of the former Quds Force commander, Qāsim Sulaymānī, coinciding with the fourth anniversary of his assassination in a US airstrike near Baghdad International Airport (IRNA, 2024, January 3). The initial explosion, caused by a remotely detonated bomb concealed in a bag inside a Peugeot 405, took place approximately 700 meters from Sulaymānī’s grave. The second, more lethal explosion occurred 1 kilometer away twenty minutes later, targeting crowds assisting the wounded from the first blast. Although the terrorist organization ISIS claimed responsibility, Iranian officials attributed the attacks to the Zionist entity. The Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Sayyid ‘Alī Khāmene’ī, warned via his X platform account that Iran would respond with force (CNN, 2024, January 4).

On January 15, 2024, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) launched missile strikes resulting in at least eight explosions in Erbil Governorate. These strikes targeted what the IRGC described as “espionage centers and gatherings of terrorist groups linked to ISIS.” The attacks caused massive explosions and activated sirens at the US Consulate in Erbil. The IRGC reported four fatalities and six injuries, aiming to destroy “Israeli” espionage headquarters and locations used by anti-Iranian terrorist groups to plan the suicide attack in Kerman (Reuters, 2022, March 13). Among the civilian casualties was Kurdish billionaire businessman Peshraw Dizayee and several family members, who died when a missile struck their residence. The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Nāṣir Kan’ānī, stated that while Tehran respects the sovereignty and territorial integ-

riety of other nations, it exercises its legitimate and legal right to deter threats to Iranian national security and combat terrorism (al-Jazīrah, 2024, January 15).

The Iranian bombardment of northern Iraq significantly escalated tensions between the two countries. On January 16, 2024, the Iraqi government, through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, issued a condemnation statement, describing the actions as an affront to good neighborly relations and regional security. The Ministry summoned the Iranian Chargé d'Affaires in Baghdad to deliver a protest memorandum and recalled its ambassador to Tehran, Naṣīr 'Abd-al-Muḥsin, for consultations regarding the Iranian aggressions. Iraq lodged a formal complaint with the UN Security Council and the United Nations concerning the Iranian aggression that caused Iraqi civilian casualties. Following Iraq's call for an emergency session, the League of Arab States adopted a seven-point resolution condemning the Iranian bombardment of Erbil, holding Iran accountable for all consequences of this violation. The Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Masrūr Bārzānī, condemned the attack on Erbil, labeling it a crime against the Kurdish people. Additionally, the Kurdistan Region Security Council urged the international community to condemn the Iranian attack, characterizing it as a blatant violation of the sovereignty of the Kurdistan Region, Iraq, and the Federal Government. Furthermore, the US Department of State condemned the Iranian attacks on Erbil, asserting that they undermined the stability of Iraq (Reuters, 2022, March 13).

3. Iraq's Position on the Continued "Israeli" Aggression against the Gaza Strip

Iraq's enduring support for the Palestinian cause is deeply rooted in history, as demonstrated by its direct involvement in the Arab wars against the "Israeli" occupation entity in 1948, 1967, and 1973. Notably, Iraq was the sole country that did not sign an armistice agreement following the 1948 war (IISS, 2024). Since the "al-Aqṣá Flood" operation on October 7, 2023, Iraq has experienced numerous political activities expressing solidarity with the Palestinian cause. In 2024, the Iraqi government's official stance on the Gaza conflict encompassed issuing statements of condemnation, support, and advocacy within the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly, and the League of Arab States, alongside providing humanitarian aid without engaging in direct military involvement. Table 4-2 presents the positions articulated by the Iraqi government through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2024 in support of Palestine and its people.

Several Iraqi cities witnessed popular demonstrations in solidarity with the Palestinian people. The Iraqi government dispatched 750,000 tons of humanitarian aid to Palestine, coordinated with the Egyptian Red Crescent for delivery via the Egyptian border (INA, 2024, November 24). This underscores Iraq's official diplomatic and humanitarian support for Palestine. However, it is unlikely that this position will expand further due to internal security concerns, primarily focusing on counter-terrorism efforts against ISIS cells, particularly along the

Table 4-2: Positions of the Iraqi Government via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Support of the Palestinian People (2024).

No.	Date	Position
Statements of Support and Advocacy		
1	Jan 11	Endorsing South Africa's legal action against the "Israeli" occupation at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for acts of killing and destruction against the Palestinian people.
2	Jan 26	Welcoming the ICJ's preliminary ruling aimed at preventing acts of genocide against the Palestinian people.
3	Mar 25	Supporting the Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza during the holy month of Ramadan.
4	May 22	Commending the decisions of Norway, Spain, and Ireland to recognize the independent State of Palestine.
5	May 24	Welcoming the ICJ ruling imposing additional measures on the occupation and ordering an immediate cessation of aggression in Rafah, according to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.
6	Jun 1	Supporting US President Joe Biden's initiative, in collaboration with Egypt and Qatar, to halt the aggression on Gaza.
7	Jun 11	Endorsing the UN Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza.
8	Jul 19	Welcoming the ICJ advisory opinion issued against the practices of the "Israeli" occupation entity in Palestine.
9	Aug 9	Supporting the joint statement by the leaders of the US, Egypt, and Qatar calling for a ceasefire agreement and relief for the Palestinian people.
Participation in the UN and Arab League regarding Palestine		
1	Jan 22	The Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy of the Republic of Iraq in Egypt participated in the League of Arab States Council meeting at the level of permanent representatives to address "Israeli" crimes and plans against the Palestinian people. During this meeting, a 23-point resolution was adopted, reaffirming the ongoing condemnation of "Israeli" acts of aggression against Palestine and highlighting the risks associated with forced displacement.
2	May 30	A resolution, jointly submitted by Iraq, the Mediterranean group, Russia, Turkey, and China, was voted on during the World Health Assembly meetings held in Geneva from May 27 to June 1, 2024. This resolution emphasized the enhancement of health response capabilities, the provision of medical treatments, and the facilitation of access for medical personnel to Palestine. Furthermore, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Iraq to the United Nations Office in Geneva delivered a speech condemning the crimes and indiscriminate bombardment targeting the Palestinian people.
3	Sep 10	Attending the Iraqi delegation at the League of Arab States session in Cairo in solidarity with Palestine.
4	Sep 18	Delivering a statement by the Iraqi mission to the UN in New York during an emergency General Assembly session regarding the Palestinian cause and the ICJ ruling.

Table 4-2 (continued)

No.	Date	Position
5	Sep 25	Meeting with the foreign ministers of Jordan and Egypt to discuss tripartite cooperation and urging the Security Council to cease the war on Gaza and Lebanon.
6	Oct 4	Calling on the Security Council, during an emergency session, to assume responsibility for international peace and security and issue binding resolutions against the "Israeli" occupation entity for a ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon.
Statements of Condemnation		
1	Jan 12	Condemning and warning against the continued support of certain countries for the "Israeli" occupation in its war on Gaza.
2	Feb 10	Condemning the occupation's attempts to perpetrate a humanitarian massacre in Rafah and calling for international intervention.
3	Feb 29	Condemning the massacre committed by the occupation against civilians waiting for aid trucks in Gaza City, resulting in many casualties.
4	May 27	Condemning the ongoing "Israeli" attacks and the targeting of displaced persons' camps in Rafah.
5	Jul 27	Condemning the "Israeli" massacre targeting a school housing displaced persons in western Dayr al-Balah.
6	Aug 10	Condemning the strike on the al-Tābi'n school in the al-Daraj neighborhood of Gaza City, which resulted in over 100 fatalities.
7	Sep 3	Condemning false "Israeli" statements concerning the border strip between Egypt and Gaza.

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on data from the official website of the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

border with Syria. Consequently, the Iraqi government has to implement strict security measures and avoid involvement in external conflicts.

4. Position on the "Israeli" Aggression against Lebanon

The Iraqi government actively facilitated the reception of Lebanese refugees, providing essential food, shelter, and healthcare services. On September 17, 2024, Iraq admitted numerous victims of the pager device explosions for medical treatment. Following a significant security escalation in Lebanon on September 23, Prime Minister al-Sudānī announced the establishment of land and air corridors to deliver aid and fuel to Lebanon (INA, 2024, October 6). Between September 27 and November 10, 2024, a total of 33,138 Lebanese refugees arrived in Iraq. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 17,298 refugees entered via the al-Qā'im border crossing, with an average of 700 Lebanese refugees arriving daily through Syria. Additionally, 13,120 refugees arrived through Baghdad International Airport, 2,720 through Najaf International Airport (UNHCR, 2024, p. 1), and others via Erbil and al-Baṣrah airports. The Iraqi government established a field camp at the al-Qā'im Customs Square to provide rest, medical treatment, and emergency services. This camp is managed by the Red Crescent with direct support from the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). Subsequently, wounded refugees arriving through the al-Qā'im border crossing

Table 4-3: Statements of Condemnation Issued by the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Solidarity with the Lebanese People

No.	Date	Statement
1	July 30	Condemning the "Israeli" aggression on the Southern Suburb of the Lebanese capital, Beirut, which resulted in indiscriminate targeting of civilians.
2	Sep 28	Prime Minister al-Sudānī issued a statement via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemning the "Israeli" aggression on the Southern Suburb of Beirut, which claimed the life of the Secretary-General of Hezbollah, Sayyid Ḥasan Naṣrallāh. He emphasized the responsibility of international organizations, the permanent members of the Security Council, and influential countries to repel aggression against Lebanese and Palestinians.
3	Oct 12	Condemning the occupation entity's use of Iraqi airspace to target UNIFIL forces, resulting in the death of its personnel, noting that this is a temporary international force aimed at peacekeeping in southern Lebanon.
4	Oct 28	The Chargé d'Affaires of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Iraq to the UN in New York delivered Iraq's statement during an emergency Security Council session to discuss the situation in the Middle East, stressing Iraq's position calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon.
5	Dec 27	Welcomed the announcement of a ceasefire between Lebanon and the "Israeli" occupation entity, calling for an end to violence and destruction.

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on data from the official website of the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

were transported to the Zayn-al-Ābidīn Hospital in al-Maḥāwīl, Bābil (Mercy Hands Organization, 2024, p. 1).

On October 6, pursuant to directives from the Prime Minister, the Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displaced facilitated relief efforts for displaced Lebanese individuals. Teams were formed to provide assistance, and committees comprising various ministries collaborated with the Iraqi Red Crescent to deliver humanitarian services. On October 9, the Iraqi Council of Ministers allocated 3 billion IQD from the emergency reserve to the Ministry of Migration and Displaced to support services for Lebanese refugees within Iraq (al-Ṣabāḥ, 2024, October 9).

The Council of Ministers enacted several measures to support Lebanese refugees. On October 7, it designated Lebanese citizens arriving in Iraq as "Guests of Iraq." The Prime Minister instructed the Ministry of Interior to coordinate with the Lebanese Embassy to expedite the issuance of travel documents for those wishing to enter Iraq. Furthermore, the Residency Affairs Directorate extended the residency permits of Lebanese citizens by 30 days without requiring departure from the country. The Iraqi government committed to integrating refugees into national systems; accordingly, the Ministry of Education directed schools to enroll Lebanese students to prevent educational disruption. On October 28, the Ministry of Education spokesperson announced approval for establishing schools following the Lebanese curriculum, staffed by Lebanese teachers residing in Iraq. Additionally, the Iraqi government, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, issued statements condemning the aggression affecting the Lebanese people (Table 4-3).

5. The Terrorist Challenge in Light of Developments on the Syrian Scene

In 2024, remnants of the ISIS terrorist organization continued to exploit the volatile security conditions in Syria by infiltrating the Iraqi-Syrian border to conduct attacks using small arms and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) against Iraqi security forces and civilians. The group utilized displacement camps, notably the foreigners' annex in the al-Hawl camp located on the Iraqi-Syrian border, to disseminate its extremist ideology. It maintained access to substantial financial resources estimated between \$10 million and \$20 million, as ISIS networks persisted in extorting local populations to consolidate their influence in parts of Iraq and Syria. Additionally, the organization received donations from sympathizers through informal money transfer networks, aiming to secure the release of members detained in Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) prisons in northeastern Syria, near the Iraqi borders with the al-Anbār and Nīnawá governorates.

Although ISIS no longer controls or occupies territory and its fighter numbers have diminished to an estimated 2,500 in Iraq and Syria, it demonstrated the capacity to escalate attacks during the second quarter of 2024. The organization continues to expand its global presence, exploiting the Palestinian-"Israeli" conflict for recruitment and incitement, alongside conducting low-level and intermittent attacks. On January 7, 2024, ISIS attacked a position belonging to the 22nd Brigade of the Kirkuk and East Tigris Operations Command of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) in eastern Ṣalāḥ-al-Dīn, resulting in two fatalities and three injuries among PMF members during the repulsion of the attack. On May 14 of the same year, it targeted an Iraqi Army headquarters in Ṣalāḥ-al-Dīn governorate, causing four deaths and injuring five others. There were no significant changes in ISIS's operational areas or tactics; attacks remained concentrated in governorates north and west of Baghdād (Lead Inspector General, 2024, pp. 12-16), confined to governorates adjacent to Syrian border crossings.

The rapid advances of the militant Syrian opposition since November 27, 2024, heightened concerns within the Iraqi government and security forces about a potential recurrence of the 2014 scenario, wherein ISIS occupied several Iraqi governorates by exploiting security vacuums created by internal Iraqi political tensions. These concerns intensified following the Syrian opposition's opening of Saydnāyā Prison on December 8, 2024, which led to the release of thousands of detainees. This development raised fears of an ISIS resurgence linked to political and security instability in Syria, especially given the weakened regional axis that had played a significant role in combating the organization and its preoccupation with conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon. Notably, the Iraqi government had been coordinating with partners such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to repatriate Iraqis from camps in northeastern Syria and facilitate their reintegration into Iraqi society; thus, the collapse of the Syrian regime adversely affected these efforts.

Following the fall of the al-Asad regime in Syria, the Iraqi government intensified border security measures on the Syrian side to prevent terrorist infiltra-

tion, implementing strict controls including barbed wire, concrete walls, and 918 thermal cameras. The new Syrian president, Aḥmad al-Shara' (formerly known as Abū-Muḥammad al-Jawlānī) partially allayed Iraqi concerns by taking steps to protect holy sites in Syria, such as the Shrine of Sayyidah Zaynab. Any aggression against these sites, to which many Iraqis hold religious ties, would have direct repercussions on Iraq's security and stability. In this context, al-Shara' expressed, via a recorded video, the new Syrian leadership's readiness to establish strategic relations with Iraq. Consequently, the Iraqi government gradually accepted the fall of the al-Asad regime and reassessed its policy toward Syria, balancing security concerns with mutual interests. A high-level delegation led by the director of the Iraqi National Intelligence Service, Ḥamīd al-Shaṭrī, was dispatched to Damascus on December 26, 2024. As a goodwill gesture, al-Shara' released several members of Iraqi factions held in Syrian custody. Subsequently, the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Fu'ād Ḥusayn, contacted his Syrian counterpart, As'ad al-Shaybānī, reaffirming Iraq's intention to reopen its embassy in Damascus and emphasizing the importance of joint efforts to combat ISIS. al-Shaybānī underscored that Iraq's security is intrinsically linked to Syria's security (Salih, 2025).

Iraq's future stance toward Syria is expected to depend on evolving developments, particularly Iraq's assessment of threats to its security and stability, with the ISIS challenge remaining paramount. This position will be contingent upon agreements that serve the interests of both nations. Iraq will continue to enhance surveillance capabilities to safeguard its borders with Syria, preventing terrorist infiltration and the smuggling of weapons and equipment, while fostering security coordination with Syrian authorities to exchange intelligence on terrorist groups. Diplomatic efforts will also focus on establishing joint mechanisms to protect Iraq's internal security and stability.

6. The Position of Armed Factions on the "Israeli" Occupation Entity's Crimes and the Targeting of US Bases in Iraq

The stance of Iraqi armed factions affiliated with the "Axis of Resistance" diverged from the official position of the Iraqi government concerning the Palestinian-"Israeli" conflict. These factions initiated numerous retaliatory operations targeting US interests and military installations both within and beyond Iraq, as a response to the United States' support for the "Israeli" occupation entity's military actions against Palestine, particularly Gaza. This situation heightened the potential for escalation on Iraqi territory.

From the onset of the Gaza conflict following October 7, 2023, through the end of 2024, over 120 attacks were recorded, some coordinated with allied armed factions in neighboring countries, notably Syria. The majority of these attacks were low-intensity, resulting in minimal human casualties and limited material damage. However, the intensity escalated significantly on January 20, 2024, when faction forces launched a missile attack on the US 'Ayn al-Asad Airbase in Iraq, injuring several US military personnel. The peak of this escalation occurred on January 28, 2024, when certain factions in Iraq attacked the Tower 22 base in the

Table 4-4: Most Significant Attacks Carried Out by the United States Against Armed Factions in Iraq in 2024.

No.	Date	Operation	Status
1	Jan 4	A US airstrike targeted the vehicle of the military official of <i>Ḥarakat al-Nujabā'</i> , Mushtāq al-Sā'idī, inside the movement's headquarters parking lot in Baghdād.	Death of al-Sā'idī and one companion.
2	Jan 4	US aircraft bombarded three headquarters belonging to resistance factions in al-Qā'im, al-Anbār Governorate.	2 killed, 6 wounded.
3	Jan 4	US aircraft bombarded a military training headquarters in Jurf-al-Ṣakhr, north of Bābil.	4 wounded.
4	Feb 2-3	Six retaliatory US airstrikes following the Tower 22 attack, targeting three PMF facilities in 'Akāshāt and three houses used by Katā'ib Ḥizballāh in al-Anbār.	16 killed.
5	Feb 7	A US drone targeted with three missiles a vehicle carrying four people, including two senior Katā'ib Ḥizballāh leaders in Baghdād: Abū Bāqir al-Sā'idī (missile official) and Arkān al-'Ulayyāwī (intelligence official), accusing them of planning to target US forces.	4 killed.
6	Apr 20	Explosion and fire inside the Kalsu base housing PMF elements in Bābil. (A technical committee ruled out an external attack, suggesting high explosives were the cause).	1 killed, 8 wounded.
7	Jul 18	Explosion in the logistical support warehouses of the 42nd PMF Brigade in the al-Yūsufiyah area, south of Baghdād. (A technical committee ruled out an external attack).	None.
8	Jul 31	US airstrikes with 4-5 missiles targeted a PMF headquarters in Jurf-al-Ṣakhr, Bābil, following missile fire at 'Ayn al-Asad.	4 killed.

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on Congressional Research Service (2024, February 16, p. 2; 2024, September 10, pp. 2-3) and Reuters data.

al-Rukbān area of northeastern Jordan, causing the deaths of three US soldiers and injuring 34 others. Subsequently, on February 5, these factions executed a drone strike targeting a training base hosting US forces in the al-'Umar oil field within the Dayr al-Zawr Governorate of eastern Syria. This action was in retaliation for the killing of Abū-Bāqir al-Sā'idī, a senior leader in Katā'ib Ḥizballāh, and resulted in the deaths of six Kurdish soldiers affiliated with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an ally of the United States (Shafaq News, 2024, December 30). Iraqi factions intensified their attacks against US bases during January and February, prompting preparations by the United States for countermeasures against these factions.

In the context of the Iraqi government's efforts to de-escalate tensions, particularly following the Tower 22 attack and escalating concerns regarding Iraq's role in regional instability, as well as the killing of senior Katā'ib Ḥizballāh leaders in US

airstrikes, Katā'ib Ḥizballāh announced on January 30, 2024, a temporary suspension of its attacks on US interests. The group expressed its readiness to arm the "Islamic Resistance in Jordan," providing 12,000 fighters with light and medium weapons, anti-armor launchers, tactical missiles, and substantial quantities of explosives to defend the Palestinians.⁽¹⁾ However, in late May 2024, individuals wearing black masks and armed with sticks targeted branches of US fast-food chains in Baghdād, including KFC and Chili House, vandalizing storefronts without harming customers or staff. Additionally, US interests in Baghdād were targeted with improvised explosive devices, notably a branch of the Caterpillar construction equipment company and the British Cambridge Institute. Katā'ib Ḥizballāh called for the boycott and expulsion of American brands. These attacks ceased after the Iraqi government deployed Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) forces in central Baghdād (Congressional Research Service, 2024, September 10, p. 13). Given the continuation of attacks despite Katā'ib Ḥizballāh's suspension announcement, it is unlikely that hostilities will cease permanently in the near term, although they have significantly decreased. Retaliatory attacks are expected to continue unless a final resolution is reached on issues the Resistance considers fundamental to its principles, particularly the Palestinian cause.

Concurrently, under sustained pressure to end the US presence on Iraqi soil, the Iraqi government initiated steps to reschedule the US presence as follows:

- On January 5, 2024, Prime Minister al-Sudānī announced that the government would begin procedures for the withdrawal of the US-led International Coalition. The United States agreed on January 23 to commence talks regarding the future of its presence in Iraq (Congressional Research Service, 2024, February 16, pp. 2-3).
- On April 14, the Prime Minister visited Washington at the invitation of President Joe Biden, meeting with the President and the Secretaries of State and Defense. On May 31, the UN Security Council decided to terminate the UNAMI mission by the end of 2025 at the Iraqi government's request (Lead Inspector General, 2024, p. 14).
- In September 2024, both parties announced an understanding regarding withdrawal plans; the agreement envisions the departure of hundreds of troops by September 2025, with the remainder leaving by the end of 2026 (Shafaq News, 2024, December 30).

The war in Gaza affected many Middle Eastern countries, including Iraq. Iraqi armed factions focused on conducting direct retaliatory attacks against the

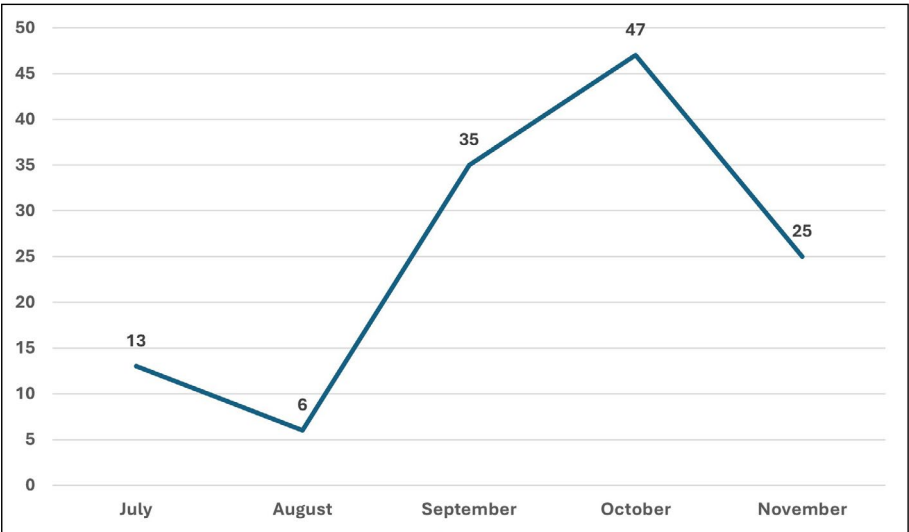
(1) Footnote: In April 2024, a clandestine organization named the "Islamic Resistance in Jordan" was established following the assassination of Muḥammad Ridā Zāhidi, a commander of the IRGC and a security official of Katā'ib Ḥizballāh, in an "Israeli" airstrike targeting the Iranian consulate in Damascus. The group conducted its inaugural operation on September 8, 2024, when a Jordanian truck driver carried out an armed assault at the Allenby border crossing, resulting in the deaths of three "Israelis." Subsequently, on October 18, 2024, two Jordanian nationals, Amīr Qawwās and Ḥusām Ghazālāh, executed an attack against "Israeli" forces after crossing the border from Jordan into the Neot HaKikar settlement near the Dead Sea in southern Jordan. This attack injured two soldiers, one of whom sustained serious injuries. Although the two assailants were killed by "Israeli" forces, it is believed that a third individual escaped back to Jordan, despite the Jordanian government's firm opposition to any unauthorized armed activities within its territory (Otralectura, 2025).

Table 4-5: Number of Iraqi Faction Attacks and Targeted Sites within the “Israeli” Occupation Entity (April-November 2024).

Month	Number of Attacks	Targeted Sites	Number of Attacks
July	13	Eilat	34
August	6	Haifa	16
September	35	Tel Aviv	2
October	47	Scattered Areas	16
November	25	Small Airports and Military Airbases	7

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on BBC News Arabic data.

Figure 4-1: Number of Iraqi Faction Attacks on the “Israeli” Occupation Entity (April-November 2024).



Source: Prepared by the researcher.

“Israeli” occupation entity from April to November 2024. The most notable incident occurred on October 4, when resistance factions in Iraq launched a drone attack on an “Israeli” base in the northern Syrian Golan, resulting in the deaths of two “Israeli” soldiers and injuries to 24 others.

Figure 4-1 illustrates the frequency of attacks on the “Israeli” occupation entity, showing that the attack rate peaked in October 2024 with 47 attacks, with Eilat being the primary target.

7. “Israeli” Threats to Iraq

The “Israeli” occupation entity accused Iraqi armed factions of targeting its interests, while the Iraqi government encountered challenges in persuading these factions to cease launching missiles and drones in retaliation for the entity’s massacres against the Palestinian people. Despite dispatching senior Iraqi security officials to Iran in September and October 2024 to solicit assistance in halting these attacks, the response indicated that these factions retain autonomous

decision-making authority and the prerogative to determine their support for counterparts in Gaza and Lebanon. This situation precipitated divisions among Iraqi political parties concerning the extent of Iraq's involvement in the regional confrontation with the "Israeli" occupation entity, notwithstanding widespread sympathy for the Palestinian cause (Reuters, 2024, November 1).

The occupation entity lodged a complaint with the UN Security Council against Iraq, urging urgent measures to halt these attacks. The Iraqi government interpreted this action as an attempt to fabricate a pretext and justification for potential aggressive acts against Iraq. Notably, the occupation's Foreign Minister, Gideon Sa'ar, attributed responsibility to the al-Sudānī government for permitting Iraqi territory to be used by what he termed "Iran-backed militias" to target the entity, asserting a right to self-defense under the United Nations Charter (al-Quds al-'Arabī, 2024, November 22).

In response to escalating "Israeli" threats, particularly following a message from the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, Jeyhun Bayramov, to Iraqi Foreign Minister Fu'ād Ḥusayn concerning the entity's intent to target armed faction headquarters and Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) sites in Iraq, Prime Minister al-Sudānī convened a meeting with all political parties engaged in the political process to deliberate on these serious developments. He also met with Abū-Ālā' al-Walāṭī, Secretary-General of Katā'ib Sayyid al-Shuhadā' and representative of armed faction forces within the Coordination Framework involved in attacks against the "Israeli" occupation entity, requesting a cessation of such operations (al-'Ayn, 2024, November 26).

Moreover, the Iraqi government submitted identical official letters to the Security Council, the UN Secretary-General, the Arab League, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), addressing the "Israeli" occupation entity's threats of aggression against Iraq and emphasizing the necessity of measures to prevent such aggression. Consequently, on November 24, 2024, the League of Arab States issued a resolution condemning and denouncing the entity's attempts to expand its aggressive actions toward Iraq. The League also communicated its supportive stance toward Iraq in letters to the UN Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council. Additionally, the Iraqi government appealed to Washington, requesting US intervention to deter the entity from executing attacks on Iraq (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024, November 23).

The Iraqi government maintains that direct confrontation with the entity is presently counterproductive and inconsistent with the balanced approach it adopts in foreign relations, while continuing to reject the entity and its historical crimes since its inception on the Palestinian land, steadfastly supporting the Palestinian cause and its legitimate objectives.

8. Analysis of the External Threat Environment (Scenarios)

Based on the preceding discussion in this chapter, Iraq experienced an escalation in the frequency of external threats during 2024, significantly impacting its national security. Within the context of the unprecedented intensification of the

conflict between the US and the “Israeli” occupation entity on one side, and Iran on the other, alongside the responses of Iraqi armed factions affiliated with the Axis of Resistance, three scenarios are projected to influence Iraq’s security.

A. First Scenario

Iraq is likely to remain entangled in proxy warfare in the near term. In this scenario, the United States would exert economic pressure on the Iraqi government to compel the dissolution of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), the disarmament of the Resistance, and the integration of armed factions into the Iraqi Armed Forces under the command of the Commander-in-Chief. Concurrently, operations against armament and training centers linked to the factions and the PMF would intensify. Simultaneously, the “Israeli” occupation entity would enhance intelligence efforts to infiltrate these factions. Under this scenario, armed factions may experience a temporary de-escalation but are expected to resume targeting US interests in Iraq, perceiving resistance against the American-“Israeli” alliance as a legitimate and sacred struggle until Western hegemony is dismantled. Iran is anticipated to increase its armed support to these groups to leverage them in the event of further escalation.

B. Second Scenario

International actors, primarily the United States and the “Israeli” occupation entity, may seek to exploit accumulating economic crises, particularly financial and administrative corruption and service deficiencies, to mobilize the Iraqi people against the political class associated with the Axis of Resistance. This strategy would likely involve amplifying these crises through media and social platforms to highlight governmental failures and shift public opinion. Additionally, external parties may attempt to exploit and financially support certain youth protest groups to undermine the legitimacy of these political forces and redraw the political landscape to favor US and “Israeli” interests. However, this scenario is expected to encounter strong domestic resistance due to the complex Iraqi socio-political context and the extensive popular base of the Shi’i political class. Consequently, this scenario may result in prolonged tension and conflict. Its success depends on the ability of external actors to incite popular anger without revealing their involvement; failure to do so may instead foster solidarity and national unity, reducing the likelihood of radical change.

C. Third Scenario

This scenario involves US-“Israeli” targeting of Iranian nuclear facilities, air defenses, missile bases, and allied armed faction sites in the region, particularly in light of setbacks sustained by the Axis of Resistance in Palestine and Lebanon. The US remains on high alert, as such strikes could diminish Iranian influence in Iraq and the broader region. This approach aligns with the positions of the Republican Party and the hardline administration of US President Donald Trump, aiming to establish a “New Middle East” devoid of Iranian allies. Concurrently, there is a tendency in the US Congress to introduce the “Liberating Iraq from Iranian Influence” bill, intended to curtail Iranian political, military, and economic influence in Iraq. It is improbable that negotiations between Iraq and the US will culminate in

a complete US withdrawal by the end of 2025; rather, the US presence is expected to be reconfigured, focusing on training, intelligence, or other forms.

The rapid escalation of events in Syria following the Palestinian-“Israeli” conflict corroborates prior plans to utilize this front to constrain adversaries and achieve objectives aligned with the interests of the conflicting parties, including the “Israeli” occupation entity. The United States may exploit terrorist groups along the Iraqi-Syrian border to reinforce its position in Iraq, especially as US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) detain over 10,000 ISIS members in Syrian prisons. This situation heightens the risk of terrorism resurgence under new formations in the coming years, particularly given the persistence of camps such as al-Hawl.

Regarding Turkey, failure by the Turkish government to reach an agreement to dissolve the PKK, despite efforts involving the imprisoned leader Öcalan to declare its dissolution through the Turkish Parliament in exchange for his release, will likely result in increased Turkish influence in northern Iraq. This escalation would entail further sovereignty violations under the pretext of pursuing party elements, adversely affecting Iraq’s domestic situation despite ongoing negotiations. In this context, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq must set aside political differences and engage in diplomatic negotiations to serve Kurdish interests. Moreover, support is needed for the Kurdish Peshmerga forces, including reforming regional security forces, enhancing military and intelligence capabilities, unifying ranks, and ensuring cooperation with the Central Government to combat prohibited elements and terrorist organizations threatening Iraq’s security, particularly in the Kurdistan Region.

In conclusion, fluctuations in the likelihood of risks to Iraq’s security will be accompanied by the government’s diplomatic efforts to recognize and manage these risks, thereby shaping the future of Iraqi security amid ongoing tensions.

II. Organized Crime

The United Nations, at its Fifth Congress on the Prevention of Crime held in Geneva in 1975, defined organized crime as a multifaceted criminal enterprise conducted by groups of individuals exhibiting a certain level of organization, with the primary objective of generating wealth for its members at the detriment of society and its individuals. This conceptualization encompasses offenses against persons and is often associated with political corruption. Notably, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and arms trafficking are identified as some of the most prominent forms of organized crime.

1. Drug Trafficking

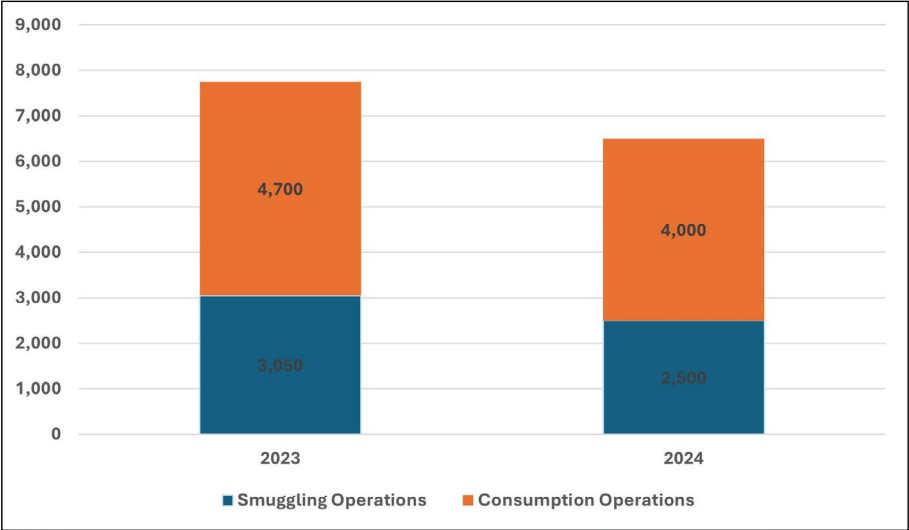
In 2024, drug trafficking activities in Iraq were primarily associated with three major smuggling corridors: the Northern, Central, and Southern internal routes. The Northern route traverses the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, linking Iraq to the northwestern provinces of Iran, southern Turkey, and the northeastern prov-

inces of Syria. This corridor experienced a significant increase in the seizure of methamphetamine and Captagon, alongside the trafficking of opiates. Reports from the General Directorates for Narcotics Control in Erbil and al-Sulaymānīyah indicate suspicions of drug production in clandestine laboratories located on the outskirts of urban centers near mountainous borders and cities such as Kirkuk and Ṭūz Khūrmātū. Notably, a laboratory manufacturing methamphetamine and Captagon was dismantled in May 2024 within the al-Sulaymānīyah Governorate. The Central route connects Syria and Lebanon to the Arabian Peninsula and Iran. Along this corridor, traffickers combine Captagon smuggled from countries west of Iraq with methamphetamine produced in the East. These substances are transported from Syria through the Iraqi al-Qā'im crossing and adjacent areas, proceeding east and south through al-Ramādī, al-Fallūjah, and al-Ruṭbah. The drugs then pass through Karbalā', Najaf, and Baghdād before reaching al-Başrah and neighboring countries. Occasionally, traffickers employ drones to drop contraband across borders. The Southern route links the Iranian province of Khūzestān, al-Başrah, Baghdād, and the Arabian Peninsula. Methamphetamine and cannabis resin constitute the majority of drug seizures along this route. Upon entry into Iraq via this corridor, drugs are further smuggled to cities including Baghdād, al-'Amārah, Najaf, and Karbalā' (UNODC, 2024, pp. 19-26).

In 2024, the Iraqi Ministry of Interior, through the General Directorate for Narcotics Affairs, arrested 14,438 suspects in drug-related cases and dismantled 600 drug networks, resulting in the apprehension of several major traffickers. Judicial rulings were issued against 8,930 individuals; among those sentenced to death were 144 international traffickers, while 454 local traffickers received life imprisonment. Additionally, 6 tons and 183 kilograms of various narcotic substances were seized, along with 765 pistols, 368 rifles, 158 hand grenades, and 1,423 vehicles. The General Directorate for Narcotics Affairs reported 3 fatalities and 31 injuries among its personnel, whereas traffickers suffered 11 deaths and 31 injuries (INA, 2024, December 28). According to Figure 4-2, drug trafficking offenses decreased by 18% in 2024 compared to 2023, with 2,500 smuggling operations intercepted in 2024 versus 3,050 in 2023. Similarly, drug consumption offenses declined by 15%, with 4,000 cases recorded in 2024 compared to 4,700 in 2023 (al-Sūmarīyah News, 2025, January 29).

In response to drug addiction, the Ministry of Interior, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, established 15 clinics and rehabilitation centers to support individuals recovering from addiction. These initiatives successfully reintegrated 3,000 recovered individuals into society. Furthermore, two international anti-drug conferences held in Baghdād in 2023 and 2024 fostered international cooperation, leading to the dismantling of numerous transnational networks through daily communication between specialized anti-drug agencies in Iraq and abroad (INA, 2024, December 28). In light of the increase in drug-related crimes, the General Directorate for Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Affairs was established within the Ministry of Interior on May 10, 2023. Monitoring of this directorate's activities in 2024 via official platforms reveals intensive efforts in anti-drug aware-

Figure 4-2: Seized Smuggling and Consumption Operations (2023-2024).



Source: Prepared by the researcher.

ness; the directorate maintains a media presence at major events to educate citizens and youth, conducting seminars and workshops in cooperation with various government institutions and activating partnerships with stakeholders inside and outside Iraq. This includes collaboration with the Kurdistan Regional Government to combat the phenomenon. The directorate reported approximately 130 awareness and educational activities from its inception until the end of 2024. There is an urgent need to prioritize the Narcotics Control Directorate by establishing branches in all Iraqi governorates and equipping them with necessary security resources (including devices, equipment, and police dogs) to ensure comprehensive and accurate oversight, coordinated with the central branch in Baghdad, to effectively combat this rapidly spreading issue across all governorates.

Under the Iraqi government’s direction, the Ministry of Health has prioritized drug control by establishing subcommittees in all governorates, chaired by governors, to develop preventive programs aimed at limiting drug proliferation. Approximately 4 tons of seized narcotic substances stored at the Forensic Medicine Department in Baghdad, as well as in Najaf and al-Basrah, were destroyed in 2024 (INA, 2024, December 28).

2. Human Trafficking

Article 1 of the Iraqi Anti-Human Trafficking Law No. 28 of 2012 defines human trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, harboring, or receipt of individuals through threats or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power, or the exchange of payments or benefits to obtain the consent of a person controlling another individual, for the purpose of selling or exploiting them in prostitution, sexual exploitation, forced labor, involuntary servitude, slavery, begging, organ trafficking, or medical experimentation. According to the United

Nations, slavery, as a form of human trafficking, affects approximately 221,000 individuals in Iraq (IOM, 2024, p. 2). This issue is attributed to multiple factors, notably the successive wars endured by Iraq, threats from terrorist organizations (most recently the ISIS terrorist group's control over several governorates and its psychological impact on residents) and political conflicts. These factors are further compounded by economic conditions, high poverty rates, and widespread corruption, which have facilitated the proliferation of specialized gangs and mafias across most Iraqi governorates. Human trafficking in Iraq encompasses a spectrum ranging from individuals coerced into selling their organs to victims of organized criminal networks.

During the first half of 2024, the Iraqi Ministry of Interior reported the arrest of over 1,800 suspects involved in human trafficking and begging, including the apprehension of nine Pakistani nationals implicated in kidnapping, robbery, and extortion. Convictions for these offenses reached 204 individuals, while 316 beggars were detained (al-Sharq al-Awsat, 2024, May 6). By August 10, 2024, Fāḍil al-Gharrāwī, a member of the High Commission for Human Rights in Iraq, indicated that the Iraqi government had intensified efforts to protect trafficking victims through its dedicated committee and the Kurdistan Regional Government. A total of 158 victims were identified, categorized as 38 victims of sexual extortion, 17 victims of forced labor (including two children), and 26 victims of unspecified exploitation (comprising 2 adult males, 7 adult females, and 16 children), in addition to 77 trafficking victims in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Of these 158 victims, the Federal Government referred 77 to the trafficking shelter operated by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, while 35 foreign victims were referred to international organizations for shelter; the remainder were directed to care facilities or reunited with their families. Among the 77 victims in the Kurdistan Region, 34 were labor trafficking victims (32 females, 2 males), and 43 were foreign nationals subjected to unspecified exploitation; 72 of these individuals were referred to protection services (Shafaq News, 2024, August 10).

Official statistics on human trafficking in Iraq remain scarce, despite the severity of the issue. The Iraqi Observatory for Victims of Human Trafficking, established in 2018 to publish monthly statistics, suspended its operations in February 2022 due to threats from certain parties, highlighting the risks associated with addressing this topic. A report covering the period from 2021 to 2023 noted that, despite significant efforts, the Iraqi government requires a more stringent commitment to standards aimed at eradicating trafficking. In this context, Amnesty International reported that traffickers exploit children aged 10 to 18 for forced labor in street work, hospitality, and domestic service, capitalizing on their economic and social vulnerabilities and the lack of security. Traffickers also utilize social media to manage networks and recruit victims through fraudulent job advertisements and operate massage centers in upscale hotels. Girls aged 14 to 18 working in cafes within the Kurdistan Region face harassment from customers and owners, while some groups exploit girls through sex trafficking, forced crimes, temporary marriages, and the traditional tribal dispute resolution practice involving forced

Table 4-6: Most Significant Human Trafficking Crimes in Iraq (2024).

No.	Date	Governorate	Crime
1	Mar 7	Maysān	Arrest of a father who coerced his 22-year-old son into selling a kidney after tricking him into traveling north for a trip and drugging him at a pre-arranged hospital.
2	Mar 30	Baghdād	Arrest of a girl for selling a 25-day-old infant following a sting operation.
3	May 6	Baghdād	Arrest of a gang in a Battāwīn hotel trafficking children for begging; 316 beggars were arrested in the campaign.
4	May 11	Baghdād	Arrest of an individual trafficking in sexual organs.
5	Jul 16	Baghdād	Dismantling of a Pakistani gang (including a woman) that kidnapped a Pakistani engineer and demanded a \$4,000 ransom; the victim was found chained.
6	Jul 21	Baghdād	Arrest of a family intending to sell their infant for three million IQD.
7	Aug 15	Baghdād	Arrest of a five-member gang (including a female minor and a Bengali national) for kidnapping and trafficking; a female victim was rescued and weapons were seized.
8	Sep 1	Wāsiṭ	Arrest of a trafficker who agreed to sell 25 kidneys from Iraqis in various governorates to parties in Iran for a commission.
9	Nov 24	Najaf	Arrest of an individual attempting to sell a child for 75 million IQD in the al-Sahlah area.
10	Nov 27	Baghdād	Security forces thwarted a mother’s attempt to sell her daughter for \$90,000 to an individual in al-Karrādah; both were arrested.
11	Dec 11	Baghdād	Arrest of 11 suspects, including women, engaged in prostitution and human trafficking.
12	Dec 26	Baghdād	Arrest of a man and a woman attempting to sell two children (aged 8 months and 1 year) for 40 million IQD.

Source: Table compiled by the researcher based on news sources and local agencies marriage (US Department of State, 2024). Table 4-6 presents the most prominent human trafficking crimes reported by local news outlets in Iraq during 2024.

3. Petroleum Derivatives Smuggling Networks

Oil constitutes the principal source of revenue for Iraq, underpinning the economies of both the Federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. Iraq ranks as the second-largest crude oil producer within the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), following Saudi Arabia, and stands as the sixth-largest global producer of petroleum derivatives. The country possesses the world’s fifth-largest proven crude oil reserves, estimated at 145 billion barrels, accounting for 17% of proven reserves in the Middle East and 8% worldwide. The majority of Iraqi crude oil reserves are situated in the governorates of al-Baṣrah, Diyālā, and Kirkuk (US Energy Information Administration, 2024, pp. 1-2). According to Article 1 of the Iraqi Anti-Smuggling of Oil and its Derivatives Law No. 41 of 2008, oil and petroleum derivatives smuggling is defined as the illicit extraction of oil and its derivatives from transportation pipelines or

storage facilities outside the bounds of legal authority. This definition encompasses the diversion of allocated quantities intended for governmental or private entities (including fishing vessels, generators, factories, farms, bakeries, and fuel stations) and their subsequent sale to smuggling networks for export, black market distribution, or manipulation of import/export figures, including fictitious imports. Smuggling activities in Iraq involve the falsification of production and export data at oil fields or ports, as well as the use of unauthorized pipelines and vehicles, adversely affecting the national economy.

Between January 1 and June 26, 2024, the Energy Police confiscated 404 vehicles and dismantled 32 smuggling hideouts associated with petroleum derivatives. A total of 426 suspects were apprehended, and 11,882,430 liters of derivatives were seized, with no reported breaches of oil pipelines (INA, 2024, June 30). In August 2024, the Energy Police further seized 73 vehicles and tankers, along with six garages and smuggling sites, arresting 98 violators who were subsequently referred to judicial authorities. Additionally, the smuggling of 236 oil tankers and 2,175,660 liters was prevented. The Directorate reported a 98% reduction in smuggling and pipeline breaches (INA, 2024, September 4). Table 4-7 presents the most significant smuggling operations intercepted in 2024.

Smuggling locations within the Kurdistan Region of Iraq are categorized into two areas: the mountainous regions of the Taurus and Zagros ranges and the Zagros plains. 'Alī Ḥamah Šāliḥ, rapporteur of the opposition Kurdish Position Party and former member of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament, reported that the Region produces over 350,000 barrels daily. He indicated that this volume is smuggled to Turkey through party-affiliated companies, with one ton of oil sold for \$270 (equivalent to approximately \$35 per barrel) while the market price of Iraqi oil was approximately \$80 per barrel in 2024. These revenues do not contribute to the budgets of the Regional Ministry of Finance or the general treasury (al-Ālam al-Jadīd, 2024, August 8). In 2024, trucks became the primary means of smuggling oil from the Region to Turkey and Iran through unofficial and suspicious transactions, coinciding with stalled negotiations to reopen the Iraq-Turkey pipeline from Kirkuk to the Turkish port of Ceyhan, previously utilized for exports.

Following the occupation of certain Iraqi governorates by the ISIS terrorist organization in 2014, the Kurdistan Regional Government exploited the weakened Central Government in Baghdād by utilizing the pipeline connecting Kirkuk oil to Ceyhan, linked to the Turkish border crossing at Fishkhābūr. During this period, revenues were allocated to Regional interests, creating a fundamental challenge in relations between the Federal Government and local authorities in Baghdād and Erbil. Baghdād authorities submitted the dispute to the International Court of Arbitration, alleging that Turkey violated the 1973 pipeline transit agreement by exporting crude oil from the Region without central approval. After nine years, in March 2023, the court ruled in favor of Iraq. A senior official from the Kurdish Ministry of Natural Resources stated that the Region's oil production reached 375,000 barrels per day, with 200,000 barrels transported by truck to Iran and Turkey, and the remainder refined locally (Reuters, 2024, July 11).

Table 4-7: Most Significant Petroleum Derivatives Smuggling Operations in Iraq (2024).

No.	Date	Location	Operation
1	Jan 24	al-Başrah	Disbandment of a smuggling network following a raid on a garage in Khawr al-Zubayr; 29 asphalt tankers, 29 derivative tankers, and 3 solvent tankers were seized, with 63 suspects arrested.
2	Mar 18	Various	The Iraqi Intelligence Agency disrupted a large smuggling network during a 15-day campaign, confiscating 34 vehicles and drivers, four oil sites, and thousands of tons of oil and derivatives.
3	Jul 15	Bābil	Arrest of a smuggling gang and seizure of equipment, a Kalashnikov rifle, and a 220-liter barrel containing petroleum products.
4	Aug 3	Najaf	Energy Police apprehended two smugglers in two operations at a site prepared for oil smuggling and detained a suspect driving a tanker with forged documents.
5	Aug 10	al-Anbār	Arrest of a suspect for smuggling derivatives and seizure of his tanker due to absence from the tanker movement tracking system.
6	Oct 10	Şalāḥ-al-Dīn, al-Anbār, al-Başrah	The Second Energy Police Brigade arrested six individuals and seized vehicles prepared for smuggling in violation of regulations.
7	Oct 21	Şalāḥ-al-Dīn	Arrest of five suspects and seizure of five vehicles prepared for smuggling due to multiple violations.
8	Nov 23	Baghdād	Arrest of three major oil smuggling kingpins in a series of operations conducted by specialized security teams.
9	Dec 9	Diyālā, Wāsit, Maysān	Energy Police detachments arrested three suspects and seized vehicles for legal violations.
10	Dec 15	al-Başrah	Energy Police arrested a suspect for smuggling petroleum products and seized his tanker due to tampering with official documentation.
11	Dec 23	Diyālā, al-Başrah	Energy Police arrested two suspects for smuggling derivatives and impounded their vehicles.
12	Dec 24	Diyālā, al-Anbār, Bābil	The Ministry of Interior arrested five individuals involved in smuggling derivatives and impounded their vehicles.
13	Dec 26	Şalāḥ-al-Dīn	Arrest of a suspect for smuggling derivatives and seizure of his tanker due to lack of official documentation.
14	Dec 29	Dhī-Qār, al-Başrah	Arrest of four suspects for smuggling derivatives and seizure of their vehicles.

Source: Table compiled by the researcher based on news sources and local agencies.

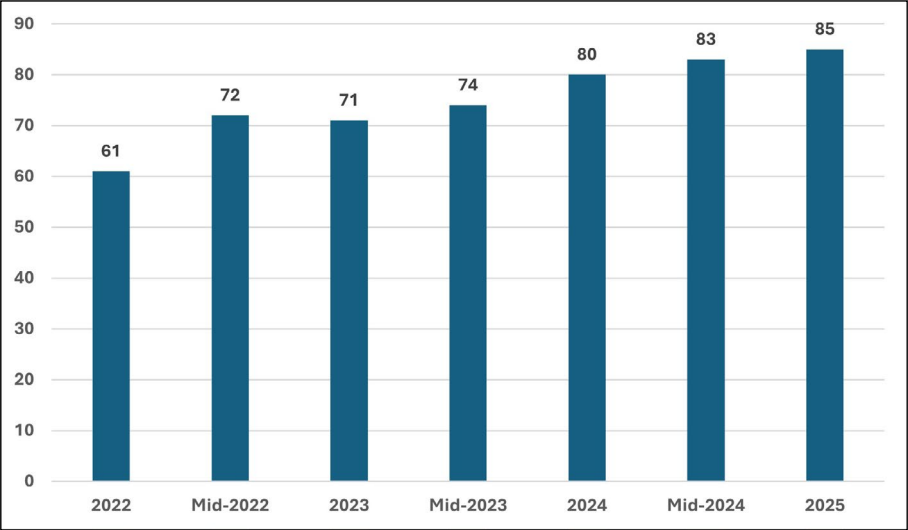
The Ministry of Oil implemented several measures to curb oil smuggling in northern Iraq, including annual audits and expenditure disclosures for factories and plants. Security agencies adopted a comprehensive strategy to address petroleum derivatives smuggling through three primary approaches: regulating tanker movements on inter-governorate roads, eliminating the problem of “slippery roads,” and tightening checkpoint procedures. These efforts resulted in a reduction of the petroleum derivatives smuggling rate to 80% in 2024, representing a positive development, particularly with the dismantling of smuggling

networks and the seizure of numerous tankers used for inter-governorate smuggling (Iraqi Dinar, 2024, April 11).

III. Criminal Offenses

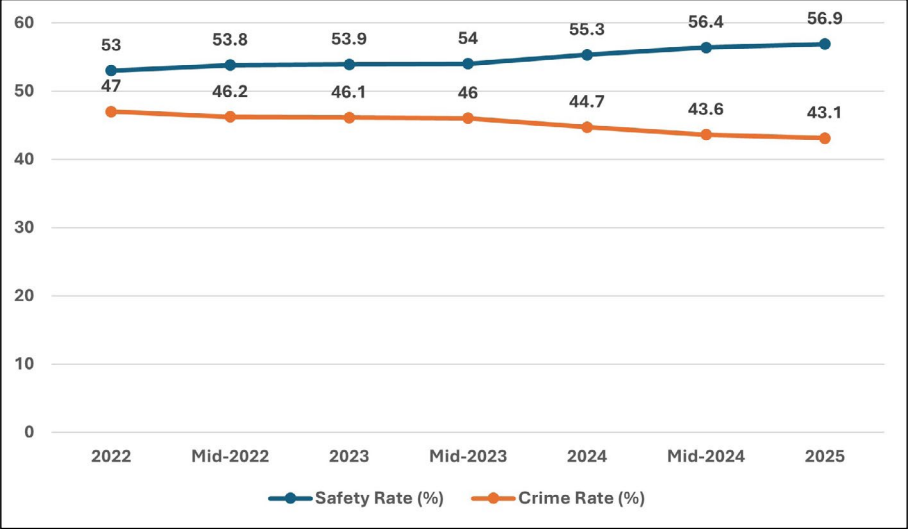
Article 25 of the Iraqi Penal Code No. 111 of 1969 defines a criminal offense as any act punishable by death, life imprisonment, or imprisonment for a term exceeding five to fifteen years. According to Figure 4-3, which is based on the

Figure 4-3: Iraq's Position in the Crime Index (2022-2024).



Source: Prepared by the researcher.

Figure 4-4: Crime and Safety Rates in Iraq (2022-2024).



Source: Prepared by the researcher.

NUMBEO Crime Index, Iraq's global ranking in criminal offenses showed improvement in 2024 relative to previous years. Specifically, after ranking 61st worldwide in 2022, Iraq declined to 71st in 2023, continuing this downward trajectory to 80th at the start of 2024, 83rd by mid-2024, and 85th at the beginning of 2025 (the ranking relevant to the crime situation in the final quarter of 2024).

The index further indicates that Iraq recorded a crime rate of 44.7 and a safety rate of 55.3 at the beginning of 2024, ranking sixth in the Arab world after Syria, Yemen, Libya, Egypt, and Lebanon. By mid-2024, Iraq held the 83rd global position with a crime rate of 43.6 and a safety rate of 56.4, moving to seventh in the Arab world following Syria, Yemen, Libya, Egypt, Lebanon, and Tunisia. Figure 4-4 illustrates the decline in crime rates alongside the corresponding increase in safety rates in Iraq during the period from 2022 to 2024.

Despite a 15% reduction in crime rates in 2024 compared to 2023, criminal activities persist and continue to threaten Iraqi security. Table 4-8 presents the Table 4-8: Most Significant Criminal Offenses in Iraq for 2024.

No.	Date	Governorate	Crime	Victims
1	Jan 1	Baghdād	A second husband shot and killed his wife and her daughter (from the first husband); a son/brother was also found killed similarly in Abū-Dashīr.	3
2	Jan 17	Kirkuk	Two individuals killed a taxi driver, disposed of the body, and stole the vehicle.	1
3	Jan 17	Bābil	A man was killed by his wife and son using a sharp tool (axe) due to family disputes.	1
4	Feb 1	Baghdād	A stepfather killed his wife, son, and daughter, kidnapped another daughter, and fled.	3
5	Feb 11	Nīnawá	A man killed his wife due to family disputes and claimed it was a suicide.	1
6	Feb 15	al-Dīwānīyah	A transgender blogger known as "Simsim" (28 years old) was killed by several knife stabs.	1
7	Mar 4	Diyālā	Two young women (aged 29 and 22) were killed by their brothers in Khānaqīn and al-Khālīṣ for "honor cleansing."	2
8	Apr 4	Dhī-Qār	A woman was stabbed to death in her home during a robbery of 7 million IQD.	1
9	Apr 7	al-Muthanná	A 25-year-old man was stabbed to death due to a financial dispute.	1
10	Apr 7	Fallūjah	A woman was killed by her brother due to disputes between them.	1
11	May 1	Baghdād	A citizen was killed by his friend inside a hotel.	1
12	Jun 5	Baghdād	Eight brothers shot and killed their sister's fiancé due to family disputes.	1
13	Jun 18	al-Baṣrah	An Egyptian national was arrested for killing and dismembering four Egyptian colleagues.	4
14	Jul 11	Bābil	A young man was killed by his brother with a sharp tool following a dispute.	1

Table 4-8 (continued)

No.	Date	Governorate	Crime	Victims
15	Jul 26	al-Sulay-mānīyah	A guest was killed with a knife by a mother and daughter following a quarrel.	1
16	Jul 27	Najaf	A 32-year-old man killed his mother and siblings over a dispute regarding 5 million IQD.	4
17	Jul 29	al-Anbār	A drug-addicted man shot and killed 8 people (including his wife and her family) during a domestic dispute.	8
18	Aug 10	al-Muthanná	A young man was killed with swords on the al-Samāwah-al-Rumaythah road.	1
19	Aug 17	al-Anbār	A man killed his mother and buried her in a storage room within their home.	1
20	Aug 18	Erbil	A car showroom owner was shot and killed due to personal disputes.	1
21	Aug 21	Şalāḥ-al-Dīn	Gunmen stormed a house and shot an entire family.	5
22	Aug 26	Maysān	A 10-year-old child was killed after being kicked into the Tigris River by a severely intoxicated man.	1
23	Aug 30	Maysān	A young lawyer and his relative were shot and killed by unidentified gunmen.	2
24	Sep 15	Dhī-Qār	A person was shot and killed by his friend due to personal disputes.	1
25	Sep 17	al-Başrah	A 13-year-old boy killed his parents and brother due to alleged domestic abuse.	3
26	Sep 19	Erbil	A 13-year-old girl stabbed her father to death while he was sleeping.	1
27	Sep 30	Dhī-Qār	A girl was strangled and her house was set on fire.	1
28	Oct 5	al-Anbār	Five members of one family, including the al-Ramādī power station manager, were killed.	5
29	Oct 30	al-Dīwānīyah	A father and daughter were shot by gunmen during a dispute over agricultural land.	2
30	Nov 7	Duhok	A Syrian Kurdish couple were shot and killed inside their home.	2
31	Nov 10	Najaf	A woman killed her husband with a glass vessel while he was sleeping.	1
32	Nov 13	Karbalā'	A 20-year-old man killed his father with twenty knife stabs.	1
33	Dec 2	Najaf	A man in his fifties shot his wife and daughter due to family problems.	2
34	Dec 13	al-Dīwānīyah	A pharmacist was shot and killed by her daughter's ex-husband.	1
35	Dec 31	Baghdād	Eight people (6 children and a pregnant woman) were strangled or stabbed over a debt.	8

most significant criminal offenses recorded in Iraq throughout 2024. These offenses were observed across all Iraqi governorates, with the majority motivated by social and psychological factors. This situation underscores the necessity of developing preventive strategies aimed at mitigating such crimes. These strategies should focus on improving economic conditions, enhancing housing environments, supporting marginalized groups, disseminating social values, and raising public awareness. Additionally, there is a critical need to educate families on healthy child-rearing practices, monitor children's behavior, combat drug abuse, and strengthen legal and security frameworks to deter criminal conduct.

IV. The Threat of Weapons Outside State Control

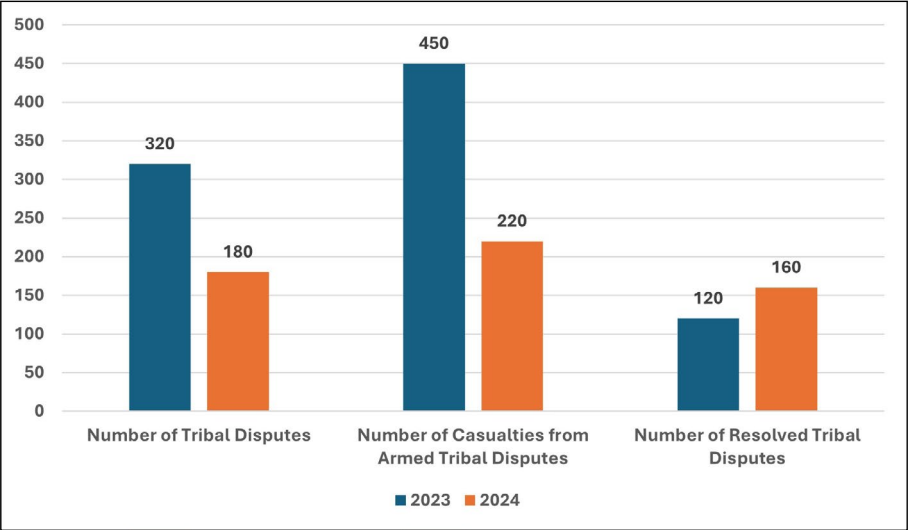
In 2024, Iraq experienced a notable proliferation of weapons beyond the control of the state, manifesting at the levels of individuals, tribes, and armed factions. These weapons have been employed in personal, tribal, and political conflicts, thereby adversely affecting the security and stability of both the state and society.

1. Tribal Weapons

In Iraqi society, particularly within the central and southern governorates, tribal resolutions are frequently employed to resolve disputes. These resolutions often involve financial compensation, blood revenge, or the practice known as the "Tribal Warning" (al-Daggah), circumventing formal legal processes. Official statistics on the proliferation of weapons among Iraqi tribes are unavailable, largely due to the extensive arsenal inherited from the former regime's military. The conflict against the ISIS terrorist organization further augmented this arsenal, as some tribes engaged in combat operations alongside security forces (al-Ālam al-Jadīd, 2024, December 24). Many tribes in central and southern Iraq possess a variety of firearms and weaponry, including pistols; Russian, American, and Iranian machine guns; anti-aircraft weapons; mortars; RPG launchers; and sniper rifles. Additionally, certain political parties leverage tribal affiliations to secure electoral support by providing assistance and resources, including the provision or tacit acceptance of weapon possession (Şawt al-Īrāq, 2024, July 5).

In early 2024, the Iraqi government intensified efforts to centralize weapon control under state authority. This initiative continued the work of the National Committee for Regulating and Restricting Weapons, established by the National Security Council under Resolution No. 21 of 2021 (al-Sā'ah, 2024, September 25). The government allocated 15 billion IQD to purchase unlicensed light, medium, and heavy weapons from citizens and launched an electronic registration platform on the "Ur Portal" for light weapons. Furthermore, 697 centers were established across all Iraqi governorates, excluding the Kurdistan Region, for the surrender of medium and heavy weapons. Despite these measures, tangible results were limited due to the complex security environment and the influence of tribal groups. Consequently, the government increased financial incentives to over 6 million IQD per surrendered medium or heavy weapon and issued warn-

Figure 4-5: Tribal Disputes in Iraq (2023-2024).



Source: Prepared by the researcher.
ings of imprisonment for unauthorized possession beyond 2024 (al-Masallah, 2024, June 16).

The practice of “Tribal Warning” persisted in 2024 despite a directive from the Supreme Judicial Council on November 8, 2018, mandating its treatment under Article 4 of the Iraqi Anti-Terrorism Law. In May 2023, the Iraqi Ministry of Interior formalized a “Code of Honor” with tribal sheikhs during a workshop at the Federal Police Command in Baghdād. This agreement comprised seven provisions aimed at safeguarding rights and promoting community peace, emphasizing respect for human rights and the enforcement of the rule of law and state authority (INA, 2024, May 6). In the first quarter of 2024, Brigadier General Miqdād Mīrī, spokesperson for the Iraqi Ministry of Interior, reported the resolution of 400 tribal disputes, including 27 armed and 373 non-armed conflicts, representing a 77% reduction in “Tribal Warning” incidents compared to 2023 (Basnews, 2024, April 29).

Dhī-Qār Governorate recorded the highest incidence of armed tribal disputes, averaging 110 cases between January and mid-November 2024. Of these, 95 were resolved through various means, including perpetrator surrender or tribal truces (al-‘Aṭwah), while 15 remained unsettled. The governorates of al-Başrah, al-Muth-anná, and Maysān also experienced frequent armed disputes, often involving the use of firearms, mortars, and locally manufactured rockets (al-‘Arabī al-Jadīd, 2024, November 19). Official statistics indicate a decline in tribal disputes from 2023 to 2024. Armed tribal disputes decreased from 320 cases in 2023 to 180 in 2024, a reduction of 43.75%. The number of casualties (killed and wounded) fell from 450 to 220, representing a 51.11% decrease. Additionally, 160 tribal disputes were resolved in 2024 compared to 120 in 2023, reflecting a 33.33% increase in peaceful dispute resolution attributed to tribal mediation and government and social awareness campaigns. Diyālā Governorate exhibited the most significant

decrease in tribal disputes at 50%, followed by al-Baṣrah at 40%, and al-Anbār at 35% (al-Dustūr, 2025, January 31).

2. The Threat of Deviant Sects

Iraq has periodically experienced the emergence of deviant sects. Among the most notable groups active in Iraq in recent years are Jund al-Samā', Abnā' Allāh, Aṣḥāb al-Qaḍīyah, al-Mawlawīyah, al-Imām al-Rabbānī movement, and al-Qurbān group. In 2024, the al-Qurbānīyūn group (also referred to as "al-'Alī al-Ilāhīyah") became active, asserting the divinity of Imām 'Alī ibn Abī-Ṭālib. This group employs an extremist practice whereby members draw lots among themselves, and the selected individual commits suicide as a sacrifice (qurbān) to Imām 'Alī. All members are youths under the age of 20, dispersed across the outskirts of central and southern Iraqi regions, including urban centers, villages, rural areas, and remote locations characterized by poverty, ignorance, and unemployment (Baghdād Today, 2024, August 19).

The Iraqi National Security Service (INSS) successfully infiltrated this movement following reports of more than five youth suicides in the governorates of Wāsiṭ, al-Baṣrah, and Dhī-Qār. Consequently, 31 members were arrested during the first half of 2024 (INA, 2024, June 29). On July 20, 2024, the INSS announced the arrest of 35 members of the al-Qurbān group in the governorates of al-Baṣrah, al-Muthanná, and al-Dīwānīyah. Additionally, four individuals were detained during the 'Āshūrā' pilgrimage; they possessed photographs of a person who had committed suicide. Investigations revealed their affiliation with the movement and their intention to conduct extremist rituals involving drawing lots to select a member to commit suicide (al-Ra'y, 2024, July 20). On September 2, 2024, the INSS announced the arrest of 20 members in al-Muthanná Governorate, including an individual known as the "Ārif," a title attributed to the movement's theorists or preachers. Furthermore, 27 suspects were apprehended in the governorates of Dhī-Qār, Wāsiṭ, and Maysān (al-Ta'ākhī, 2024, September 3). On October 21, 2024, the INSS reported the arrest of 35 individuals associated with this movement in al-Baṣrah, Wāsiṭ, al-Muthanná, and Dhī-Qār governorates (INA, 2025, October 21). On November 26, 2024, Major General Laftah al-Muḥammadāwī, Police Commander of Maysān, announced the dismantling of the group and the arrest of 10 additional members following raids on several residences (Baghdād Today, 2024, November 26).

Regarding the al-Mawlawīyah movement, which rejects the traditional adherence to religious authorities and scholars (Marāji'), advocating instead for allegiance to a "Mawlá" (Master) connected to Imām al-Mahdī, the movement expanded significantly after the ISIS terrorist organization occupied several Iraqi governorates in 2014. On February 7, 2024, Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) intelligence announced the arrest of a member in al-Muthanná Governorate who possessed leaflets promoting extremist religious ideas intended for public distribution (Nūn, 2024, February 7). On September 3, 2024, an INSS unit arrested six followers in the village of Khamīsah, al-Huwayr sub-district, northern al-Baṣrah

Governorate. Similarly, on October 5, 2024, Ministry of Interior intelligence detained a follower for distributing extremist leaflets in the Sūq al-Shuyūkh area, south of Dhī-Qār Governorate (+964, 2024, October 5).

As part of the security measures for the Arbaʿīn pilgrimage, the INSS arrested 180 suspects affiliated with various sects. Additionally, the INSS succeeded in shutting down over 12,000 websites and social media pages inciting extremism and arrested 143 individuals for promoting the banned Baʿth Party (INA, 2024, December 31).

3. Miscellaneous Weapons

Unlicensed weapons are extensively distributed throughout Iraqi society. Although precise official data on their quantities are lacking, estimates indicate that between 13 and 15 million units of medium and light weaponry exist among the Iraqi population. The most prevalent among these are Kalashnikov rifles, Russian-manufactured PKC and RPK machine guns, mortars, and RPG launchers. Neighboring countries act as primary sources for the influx of these weapons into Iraq, with specialized criminal networks orchestrating smuggling operations involving substantial financial transactions. Additionally, terrorist organizations exploit these smuggled arms to recommence their activities, particularly within the governorates of al-Anbār, Diyālā, and Kirkuk (Şawt al-ʿIrāq, 2024, September 2). On April 19, 2024, security forces in Kirkuk Governorate successfully apprehended a gang, most members of which originated from outside the governorate, some possessing security identification, attempting to smuggle significant quantities of unlicensed weapons into Kirkuk for use in terrorist activities and organized crime (Şawt al-ʿIrāq, 2024, April 19). Throughout 2024, various armed groups employed diverse weapons and equipment for multiple objectives. Table 4-9 presents the most notable operations involving miscellaneous weaponry and the corresponding types of usage during 2024.

Table 4-9: Significant Operations Involving the Use of Unlicensed Weapons in Iraq (2024).

No.	Date	Governorate	Crime	Type
1	Jan 9	Baghdād	The killing of Iraqi-Swedish national Muşţafā al-Jubūrī, known as 'Benzema,' who was affiliated with the 'Foxtrot' criminal network in Sweden and involved in recruiting youth for trafficking prohibited substances. The perpetrator, a Swedish citizen disguised as a delivery worker, was apprehended by security forces following the shooting.	Swedish gang war in Iraq
2	Feb 18	Baghdād	An armed attack in the al-Rashādiyyah area resulted in the killing of the brother-in-law of the wife of the head of the Nabnī Alliance (Hādī al-ʿĀmirī) and his friend, stemming from a land dispute. Security forces arrested two suspects.	Criminal incident

Table 4-9 (continued)

No.	Date	Governorate	Crime	Type
3	Feb 19	Bābil	The assassination of Sadrists activist Aysar al-Khafājī coincided with the inauguration of the new governor ('Adnān Fayḥān). The activist was kidnapped in an armed attack outside his residence in the Abū-Gharaq district, killed, and his body was discarded on the highway in the Jablah area. Despite the governor's affiliation with 'Aṣā'ib Ahl al-Ḥaqq, which has historical tensions with the Sadrism movement, Sayyid Muqtadā al-Ṣadr intervened to mitigate the conflict.	Political assassination
4	Feb 21	Najaf and Bābil	An improvised explosive device targeted an office of 'Aṣā'ib Ahl al-Ḥaqq in Najaf, causing material damage. Additionally, an office of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) in Bābil was attacked with an RPG-7, though no human casualties were reported.	Political targeting
5	Feb 23	Baghdād	Fakhrī Karīm, head of al-Madā Media Foundation, survived an assassination attempt when his vehicle was intercepted by a pick-up truck that fired 11 bullets at him.	Liquidation
6	Feb 21	Wāsiṭ	Colonel 'Azīz al-Imārah, former commander of the Rapid Response Force in Wāsiṭ Governorate, sustained three gunshot wounds in an armed attack that also resulted in the death of his brother.	Political assassination
7	Apr 18	Erbil	The killing of 21-year-old blogger Fairūz Āzād occurred while she was asleep in her apartment in the Darātū neighborhood. Several relatives forcibly entered the apartment and shot her four times.	Liquidation
8	Apr 27	Baghdād	Iraqi blogger Ghufrān Sawādī, known as 'Umm-Fahd,' was killed in front of her residence in Zayyūnah. The assailant, arriving on a motorcycle, opened her car door, shot her in the head with a 9mm pistol, confiscated her mobile phone, and fled.	Liquidation
9	Jun 7	Kirkuk	An Emergency Police patrol was attacked by two gunmen on a motorcycle in the Qūriyah area. One officer was killed and another wounded; the suspects were subsequently arrested.	Armed targeting
10	Sep 25	Baghdād	The Chinese company 'Power China,' headquartered in a residence in the al-Manṣūr area, was subjected to an armed robbery involving the theft of 300-500 million IQD, an M4 weapon, and a Cadillac vehicle.	Armed robbery
11	Sep 25	Baghdād	An armed group intercepted a civilian vehicle on the Army Canal road, opened fire, and robbed the owner of 32 million IQD.	Armed robbery

Table 4-9 (continued)

No.	Date	Governorate	Crime	Type
12	Dec 3	Baghdād	An employee of the Bābil Governorate Council was killed inside the home of a Brigadier General after being shot 13 times in the al-Jihād neighborhood.	Liquidation
13	Dec 12	al-Baṣrah	An Emergency Police patrol was fired upon by two individuals on motorcycles, resulting in injuries to three personnel; the suspects were arrested.	Armed tar- geting

Source: Table compiled by the researcher based on news sources and local agencies.

The Ministry of Interior launched numerous operations against weapon sales and trafficking networks in 2024. Government statistics revealed the seizure of more than 2,000 weapons in the al-Karkh district alone during the final four months of 2024, with an average of 700 pieces per month in September, October, and November, and 255 pieces in December. These seizures were carried out through emergency police patrols, excluding proactive operations and residential inspections (al-‘Ālam al-Jadīd, 2024, December 24).

Furthermore, security forces conducted a campaign against caves and weapon caches used by terrorist groups in Iraq during 2024 to destroy them and clear them of weapons and equipment (See Table 4-10).

Table 4-10: Terrorist Caches and Caves Cleared of Weapons and Equipment by Security Forces (2024).

No.	Date	Operation Description
1	Jan 20	Joint Operations initiated the "Wa'd al-Ḥaqq" operation against terrorist elements. The Air Force conducted three strikes against ISIS dens and caches in Diyālā Governorate. Utilizing precise intelligence and Cessna Caravan aircraft, they destroyed ISIS caches in Wādī al-Shāy, Kirkuk.
2	Feb 29	The Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) destroyed seven ISIS caches in Nīnawā Governorate.
3	Mar 9	Security forces destroyed ISIS caches and dens in the al-Anbār desert.
4	Mar 19	The CTS destroyed 29 ISIS caches, filled 6 tunnels, and seized 2 explosive belts, 12 IEDs, 3 booby-trapped motorcycles, 4 mortar shells, and 3 barrels of explosives. Additionally, 80 containers of PKC machine gun ammunition and 13 containers of Kalashnikov ammunition were found in Ṣalāḥ-al-Dīn, Tulūl al-Bāj, Nīnawā Governorate, and the al-Ḥaḍr district in Wādī al-Tharthār.
5	May 10	The CTS detonated and destroyed 10 caves and caches in the Dāquq district (Wādī al-Shāy) and arrested three terrorists in the governorates of al-Anbār, Ṣalāḥ-al-Dīn, and Kirkuk.
6	Jul 10	The 25th PMF Brigade, in cooperation with the Iraqi Army, destroyed ISIS caches in Wādī al-Tharthār, 40 kilometers southwest of Nīnawā.
7	Aug 18	The CTS conducted an inspection campaign covering the governorates of Ṣalāḥ-al-Dīn and Diyālā, as well as the al-Ṭārimīyah district, resulting in the destruction of several ISIS caches and caves and the arrest of one terrorist.

Table 4-10 (continued)

8	Aug 24	Joint Operations, using Cessna Caravan aircraft, destroyed three ISIS dens and killed those inside through precise airstrikes in the al-Ṭūz district, east of Ṣalāḥ-al-Dīn.
9	Nov 28	The Air Force, in cooperation with the CTS and the Federal Intelligence and Investigations Agency, used F-16 aircraft to destroy six caches belonging to ISIS detachments in Wādī Ḥawrān within the al-Anbār Operations Command sector.
10	Dec 12	F-16 aircraft, in cooperation with Federal Intelligence, struck a terrorist detachment and destroyed weapons and ammunition in the al-Rashād area within the Kirkuk Operations Command sector.
11	Dec 15	Security forces seized weapons and explosive materials in al-Ruṭbah.
12	Dec 28	Iraqi CTS forces destroyed nine caches and seized explosive belts and materials belonging to the ISIS organization in al-Anbār Governorate.
13	Dec 30	The CTS, in cooperation with Joint Operations, destroyed 20 caches, 3 caves, and 5 tunnels, killed 7 terrorists, and seized various explosive materials on the border between Ṣalāḥ-al-Dīn and Diyālā governorates, in addition to destroying 5 caches in al-Anbār Governorate.

Source: Table compiled by the researcher based on news sources and local agencies.

V. Classification of Security Risks

The assessment of security risks in this study employs the Munich Security Index framework, which evaluates threats based on five criteria: Overall Risk (indicating whether the risk is escalating, stable, or declining), Imminence (the likelihood and timing of the risk occurrence), Severity (the potential intensity and impact on security and stability), Proximity (the geographical closeness of the threat to critical human or state targets), and Preparedness (the government's readiness and capacity to manage the risk).

Each criterion is rated on a scale from 0 to 20, with the first four criteria categorized as follows: 0-4 (very low), 5-9 (low), 10-14 (medium), 15-19 (high), and 20 (very high). The Preparedness criterion is inversely scored: 20 (very low), 15-19 (low), 10-14 (medium), 5-9 (high), and 0-4 (very high). The total risk score is calculated on a scale from 0 to 100 to facilitate interpretation, with the average score derived by dividing the total by five, yielding a final risk score on the Munich Security Scale (0-20). This methodology considers statistical data, figures, and analyses relevant to Iraq's internal security and stability, as well as the state's capacity to address each threat.

Table 4-11 presents the risk levels associated with regional and border conflicts affecting Iraq's security in 2024. Turkish aggression against Iraq registers an average risk score of 15.8, indicating a high threat level. The Overall Trend is high due to ongoing Turkish military operations in northern Iraq. The Imminence factor is also high, reflecting the persistence and escalation of Turkish attacks, including ground incursions. Severity is rated medium, as the strikes are geographically limited to northern Iraq. Proximity is significant, given the military actions resulting in human and material losses and heightened political and secu-

Table 4-11: Risk Levels of Regional Conflicts on the Iraqi Security Scene.

No.	Type of Risk	Overall Trend	Imminence	Severity	Proximity	Preparedness	Total Result	Average Score
1	Iranian Operations	17	17	18	18	13	83	16.6
2	Turkish Aggression	17	17	14	18	13	79	15.8
3	Terrorist Challenge (Syrian Arena)	17	17	18	18	7	77	15.4
4	"Israeli" Aggression on Gaza	15	16	16	11	13	71	14.2
5	"Israeli" Aggression on Lebanon	15	16	16	11	13	71	14.2

Source: Prepared by the researcher.

ity tensions between Iraq and Turkey. Preparedness is medium, reflecting Iraq's limited military capabilities along its borders.

Iranian operations against Iraq have an average Munich Index score of 16.6. The Overall Trend is high, influenced by the evolving "Israeli"-Iranian conflict stemming from "Israeli" actions against Palestine and Iran. This risk is imminent and escalating, with high severity due to the potential for substantial damage to critical Iraqi areas. Proximity is notable, with the possibility of operations penetrating deep into Iraqi territory. Preparedness remains medium, attributed to the government's insufficient strategic planning and operational capacity to counter such threats.

The terrorist threat emanating from internal events in Syria poses a risk with an average score of 15.4. The Overall Trend identifies this as a significant danger, particularly due to active terrorist groups in Syria and the potential for cross-border infiltration into Iraq. Severity is high, given the potential for considerable human and material losses. Proximity is relevant due to Iraq's geographical adjacency to the Syrian border. However, Preparedness is rated high, reflecting the Iraqi government's and security forces' experience in counterterrorism and regional cooperation that enhances threat containment.

"Israeli" aggression against Palestine and Lebanon presents a risk score of 14.2. The Overall Trend is concerning, as it exacerbates regional tensions. The risk is imminent, with potential spillover effects into Iraq. Severity is high, given the possibility of targeting vital interests. Proximity is indirect, manifested through affected border areas. Preparedness is medium, reflecting Iraq's political and diplomatic support for the Palestinian cause while maintaining a stance to avoid involvement in external conflicts that could destabilize internal security.

Table 4-12: Risk Levels of Armed Faction Threats to the Iraqi Security Scene.

No.	Type of Risk	Overall Trend	Imminent	Severity	Proximity	Preparedness	Total Result	Average Score
1	Targeting US Bases	17	15	18	18	13	81	16.2
2	"Israeli" Threats to Iraq	18	13	19	12	16	78	15.6
3	Factions' Position on Striking the "Israeli" Entity	14	14	16	14	14	72	14.4

Source: Prepared by the researcher.

Table 4-12 illustrates that the targeting of US bases in Iraq represents a significant risk, with an average score of 16.2 according to the Munich Security Index. The overall trend reflects a fluctuating persistence of attacks on these bases, driven by tensions between the United States and the "Israeli" occupation entity, alongside factions affiliated with the Axis of Resistance. This threat is classified as imminent, with the potential for renewal at any time, particularly amid regional escalations linked to the entity's policies of killing and starvation against the Palestinian population. The proximity factor is elevated due to the presence of US bases within Iraq, while preparedness to counter such attacks remains insufficient. Concurrently, the average score for "Israeli" threats to Iraq is 15.6; although the overall trend indicates a high and probable risk, the imminence factor is moderate owing to the lack of strong indicators suggesting an imminent "Israeli" strike.

Table 4-13 reveals an increasing risk trend concerning the proliferation of weapons outside state control in Iraq, constituting a major security challenge. Given their continued dissemination across various regions, the likelihood of their use is considered imminent. The severity of this risk arises from the poten-

Table 4-13: Risk Levels of Organized Crime, Criminal Offenses, and Weapons Outside State Control.

No.	Type of Risk	Overall Trend	Imminent	Severity	Proximity	Preparedness	Total Result	Average Score
1	Weapons Outside State Control	15	16	16	16	13	76	15.2
2	Organized Crime Challenges	15	14	16	16	5	66	13.2
3	Criminal Offenses	13	16	12	16	5	62	12.4

Source: Prepared by the researcher.

tial to cause civilian casualties, and the proximity factor is high due to the presence of these weapons among civilians in residential neighborhoods. Despite governmental efforts, the Iraqi authorities face ongoing difficulties in controlling weapons outside state oversight, resulting in a medium preparedness rating. Consequently, the overall assessment according to the index is high, with an average score of 15.2.

The overall trend for organized crime challenges in Iraq remains high, despite a decline in 2024 compared to previous years, encompassing activities such as drug and petroleum derivative smuggling. The imminence factor is moderate, reflecting the ongoing nature of these operations, while severity is high due to their significant economic and social impacts. Proximity is elevated as these crimes occur near urban centers and commercial areas. Preparedness is rated high, attributed to measures implemented by the Iraqi government through security ministries and intelligence agencies; however, there is a recognized need to enhance governmental efforts, particularly concerning human organ trafficking. Accordingly, the overall assessment is moderate, with a score of 13.2. Additionally, risks associated with criminal offenses have declined in 2024 to a score of 12.4, categorizing them as medium risk. The overall trend is moderate due to the daily recurrence of such crimes; however, their unpredictable and repetitive nature results in a high imminence factor. Severity is moderate, as these offenses are less threatening than organized crime, and proximity remains high due to their direct impact on citizens and residential areas. Preparedness is high, supported by security operations aimed at apprehending perpetrators, enforcing stricter penalties, and expediting judicial proceedings.

VI. The Future Agenda and Requirements for Sustaining Iraqi National Security in 2025

Insecurity remains one of the most critical factors impeding a nation's development and prosperity. The United Nations has identified seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the sixteenth goal specifically emphasizing "Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions." All members of society should be free from all forms of violence that engender injustice and undermine national development, thereby ensuring their security in all aspects of life.

The year 2024 presented significant security challenges for Iraq. The year commenced with retaliatory attacks by armed factions targeting US bases, expressing opposition to the massacres perpetrated by the "Israeli" occupation entity against the Palestinian population in Gaza following the Tūfān al-Aqṣā operation. In response, the United States conducted airstrikes on armed faction sites within Iraq. Subsequently, the Iraqi government initiated negotiations with the American side to conclude the matter concerning the US-led International Coalition. Concurrently, armed factions launched direct attacks on critical interests within the occupation entity, precipitating a severe security escalation. Consequently, Iraq received threats from the occupation entity regarding inten-

tions to bombard specific sites affiliated with armed factions in Iraq. These developments heightened concerns about Iraq's potential involvement in a regional conflict, particularly given the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC) utilization of Iraqi airspace to launch hundreds of missiles against the occupation entity following the assassination of the Secretary-General of Hizballāh, Sayyid Ḥasan Naṣrallāh, in Lebanon.

To sustain Iraqi national security in 2025, the Iraqi government must adopt a comprehensive vision addressing the root causes by initiating a national dialogue with leaders of armed factions in Iraq. This initiative should encompass the restructuring of these factions and their integration into the Iraqi Armed Forces, thereby placing them under the command of the Commander-in-Chief and subject to the security establishment's authority. In exchange, faction leaders should prioritize Iraq's national interests to prevent vulnerabilities that international actors might exploit to threaten Iraq's security and stability or to entangle the country in a direct regional conflict from which withdrawal would be challenging. In this context, the Iraqi government should reassess security priorities and formulate both short- and long-term plans to address developments within Iraq and the broader region by devising a new national security strategy commensurate with the scale of regional changes witnessed in 2024. Additionally, it should develop an integrated policy leveraging experiences from previous years, particularly in managing relations with neighboring countries Turkey and Iran.

Diplomatic channels remain the preferred mechanism for addressing trans-border threats. It is essential to engage in negotiations with the governments of both Turkey and Iran to urge respect for Iraq's sovereignty through agreements that promote mutual interests, such as security coordination and the deployment of additional Iraqi forces along the Turkish border to combat the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and prevent its presence on Iraqi territory. Furthermore, the deployment of radar systems and thermal cameras along the borders is necessary to monitor movements. The Iraqi government should enhance its air defense capabilities, develop deterrent mechanisms to intercept trans-border attacks, and establish a long-term security doctrine. This effort should include coordination and cooperation with Kurdish Peshmerga forces and engagement with the international community to safeguard Iraq's security and sovereignty.

Although the ISIS armed terrorist organization no longer controls territory, it is believed that the group may resume activities, supported by major powers seeking to exploit fragile regional conditions, particularly developments in Syria, which serves as a significant incubator for extremism and terrorism and a potential source for exporting such threats to Iraq under a new designation but with the same extremist ideology. These groups operate extensive smuggling networks to finance their activities, notably with camps housing ISIS families in the border region with Syria. These families often follow extremist paths, especially in the al-Hawl camp, which has become an intellectual incubator and a conducive environment for communication among terrorist groups. This situation presents an urgent challenge that the Iraqi government must address to

sustain national security in 2025 by training Iraqi forces to respond effectively to such threats, enhancing intelligence capabilities, monitoring camp activities, and strengthening regional and international cooperation to repatriate residents to their countries. Repatriated Iraqis should be reintegrated into society following comprehensive preparation and psychological treatment. Moreover, efforts should continue to combat illicit money laundering, counter recruitment via social media, and promote social cohesion.

In 2024, Iraq witnessed notable improvements in combating criminal offenses compared to previous years, alongside government efforts to counter organized crime, particularly narcotics and petroleum derivative smuggling networks. To maintain security in 2025, it is necessary to intensify intelligence efforts, facilitate information exchange among all intelligence agencies within ministries and security services, and monitor illicit financial transfers. The utilization of modern technology is essential in combating various crimes by monitoring suspicious activities and employing advanced surveillance systems, including cameras equipped with facial recognition, digital fingerprinting, iris scanning, and voice analysis technologies. Tracking wanted individuals and analyzing communications through virtual simulations are also critical. Additionally, drones equipped with smart cameras can monitor inaccessible border areas to intercept criminals and smugglers. Awareness and educational programs highlighting the risks and legal consequences of criminal activities should be implemented through schools, universities, and social media platforms, in collaboration with civil society organizations. These initiatives should encourage community members to report crimes and offer financial incentives to those contributing to the disclosure of offenses that threaten national security and stability. Furthermore, the proliferation of weapons outside state control contributes to increased crime rates and tribal conflicts. The Iraqi government must demonstrate genuine commitment to addressing this issue by enforcing stricter weapon possession laws and conducting regular inspections to curb unauthorized weapon ownership.

VII. Recommendations

To improve the Iraqi government's management of security challenges in 2025, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The Iraqi government should implement a balanced yet firm policy addressing any violations of Iraqi territory by any entity. This approach should involve the use of political and diplomatic channels to contain threats, formally document violations, and escalate matters diplomatically when non-compliance occurs. It is imperative to renegotiate with regional and international stakeholders, enhance coordination with neighboring countries to unify security and political positions against threats, and establish agreements that safeguard Iraq's sovereignty.
2. It is recommended that Iraq advances its defense capabilities, particularly in air defense, by improving missile system readiness, activating early

warning mechanisms, and developing an advanced intelligence network capable of early threat detection to enable efficient responses. Strengthening coordination among security agencies, both intelligence and military, is essential to ensure rapid responses and effective deterrence against threats to Iraqi security. Additionally, investment in technological cooperation with allied nations to modernize equipment and methodologies is advised.

3. Efforts should focus on enhancing integration between military institutions and armed factions within Iraq, maintaining unity in security and political stances. This integration aims to reduce vulnerabilities to external exploitation, unify operational planning, facilitate intelligence sharing, and standardize training and rehabilitation programs. Such measures will optimize outcomes, improve task execution efficiency, and maintain a balance in protecting state sovereignty.
4. Security measures along the Iraqi-Syrian border require strengthening, including the development of precise surveillance and intelligence systems to monitor terrorist activities and potential support networks. Border security should be augmented through the deployment of drones equipped with smart cameras. Additionally, dismantling terrorist cell hubs, particularly displacement camps such as the al-Hawl camp, is critical. Establishing a periodic risk assessment mechanism will allow for the updating of plans and capabilities in response to evolving terrorist tactics. Diplomatic engagement with Syrian authorities is recommended to ensure effective cooperation, prevent infiltration into Iraqi territory, and coordinate security efforts and intelligence exchange with relevant countries linked to Iraq's stability.
5. Strengthening social cohesion among Iraqi citizens is vital to prevent divisive agendas. Promoting citizenship values and supporting initiatives fostering dialogue and mutual understanding among Iraq's diverse communities are essential. Furthermore, implementing monitoring mechanisms to oversee suspicious activities on social media platforms will help prevent the exploitation of these platforms for spreading hate speech.
6. Combating trafficking in prohibited substances and smuggling networks necessitates an integrated strategy. This includes establishing mobile rapid-response units at vulnerable border points, equipped with advanced intervention tools. Developing an electronic surveillance network comprising drones and ground sensors is advised to detect suspicious activities. The application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies to analyze surveillance data and predict infiltration or smuggling attempts is recommended. Joint training programs involving the Army, Police, and intelligence agencies should be conducted to harmonize detection and response protocols, with local communities engaged in information gathering. Additionally, tracking illicit financial flows through monitoring of suspicious transactions is crucial.

7. To address criminal offenses in Iraq, enhancing security capabilities for early crime detection and prevention is recommended. This involves the implementation of smart information systems and data analytics, alongside strengthening judicial capacities through training and investigative programs. Raising public awareness about the dangers of crime and providing legal education on penalties are important preventive measures. Reviewing legislation related to organized crime to impose stricter penalties, ensuring the prompt execution of judicial sentences, and establishing rehabilitation programs for offenders post-sentencing are also essential to reduce recidivism.

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5. Society

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The year 2024 represents a critical juncture for Iraq, characterized by significant internal and external challenges and the profound consequences of the Middle Eastern conflict following the Tūfān al-Aqṣá operation. In response, the Iraqi government adopted a strategy of “productive diplomacy” and an “Iraq First” policy to mitigate these challenges. Throughout the year, the government prioritized numerous construction and reconstruction initiatives, particularly in infrastructure development. These efforts facilitated the restoration of a vital element long absent from the Iraqi political landscape since 2003: the trust between the government and its citizens, who have awaited the implementation of security, social, and economic programs. Key governmental achievements included improvements in education, the successful execution of the population census (whose data will underpin major development plans aligned with social aspirations) and the ongoing advancement of infrastructure projects.

Beyond these measures, the government addressed poverty and unemployment, enhanced public services, and encouraged private sector participation in major strategic projects and electronic governance. The overarching goal was to elevate citizens’ living standards, resolve social issues, and support developmental initiatives such as the strategic Development Road project. This initiative aspires to position Iraq as an international trade hub, thereby positively impacting society and generating thousands of employment opportunities in a country where over 60% of the population of more than 45 million is of working-age youth.

To foster a secure, stable, and sustainable society, the government launched its fourth development plan since 2010, spanning 2024–2028, as a step toward realizing the Iraq 2030 vision for sustainable development. This plan emphasizes not only economic growth, innovation, and productivity but also prioritizes human and social development and sustainability through workforce skill enhancement and poverty reduction via productive employment.

I. The 2024 Population Census

After overcoming numerous challenges and delays, the general population census was conducted in Iraq on November 20 and 21, 2024, with results announced on February 24, 2025. Recognizing that data and evidence are funda-

mental to sustainable development and policymaking, this census provides a foundation for future planning, ensuring resource allocation aligns with areas of greatest need and individual requirements are integrated into development strategies. Dr. Hind Jalāl, representative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Iraq, emphasized that the census transcends mere enumeration; it serves as a catalyst for change. By leveraging data-driven decision-making, Iraq can formulate inclusive policies addressing the needs of all citizens, particularly women, youth, and marginalized groups, thereby advancing national development goals (2024–2028) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UNFPA, 2025).

Analysis of the census results reveals a substantial population increase to 46.118 million, compared to 6.5 million recorded in the last comprehensive census in 1957. Urbanization has intensified, with the urban population rising to 70.17%, while rural residency declined to 29.83%. The illiteracy rate increased to 15.31%, whereas primary education enrollment reached 88%. Although these indicators are relatively positive, they underscore the necessity for enhanced efforts to improve school enrollment rates to further social development.

The average family size, ranging from three to five members, suggests that social policies in Iraq must consider the extended family's needs. This consideration impacts housing policies, social services, labor market participation, and healthcare provision (Khalīl, 2024). The availability of accurate, contemporary data will facilitate the formulation of development strategies grounded in empirical reality and precise statistics (Schaer, 2024).

1. The Importance of the Population Census

The significance of the population census can be delineated through several key aspects (al-Abādī, 2024):

1. It contributes to the monitoring and evaluation of policy impacts on the implementation of development programs, facilitating the regular updating of relevant data.
2. It plays a crucial role in modernizing digital infrastructure, as the establishment of a robust digital framework enhances data collection and analysis. Advanced technologies, including Artificial Intelligence and the Internet of Things (IoT), improve data accuracy and ensure continuous updates.
3. The census fosters community awareness, thereby strengthening social understanding of its importance and the benefits it provides in enhancing public service delivery and economic advancement.
4. It supports government initiatives aimed at the growth and development of local communities, exemplified by programs targeting improvements in education, healthcare, and infrastructure. These initiatives are essential components of sustainable development, enabling governments and institutions to evaluate performance, analyze outcomes, refine policies, and direct programs more effectively.

5. The census encourages and supports scientific research in demography and economic development, offering innovative and sustainable solutions alongside a deeper understanding of challenges and opportunities related to population growth and development.

The outcomes of the census are evident when considering that the population constitutes the fundamental element in the production and distribution of material wealth within any society. Developmental planning and scientific research are infeasible without reliable, detailed data concerning population size, distribution, and composition (Hasan, 2018, pp. 3-4).

The population census is intrinsically linked to the social dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as it provides accurate information that aids in achieving objectives such as poverty eradication, ensuring good health and well-being, and improving educational quality. Census data facilitate the identification of areas with the greatest need, directing developmental investments accordingly and supporting efforts to reduce inequalities. Moreover, the census enhances transparency and government administration by offering a clear depiction of population needs, thereby enabling effective and sustainable resource allocation, demographic monitoring, and improved future planning.

In Iraq, the population census transcends a mere technical procedure; it represents a fundamental human right, a primary instrument for sustainable development, and a cornerstone for establishing a more equitable and stable future for present and future generations (al-Sa'dī, 2024).

Furthermore, the census serves as a vital mechanism for safeguarding citizens' rights broadly and the rights of marginalized groups specifically. It provides extensive databases that empower governments and social or sectoral institutions to uphold minimum rights. Additionally, it enables international sectoral organizations, such as United Nations programs, to identify vulnerabilities, offer logistical and financial support, and address challenges and emergencies (Ibrāhīm, 2025).

The census also underpins decision-making processes within the private sector, as population size and characteristics influence corporate location choices and the provision of services tailored to target populations. Additionally, population statistics constitute a primary source for developing statistical frameworks necessary for sampling household surveys conducted between censuses.

Significant social policies derived from census results encompass those related to population characteristics, family size, primary breadwinners, health indicators, sanitation, potable water supply, cultural dynamics, internal and external migration, human rights, and public orders (Bakhīt, 2024, pp. 3-4).

2. Developmental Dimensions of the Population Census

The principal developmental dimensions of the population census are outlined as follows (Bakhīt, 2024, pp. 7-8):

1. Resource Distribution and Budget Allocation: Precise population data obtained from the census facilitate the equitable allocation of economic

resources and financial budgets across Iraqi governorates via regional development funds and other mechanisms. This ensures that governorates with higher population densities or greater needs receive appropriate support.

2. **Infrastructure and Service Planning:** Comprehensive demographic data derived from the census support both immediate and long-term planning efforts, including the development of infrastructure projects, healthcare facilities, educational institutions, and other public services tailored to the specific needs of various Iraqi governorates.
3. **Economic Development:** An understanding of population dynamics enables the identification of labor market trends and unemployment patterns in Iraq. This knowledge informs the formulation of economic policies aimed at addressing both structural and cyclical unemployment while fostering sustainable development initiatives.
4. **Improving Social Services:** Data from the population census assist in the provision of social services, encompassing various social security programs, and highlight areas necessitating urgent government intervention.
5. **The Housing Sector:** The census aids in determining the proportion of the population lacking homeownership or residing in inadequate conditions, such as multiple families sharing a single dwelling. This information is critical for accurately diagnosing housing challenges and devising future plans to increase housing availability, thereby addressing a longstanding crisis in Iraq.

It is projected that Iraq will encounter a substantial development deficit in forthcoming years due to the widening disparity between population growth and service provision. These demographic figures necessitate the formulation of strategic plans, which in turn require adequate funding, representing a significant challenge for the state.

With the working-age population constituting 60.2% of the total, Iraq is currently experiencing a “demographic gift.” However, without effective investment, this advantage risks becoming a “demographic curse.” This demographic indicator presents a major challenge to the government: fulfilling the employment needs of the population. Successful employment generation could lead to poverty reduction, contingent upon government policies, economic conditions, labor market dynamics, and private sector engagement.

A preliminary analysis of the population census reveals an intensification of the housing problem, one of the most pressing challenges for future administrations. This issue is exacerbated by the demand for services to meet housing needs amid increasing urban population density. The absence of urban planning further compounds the problem, contributing to multifaceted issues such as encroachments on service networks, loss of potential, risks, and social maladies. The census indicates that existing health, educational, and service infrastructures are insufficient for 60% of the population. Given an annual population growth

rate of 2.3%, Iraq's population is expected to increase by over one million individuals each year. Moreover, since 60% of the population is of working age, Iraq requires the creation of more than 622,000 job opportunities annually (al-Ālam al-Jadīd, 2024, November 26).

The lack of a comprehensive population census previously hindered accurate assessment of population growth, thereby impeding the implementation of effective population control policies. This deficiency resulted in overcrowding on agricultural lands, increased consumption, and widespread unemployment. Furthermore, the absence of reliable statistical data compromised decision-making processes and the development of effective plans to balance population size with the distribution of educational, health, and public services, causing significant detriment to all facets of Iraq's development (Draw Media, 2024, May 31).

3. The Intrinsic Value of Census Execution

The execution of the census constitutes a significant advancement for several reasons, particularly the following (al-Ḥilū, 2024):

1. Re-emphasizing the Importance of Planning: The census serves as the cornerstone of a long-term planning framework, notwithstanding certain complications.
2. An Opportunity to Build Trust: Successfully disseminating accurate and widely accepted results, despite skepticism, may help restore some degree of trust between citizens and the state.
3. Urban vs. Rural Growth: Comprehending the distribution of the population is essential for addressing urbanization challenges, especially as urban areas have begun to expand more rapidly than rural regions.
4. Stimulating Administrative Reform: Challenges encountered during the census process can act as catalysts for administrative reform, prompting improvements in the efficiency of governmental institutions.

Despite the difficulties and challenges encountered during the population census, it can be regarded as a positive step forward. It offers an opportunity to identify and correct disparities; moreover, if the data are employed equitably and scientifically, they may provide a foundation for effective developmental policies in the future. Nonetheless, there remains concern that ongoing political and administrative disputes could undermine this potential, resulting in a missed opportunity.

II. Tribal Disputes

Following the American occupation of Iraq in April 2003, tribes and the government became intertwined components of Iraq's institutional framework. Article 43, Section Two of the 2005 Iraqi Constitution emphasizes the state's commitment to advancing Iraqi tribes and clans and managing their affairs in accordance with religious and legal principles, while prohibiting tribal customs that contravene human rights. This constitutional provision was operationalized through the

establishment of the Ministry of Interior's General Directorate for Tribal Affairs and the formation of tribal councils across much of Iraq. The reliance on tribal structures intensified due to social instability and insecurity post-occupation, alongside an escalation in tribal disputes, particularly in the governorates of Maysān and al-Baṣrah, resulting in a revival of tribal culture in both urban and rural contexts.

The reconstitution of tribal structures, combined with escalating sectarian conflicts, partisan disputes, and weak legislative frameworks, positioned tribes as active participants in conflicts involving political parties and local governments, given the overlap between tribal, sectarian, and governmental affiliations. In periods characterized by the absence of the rule of law, tribes played a crucial role in maintaining social order, resolving disputes, preventing violence, and mediating inter-regional conflicts. Some members of the Council of Representatives also serve as tribal representatives. Additionally, tribes have contributed to addressing socially harmful behaviors, such as assaults on medical and educational personnel, by agreeing to expel offenders from their communities and supporting governmental deterrence efforts. Many cases have been resolved through tribal mediation, except for serious crimes such as murder, where public rights prevail despite tribal settlements. The adoption of tribal customs is often viewed as an expedient alternative for cases not involving public rights, given the protracted nature of judicial proceedings involving multiple sessions, appeals, and cassation.

Tribal customs remain a subject of significant debate. Critics argue that they reflect state weakness and advocate for their abolition, whereas proponents contend that these customs contribute positively to security by providing alternative mediation mechanisms. These customs constitute a form of customary law through which tribes resolve disputes outside formal state legal frameworks, occasionally involving practices that contravene legal norms. A notable example is the "Tribal Warning" (al-Daggah al-'Ashā'irīyah), wherein tribe members discharge light and medium firearms at the residence of a threatened individual while chanting tribal slogans. In 2018, the Supreme Judicial Council mandated that the "al-Daggah" be prosecuted under the Anti-Terrorism Law. This directive, supported by several tribes, led to a 77% reduction in the practice nationwide, as reported by Ministry of Interior spokesperson Brigadier General Miqdād Mīrī on April 18, 2024, who noted that 11 of 15 governorates were free of this crime in the early months of that year (al-Jazīrah, 2024, September 3).

While tribal customs function as mechanisms of social organization, they require further refinement through educational seminars aimed at developing legislation that aligns with contemporary standards. Governmental, tribal, and media initiatives to promote legal compliance are essential to mitigate adverse practices. Certain customs have previously impeded charitable actions, such as assisting victims of traffic accidents or medical emergencies, due to fears of tribal retribution or retaliation by victims' relatives (al-Jazīrah, 2024, September 3).

In an effort to regulate tribal disputes, the Iraqi Ministry of Interior issued the “Tribal Covenant” on April 1, 2024. This document comprises seven clauses designed to limit tribal conflicts in central and southern Iraq, which adversely affect social peace through casualties and intimidation. The clauses include respect for religious constants during tribal gatherings; adherence to human rights principles consistent with religious teachings; enforcement of the rule of law and state authority through support for official security agencies; commitment to authentic customs and traditions consistent with religious teachings; prohibition of electronic blackmail; support for government efforts to combat drug trafficking and use; and prohibition of forced displacement.

Given the prioritization of tribal dispute resolution by Prime Minister Muḥammad Shiyā’ al-Sudānī, and the ongoing casualties in southern and central governorates necessitating military intervention to disperse armed clashes involving medium weaponry, Ghānim al-Mas’ūdī, a prominent figure in Maysān Governorate, acknowledged that Ministry of Interior oversight and legal sanctions have contributed to a relative decline in disputes. Nevertheless, he emphasized that the reduction has not yet met expectations, underscoring the need for sustained monitoring and coordination with tribal leaders. He further highlighted the critical role of tribal dignitaries in suppressing sedition and activating reconciliation councils in collaboration with security authorities. He also advocated for expedited measures to restrict weapon possession and impose stringent penalties on violators and instigators of tribal conflicts (al-‘Arabī al-Jadīd, 2024, July 1).

The governorates of Maysān, Dhī-Qār, and al-Baṣrah remain the most affected by tribal disputes, some involving medium weapons and mortars. The underlying causes often extend beyond tribal disagreements to include conflicts among smuggling networks dealing in goods, currency, and narcotics, as well as tensions fueled by certain political factions. In Dhī-Qār alone, 110 tribal disputes were recorded between January and mid-November 2024; 95 were resolved, while 15 remained unsettled, either through perpetrator surrender or tribal truces, according to Colonel Qāsim al-Sa’dī, the governorate’s director of tribal affairs (al-‘Arabī al-Jadīd, 2024, November 19).

Nationwide, 400 tribal disputes were resolved during the first four months of 2024, comprising 27 armed and 373 unarmed conflicts (al-Sūmarīyah News, 2024, April 29). This decline is attributed to several factors, including strengthened rule of law and judiciary, enhanced tribal mediation, and awareness campaigns led by governmental and civil society organizations (al-Ma’lūmah, 2025, January 30).

Tribal dispute resolution operates through two informal mechanisms (Jāmūs, 2019, p. 14):

1. Tribal Reconciliation: This process focuses on resolving disputes between individuals, facilitated by qualified mediators who reconcile differing perspectives to achieve consensual solutions grounded in customs, traditions, and legal principles.

2. Tribal Adjudication: This mechanism involves the issuance of binding customary rulings by tribal judges based on prevailing customs and traditions within specific tribal jurisdictions.

The persistence of tribal dispute resolution is partly due to the protracted nature of formal judicial processes and the financial burdens associated with litigation, which can extend over several years. Additionally, corruption within certain administrative sectors contrasts with the expediency of tribal decisions reached through brief deliberations. Despite judicial reforms and stricter penalties, further efforts are necessary to encourage Iraqis to resolve disputes through formal legal channels rather than tribal mechanisms and armed conflict (al-'Arabī al-Jadīd, 2024, November 19).

III. Narcotics Crimes

Narcotics trafficking represents a significant challenge to Iraqi society, particularly given the recent expansion of drug trade routes that have transformed Iraq into a transit corridor to several Arab nations. Therefore, the government intensified its anti-narcotics efforts in 2024, as the proliferation of narcotics emerged as the country's foremost security concern after terrorism.

According to the Ministry of Interior, approximately 14,000 individuals involved in narcotics trafficking and distribution were apprehended, and six tons of various narcotic substances were confiscated between early 2024 and December of the same year. The estimated value of the seized narcotics reached 200 million USD, alongside the confiscation of vehicles, sites, and equipment used by trafficking networks within Iraq. Foreign nationals arrested for trafficking offenses were predominantly Iranian and Syrian. The most commonly abused substances in Iraq include crystal methamphetamine and Captagon, primarily originating from Iran and Syria, as well as hashish and heroin. Statistical data indicate that seven out of every ten individuals committing crimes such as murder, theft, robbery, or assault are addicted to narcotics. This underscores the urgent need for strategic interventions, particularly as traffickers target youth populations, including university and school students (al-'Arabī al-Jadīd, 2024, December 22).

The Ministry of Interior also reported the successful treatment of approximately 3,000 addicts through a specialized rehabilitation program, marking the highest recovery rate achieved by Iraqi health authorities in recent years within the framework of the government's strategic anti-narcotics campaign. Colonel Riyāḍ Aḥmad Muḥammad, Director of the Addicts and Narcotics Users Rehabilitation Centers Division at the Ministry of Interior, noted that 15 compulsory clinics for treating addicts were established in 2023 across Baghdād and various governorates, with the exception of Nīnawá, where a clinic is forthcoming. These clinics admitted approximately 5,129 addicts during 2024, of whom 2,957 completed treatment and were discharged.

Judicial authorities issued rulings that facilitated the apprehension of major local and international trafficking networks. Sentences included life impris-

onment for 434 local traffickers and death penalties for 144 international traffickers (al-'Arabī al-Jadīd, 2025, January 7). Felony sentences related to narcotics offenses increased to 68% in 2024, compared to 14% in 2023. Additionally, the number of death sentences for narcotics-related felonies rose to 150 in 2024 (2% of total sentences), compared to 20 in 2023 (0.2% of total death sentences). This increase in capital punishment is largely attributed to the government's intensified campaign against narcotics, which it classifies as a threat to national security. In December 2023, Prime Minister al-Sudānī advocated for the ratification of all death sentences for narcotics convictions, prompting concern from human rights organizations. Several United Nations agencies criticized the extensive application of the death penalty for offenses not classified as "most serious crimes" (Girelli et al., 2025, pp. 31-32).

The Prime Minister also directed the implementation of a comprehensive national anti-narcotics strategy, highlighting the importance of preventive guidance programs aimed at protecting youth. These initiatives were submitted by the Ministries of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research, and the National Security Advisory (al-'Arabī al-Jadīd, 2025, January 7). In May 2024, the government declared its intention to treat narcotics offenses as a "terrorist threat" and pursue an "Iraq free of drugs" through an expanded strategic plan.

Fāḍil al-Gharrāwī, head of the Strategic Center for Human Rights in Iraq, identified several factors contributing to the flourishing narcotics trade, including insufficient public awareness, lack of religious deterrents, economic hardship, and unemployment. He also noted the systematic targeting of youth by organized crime groups and the misuse of the internet. Additional contributing factors include domestic violence, the cumulative effects of conflict, collective behavior, peer influence, and exposure to media and social platforms. Iraq's geographic location and the existence of vulnerable transit corridors exploited by international gangs have transformed the country from a mere transit route into a thriving narcotics market.

Addressing these challenges requires urgent legal reforms, realistic solutions, and a shift in treating users as patients and victims rather than criminals, with an emphasis on rehabilitation (al-Jazīrah, 2024, August 5).

Regionally and internationally, Iraq has sought to enhance cooperation with states and organizations to combat narcotics proliferation. Iraq participated in the inaugural meeting of the Guiding and Monitoring Committee for the Arab States Regional Framework (2023–2028) in Cairo on January 29, 2024, under the auspices of the League of Arab States and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The framework identified six priority areas: adopting a balanced approach to drug control; strengthening responses to organized crime; combating human trafficking and migrant smuggling; addressing corruption and financial crimes; preventing terrorism and violence; and enhancing criminal justice systems.

Furthermore, a meeting between the Ministers of Interior of Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon on February 17, 2024, resulted in the establishment of a joint telecommunications channel for information exchange on drug control. This was followed by the signing of a security cooperation memorandum between Iraq and Syria on May 12, 2024 (INCB, 2025, pp. 123-124). Internationally, Iraq voted against the United Nations General Assembly resolution calling for a moratorium on the death penalty for narcotics-related offenses in meetings held in 2018, 2020, 2022, and 2024 (Girelli et al., 2025, p. 19).

IV. Domestic Violence

Domestic violence constitutes a form of discrimination that significantly impedes women's ability to exercise their rights and freedoms. Iraq has implemented two national strategies to combat this issue, alongside other proactive measures such as establishing specialized departments within the Directorate of Family and Child Protection from Domestic Violence and appointing dedicated judges in misdemeanor courts to oversee domestic violence cases. Nevertheless, judicial responses remain limited, as acts of violence within households are frequently treated as familial disputes.

Iraq has formulated two national strategies addressing violence against women and girls. The first strategy, spanning 2018-2030, provides a comprehensive framework enabling policymakers and decision-makers to enact concrete measures aimed at victim protection and violence prevention. The second strategy, covering 2023-2030, seeks to empower women in contexts where they are most susceptible to marginalization and exclusion. Despite the positive intentions of these strategies, their effective implementation necessitates appropriate legislation, adequate financial resources, and specialized personnel focused on women's issues (UNAMI & OHCHR, 2024, pp. 2, 7-8).

Violence against women and girls in Iraq remains a significant challenge, particularly for displaced women and survivors of violence. Although Iraq has made progress through policy reforms and awareness campaigns, social barriers persist, underscoring the need to sustain momentum to ensure lasting progress. Strengthening and enforcing laws targeting violence against women and children is an urgent priority; robust legal frameworks are essential to guarantee accountability and eradicate such violence.

Electronic violence is an emerging threat that disproportionately affects women and girls. This form of violence jeopardizes women's safety and limits their participation in digital spaces, adversely impacting their educational, employment, and leadership opportunities. Consequently, the United Nations has advocated for enhanced cyber legislation and increased public awareness to foster a digital culture that respects the rights of all individuals (United Nations in Iraq, 2024, November 26).

In 2024, Iraq recorded 14,000 cases of domestic violence, according to data from the Ministry of Interior, with the majority involving physical violence. Female

victims constituted 73% of cases, while males accounted for 27%. Additionally, assaults against children increased, with parental perpetrators responsible for 6% of total domestic violence cases in 2024. This trend reflects a continuous escalation compared to previous years. The country's unstable political, economic, and security conditions have adversely affected the general population's psychological well-being, contributing to the rise in these incidents (al-'Arabī al-Jadīd, 2025, February 2).

Primary factors contributing to domestic violence include weak religious deterrents, misunderstandings, upbringing in violent environments, poor marital choices, and challenging living conditions such as poverty and unemployment. These factors may motivate either spouse to perpetrate violence against family members (al-Ḍālimī, 2022).

The reported figures likely underestimate the true extent of domestic violence due to underreporting, particularly of violence against children, driven by fears of social stigma or retaliation. Consequently, Iraq's ongoing absence of clear legislation to deter domestic violence may result in increased cases in forthcoming years, especially given the rising prevalence of narcotics use, a significant contributor to domestic violence. This situation necessitates urgent and comprehensive governmental and institutional measures to protect children, including strengthening national legislation, providing psychosocial support, and enhancing community awareness.

Although the previous Iraqi government approved the Anti-Domestic Violence Law within the Council of Ministers and forwarded it to the Council of Representatives for ratification, political polarization and opposition from influential political blocs have hindered its enactment. These blocs argue that the law mimics Western legislation and grants women rights to government care, which they contend encourages rebellion (al-'Arabī al-Jadīd, 2025, February 2).

Similarly, the Council of Representatives failed to ratify the Child Protection Law introduced in June 2023. If enacted, this law would represent Iraq's first child protection legislation and a significant advancement in safeguarding children's rights. The law addresses issues such as child labor, exploitation, and abuse, while explicitly enshrining fundamental rights including life, health, education, and nationality (Human Rights Watch, 2025).

To mitigate domestic violence, the United Nations launched in Iraq the annual "16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence" campaign. This global initiative aims to raise awareness and bolster efforts to combat violence, fostering an environment where women and girls can live in peace and dignity. The campaign commenced with a meeting on October 25 in Erbil, linking the Women, Peace, and Security agenda with the campaign and commemorating the 24th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. A subsequent meeting in Baghdad on December 2 reaffirmed Iraq's commitment to addressing violence and enhancing women's leadership roles. The campaign emphasized support for developing Iraq's third National Action Plan for Women, Peace, and Security,

prioritizing comprehensive measures to provide protection services such as safe spaces, psychological support, medical care, and legal assistance with the aim of enhancing the safety of women and girls, empowering them, and building their capacity for resilience (United Nations in Iraq, 2024, November 26).

V. Suicide

For years, Iraq has witnessed a noticeable increase in recorded suicide rates. Official statistics issued by government institutions indicate record numbers, pointing to the entrenchment of this phenomenon in society. Although Iraq ranks low on the global suicide index (ranking 154th out of 183 countries) the increase in suicide cases in the country over the past two decades indicates a significant transformation in Iraqi society. Most suicide cases and attempts are concentrated in the central and southern governorates. This was confirmed by the director of the Human Rights Office in al-Baṣrah, Maḥdī al-Taṡīmī, who stated that his governorate alone recorded 150 suicide cases and attempts during the first eight months of 2024. The majority of suicide cases involve young people between the ages of 18 and 35.

Experts and specialists attribute the causes of suicide in Iraq to several factors. The first is the psychological factor, which drives individuals to adopt various methods of suicide. The spokesperson for the Iraqi Ministry of Health, Sayf al-Badr, mentioned that approximately 43% of suicides are primarily due to psychological reasons, followed by family reasons at 35%, economic reasons at 15%, and other factors with lower impact. Psychological factors manifest in depression caused primarily by narcotics, as excessive drug addiction leads to a loss of responsibility and interest in life, as well as a decline in religious commitment, which results in the absence of any deterrent for those attempting to end their lives. The second is the social factor, represented by family breakdown; Iraqi society records a state of indifference in the use of social media across various age groups. Furthermore, many Iraqi youths are obsessed with following social media influencers and the fame and wealth they achieve, leading to frustration in the absence of social guidance, manifested in the absence of the father’s role and, in many cases, the mother’s role due to her own preoccupation with social media interests. This leads to clear family disintegration that drives youth to suicide. The third is the economic factor, as the economic situation of Iraqi families and young people, due to the scarcity of job opportunities in the private sector and their absence in the public

Table 5-1: Suicide Cases in Iraq for the Period (2016–2024).

Year	Suicide Cases	Year	Suicide Cases
2016	343	2021	863
2017	449	2022	1,073
2018	519	2023	700
2019	588	2024	375
2020	644	-	-

Source: Prepared based on (al-Dabbāgh, 2025; al-Sūmarīyah, 2025, April 27).

sector, has led youth into a state of aimlessness and loss, in addition to a decline in hope for improvement in public life and poor services in many governorates and regions.

In an attempt to curb suicide and address its causes, the government in 2024 adopted the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention (2024-2030). The Minister of Health, Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥasnāwī, announced this strategy, explaining that the national strategy assigns a role to every ministry and sector, in addition to non-governmental entities such as the media, religious authorities, social figures, and civil society organizations, whose efforts must be combined. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister's advisor for health affairs, Ṣāliḥ Ḍamad, emphasized the government's focus on psychiatry for those suffering from mental illnesses. However, despite the announcement of this strategy, the pace and rates of suicide continue to increase. Consequently, the government has begun to refrain from announcing official statistics on suicide rates, especially among the security services, amidst a lack of a clear future vision for how to address this phenomenon (al-Dabbāgh, 2025).

Solving the problem of suicide requires the participation and cooperation of all sectors of society. The beginning must be with the family through monitoring and communication among its members. This is followed by the roles of the school, places of worship, the media, social media platforms, and security agencies. It is essential to activate the media's role in education to reduce suicide cases, develop the work of health institutions, especially departments concerned with mental health, and prepare them to face the risks of suicide. Furthermore, medical treatments should be provided for patients suffering from psychological crises and neurological disorders, and specialized task forces should be provided to offer psychological and social support to survivors of suicide attempts. Additionally, civil society organizations' work should be activated and effectively involved, alongside efforts to increase public awareness of the magnitude of the problem, restrict access to weapons, establish a system for monitoring mental health and cases, and create a National Center for Suicide Prevention to serve as the national institution concerned with this file in Iraq. Finally, scientific studies and research discussing the problem should be expanded, and academics should be encouraged to study it in Iraqi universities (al-'Ubaydī, 2024).

VI. Begging

Begging constitutes a multifaceted social phenomenon influenced by various interrelated factors pertaining to individuals' personal histories and broader social, economic, and cultural contexts. These factors contribute to varying degrees of vulnerability and primarily include poverty, challenges in accessing the labor market, widowhood and divorce, family abandonment, low educational attainment, the erosion of family solidarity values, and health conditions (physical and mental health, as well as disabilities). Additionally, the willingness of citizens to provide assistance to beggars plays a significant role.

Estimates indicate that the number of beggars in Iraq exceeds 500,000, with juveniles and women constituting the majority. Approximately 70% of begging activities are classified as organized crime, 20% as electronic begging, and 10% as traditional begging. Emerging forms of begging include "health begging," which involves the pretext of establishing humanitarian or social projects, alongside the exploitation of social media and websites to solicit financial aid by disseminating emotive narratives concerning familial hardships, such as serious illnesses. The exploitation of children in begging often leads to their involvement in organized crime or narcotics trafficking. Moreover, foreign begging represents the most perilous form of human trafficking, facilitated by organized crime networks that exploit Iraq's legal, security, and economic vulnerabilities to perpetuate the begging trade. Foreign beggars are typically brought into Iraq under the guise of labor or religious pilgrimage. The majority of foreign beggars originate from Asian countries, predominantly Bangladesh, while Syrians constitute the largest group among Arab beggars. Between 2023 and 2024, the Ministry of Interior deported over 10,000 foreign beggars; however, significant numbers remain within Iraq, with no precise data regarding their demographics.

Begging is recognized as a precursor to various criminal activities, including home invasions and theft. Furthermore, Anti-Human Trafficking Law No. 28 of 2012 identifies eight forms of human exploitation, among which begging is included. The coercion of victims into begging by perpetrators constitutes a human trafficking offense, as does the forced abduction of children and adults to integrate them into organized crime groups for the purpose of compelled begging. In cases involving juvenile abduction, the situation may escalate to the deliberate infliction of physical disabilities, followed by exploitation in begging, organ trafficking, narcotics, and prostitution (Tūmā, 2024).

The consequences of begging are multifaceted, encompassing the distortion of social image, heightened insecurity among residents, and economic burdens due to increased reliance on donations rather than employment. Additionally, begging contributes to elevated crime rates, the involvement of children in illicit activities, and the potential spread of diseases and epidemics that strain the healthcare system and threaten public health. The phenomenon also adversely affects tourism by projecting a negative image of Iraq to international visitors, thereby diminishing the country's appeal as a tourist destination and impacting the national economy (Hasan, 2024).

The inadequate outcomes of the 2023 campaign initiated by the Supreme Judicial Council to combat begging, alongside subsequent efforts by various entities, prompted the National Security Advisory in December 2024 to formulate the "National Policy to Combat Begging" in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor and other ministries. This policy, currently in the process of implementation and dissemination, aims to provide a dignified life for citizens unable to work. Concurrently, the Ministry of Interior continues extensive anti-begging operations across governorates through its various formations.

As part of governmental efforts, the Ministry of Labor, in coordination with the Ministry of Interior, launched a campaign on September 9, 2024, to fulfill its mandate in supporting vulnerable populations. The Ministry collects data on beggars detained by the Ministry of Interior and conducts field research to assess their circumstances. Eligible individuals are enrolled in the social protection network and are offered soft loans upon completion of training courses and workshops designed to facilitate the establishment of small enterprises. Cases involving those unable to work (including minors, the elderly, and persons with special needs) are referred to the social protection system for placement in dedicated care facilities.

Currently, the Ministry of Labor's interventions are confined to beggars aged 15 to 45 who are detained in Ministry of Interior centers. A written commitment is obtained from each individual, pledging that neither they nor their family members will return to begging; violations result in legal consequences. This initiative builds upon prior efforts, which have integrated over 7,000 individuals into social protection programs. Nonetheless, challenges persist, as the average social welfare stipend of approximately 200 USD fails to dissuade most eligible beggars from continuing to beg. This issue is exacerbated by the influence of organized crime gangs controlling many beggars. Ahmad Khalaf, head of the Social Authority at the Ministry of Labor, affirmed in press statements that 90% of beggars receive social welfare payments and are among the seven million Iraqis benefiting from such support, implicitly indicating that the stipend alone does not prevent the perpetuation of begging (Tümā, 2024).

VII. Civil Society

Iraqi civil society confronts significant challenges regarding its future sustainability due to a marked decline in international projects and grants since 2020. This reduction coincided with several global and regional developments, including the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the inward focus of countries on domestic issues and economic recovery, and the reallocation of European and American support toward Ukraine in response to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Consequently, organizations dedicated to promoting democratic initiatives, economically empowering women, and defending minority rights face both internal and external obstacles that threaten funding continuity and divert international attention away from Iraq, thereby placing civil society at considerable risk.

Similar trends are observed within organizations operating in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, where there has been a gradual decrease in grant allocations. Many of these grants primarily targeted displaced persons and refugees, while also encompassing host communities through projects that were predominantly relief-focused rather than developmental.

The persistent decline in international aid represents one of the foremost challenges confronting Iraqi civil society. The Iraq Humanitarian Fund (IHF), administered by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian

Affairs (OCHA), constitutes one of the largest international entities supporting civil society by providing direct funding and coordinating efforts among non-governmental organizations (NGOs). However, the fund has encountered substantial financial constraints, securing only a fraction of the resources required for 2024. This shortfall adversely affects humanitarian response initiatives and essential support for displaced populations. Data from the Financial Tracking Service indicate that Iraq received a total of 62 million USD in humanitarian funding for 2024, amounting to merely 29.1% of the planned funding requirements. Similarly, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has underscored significant funding gaps in Iraq. For example, the IOM's Iraq Crisis Response Plan for 2024 requested 6.8 million USD but obtained only 488,190 USD, resulting in a substantial funding deficit of 93%. This deficit has negatively impacted critical areas such as displacement monitoring, climate change assessment, and the integration of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

The dependence of Iraqi civil society on international funding has long been a subject of concern, with critics suggesting that many organizations may be influenced by external agendas. Nonetheless, international funding remains the principal financial source for NGOs in Iraq and across the region. The cessation of such grants would severely hinder Iraqi civil society and produce adverse consequences for this sector, which is integral to the democratic process.

There exist seven levels through which NGOs can engage to influence society: providing direct services, raising awareness, capacity building, protecting vulnerable groups, conducting advocacy campaigns, monitoring government performance, and participating in decision-making processes. Notably, the necessity and volume of funding decrease progressively from the first to the seventh level, whereas the social impact correspondingly increases. These multifaceted interventions have played a significant role in countering extremist ideologies, disseminating democratic values and civic principles, fostering tolerance, and establishing and defending rights. Therefore, abandoning civil society without instituting alternative local funding mechanisms to ensure its sustainability would jeopardize volunteer groups and civic initiatives (Madanī, 2024).

VIII. Poverty and Unemployment

Unemployment remains one of the most significant challenges confronting Iraqi governments since 2003, contributing to an increased poverty rate within an oil-rich nation. This issue is exacerbated by the growing number of university graduates unable to secure employment due to the absence of a comprehensive state vision. Consequently, widespread protests by unemployed youth have occurred across several Iraqi governorates, including the closure of official institutions and oil company headquarters in southern Iraq. Despite governmental assurances to address unemployment and poverty, these protests persist. According to data from the Ministry of Planning, the poverty rate declined from 30% in 2021 to 17.5% in 2024, while the unemployment rate decreased from

16.5% to 13.5% during the same period. These figures indicate an improvement in economic growth indicators compared to previous years, particularly 2020 and earlier (al-'Arabī al-Jadīd, 2025, May 31; Ministry of Planning, 2025, June 25).

A 2024 socio-economic household survey encompassing all Iraqi governorates revealed significant reductions in poverty rates in Dhī-Qār, al-Muthanná, al-Dīwānīyah, and Nīnawá compared to 2018. Specifically, Dhī-Qār's poverty rate decreased from 40% to 15%, al-Muthanná's from 52% to 43%, al-Dīwānīyah's from 48% to 29%, and Nīnawá's from 38% to 13%. The governorates with the lowest poverty rates were Erbil at 7% and al-Sulaymānīyah at 8% (Ministry of Planning, 2025, February 26).

Factors contributing to these reductions include the expansion of the private sector and the enactment of the Retirement and Social Security Law, which equalized benefits for employees in both private and public sectors. The Prime Minister emphasized the need for state support to complete infrastructure projects and highlighted the government's commitment to subsidizing domestically manufactured goods by 18% of their export value. He further noted that domestic production would generate substantial financial surpluses and facilitate workforce employment. Additionally, incentivizing the Iraqi industrial sector to enhance and develop production remains a governmental priority, with factories equipped with modern machinery. Service projects across sectors such as housing, sewage, water, electricity, roads, industry, and agriculture have also contributed to job creation. Efforts to reduce unemployment included regulatory measures by the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to control the entry of foreign labor in accordance with project requirements (al-'Arabī al-Jadīd, 2025, May 31; Ministry of Planning, 2025, June 25).

The observed decreases in poverty and unemployment rates are attributed to government policies implemented in the three years preceding 2024. These policies encompassed expanding the social protection network to include more eligible beneficiaries, improving the ration card system, securing the "food basket" for citizens, initiating new projects, resolving issues related to stalled projects, and accelerating ongoing project completion. Furthermore, the government ensured the importation of food supplies at official prices, unaffected by parallel exchange rates, thereby stabilizing living conditions and enhancing job opportunities (Jarīdah, 2024, December 31).

Despite official reports indicating a reduction in unemployment to 13%, independent assessments and non-governmental organizations suggest that the actual unemployment rate, particularly among youth, exceeds 15% and may surpass 25% in certain categories, notably among university graduates. The Ministry of Planning estimated that, by the end of 2023, the number of unemployed individuals in Iraq ranged between 2 million and 2.5 million, including over 800,000 university graduates. Graduates from the Faculties of Education, Engineering, Agriculture, and Science represent the largest proportions within this group.

The government's reliance on partial measures, such as temporary employment programs and small loans, has yielded limited impact on unemployment due to inadequate follow-up and the lack of infrastructure to support entrepreneurship (al-Tamīmī, 2025).

IX. Extortion Crimes

Extortion constitutes a significant security and social challenge within Iraqi society, posing a substantial threat to the nation's investment environment. This issue adversely affects the confidence of foreign enterprises and limits economic development opportunities. Prior to 2021, numerous companies were compelled to cease operations or transfer them to secondary firms across various regions due to challenges such as harassment by tribal groups or armed factions demanding material benefits through forced payments or employment quotas for local residents. Nevertheless, extortion activities have markedly decreased in recent years, attributable to concerted efforts by the al-Sudānī government to establish a secure and conducive investment environment. This government has prioritized service delivery and infrastructure development within its strategic plans and programs. An integrated plan was implemented to safeguard the operations of thousands of investment companies across multiple sectors while simultaneously attracting new investments. Consequently, the government engaged reputable firms to revitalize the country's economic sector, which had experienced decline in previous periods (al-'Arabī al-Jadīd, 2024, May 20).

Electronic extortion, a form of cybercrime executed through digital means to extract material or moral gains from victims, involves intimidation and threats to disclose private information that could impact the victim's life, predominantly via social media platforms. The proliferation of electronic extortion correlates with the widespread adoption of technology and cyberspace, alongside the expansion of cybercrime. According to the Iraqi Ministry of Interior, electronic extortion is among the most prevalent crimes affecting society, disproportionately targeting women (70%) compared to men (30%). The most vulnerable demographic ranges from 15 to 35 years of age. In 2024, the Ministry of Interior documented a reduction in electronic extortion cases, managing 566 incidents, 527 involving women and 39 involving men. Furthermore, statistics from the Community Police within the Ministry of Interior indicate that Iraq recorded 1,950 electronic extortion cases in 2023, with the majority of victims being women, including adolescent girls and children under 14 years (Shafaq News, 2024, May 18; Karīm, 2025; Baghdad Today, 2024, May 28).

On March 5, 2024, the Ministry of Interior spokesperson, Miqdād Mīrī, affirmed that electronic extortion crime rates have diminished to approximately 3% of previous levels, attributing this decline to the security agencies' enhanced capacity to detect cases and promptly apprehend perpetrators. He emphasized that this reduction reflects the dedicated efforts of security forces to combat crimes that threaten citizens' privacy and digital security.

However, concerned parties suggest that the reported statistics may underestimate the true prevalence of electronic extortion, as many victims opt for silence and comply with extortion demands due to fear of social stigma. This is corroborated by increasing rates of divorce, suicide, and domestic violence.

The Community Police identify two primary methods of extortion: first, victims develop excessive trust with extortionists who exploit private photos or personal information to initiate extortion; second, electronic hacking occurs due to widespread lack of awareness regarding necessary security measures and protection of electronic devices (Shafaq News, 2024, May 18).

The utilization of Artificial Intelligence (AI) by criminal gangs and mafias in extortion operations in Iraq has raised concerns regarding severe social repercussions, compounded by the government's limited capacity to address such crimes amid the country's digital underdevelopment. Consequently, many girls may refrain from disclosing extortion incidents to their families or reporting them to authorities, fearing familial and tribal repercussions that could result in domestic violence, homicide, or suicide.

In 2023, Iraq ranked lowest among Arab countries in government AI readiness, according to Oxford Insights. This global AI index evaluates over 100 criteria across seven indicators: government strategy, research and development, competencies, infrastructure, operating environment, and trade. The ranking highlights governmental deficiencies, exemplified by the blocking of the Telegram platform following data leaks involving Iraqi citizens, without addressing the root causes, namely, the absence of mechanisms to prevent data breaches and inadequate cybersecurity fortification amid evident digital backwardness and institutional inefficiency.

The challenges extend beyond technological lag to legislative inadequacies, as Iraq lacks specific cybercrime legislation, resulting in a legal gap between emerging cybercriminal activities and outdated penal and procedural codes enacted over five decades ago. Consequently, security agencies and specialized courts have resorted to applying Penal Code No. 111 of 1969 to fill this void, despite its insufficiency in deterrence and punitive effectiveness, notwithstanding its classification of cybercrimes as felonies punishable by over five years of imprisonment. Therefore, Iraq necessitates a comprehensive legal and institutional framework explicitly addressing cybercrimes, encompassing criminalization, penalties, investigative protocols, and technical evidence-gathering procedures. Factors such as political instability, diminished investment prospects, attempts to exploit power vacuums, cultural influences (Mūsá, 2024, p. 2), lack of awareness regarding technological risks, poverty, unemployment, inadequate parental supervision, evolving social communication patterns, widespread ignorance, and educational system failures, exacerbated by escalating social issues post-2003, have facilitated the exploitation of victims and the escalation of electronic extortion cases. Additionally, successive governments' neglect of women's and children's welfare and the absence of developmental programs have further exacerbated this phenomenon within Iraqi society.

Enhancing digital literacy, providing legal and psychological support to victims, and advancing Iraq's cybersecurity infrastructure are critical measures to mitigate the spread of electronic extortion and protect women from it.

In response to elevated extortion rates, the Iraqi government has initiated several measures to combat cybercrime, notably the unified emergency number project (911), which enables victims to confidentially report incidents and seek assistance from specialized authorities. This service operates 24/7 and supports five languages. The Iraqi National Security Service launched the "We Have Your Back" awareness campaign, targeting the protection of girls, especially middle and high school students, from extortion crimes. Furthermore, the NAYA organization, in collaboration with the Supreme Council for Youth and the NGO Directorate, under the Prime Minister's sponsorship, initiated a nationwide campaign to raise awareness about electronic extortion risks and equip women with effective protective strategies.

Despite these efforts, victims encounter challenges within legal and security frameworks, as procedural complexities and delays discourage some women from filing complaints. To address this, the Ministry of Interior has designated female personnel to investigate electronic extortion cases, aiming to create a safer environment for victims (Karīm, 2025). Moreover, social responsibility extends to the family, the tribe, religious institutions, and civil society organizations in educating youth on responding to such crimes through awareness, behavioral guidance, and fostering a culture of reporting and confronting extortion without fear (Mūsá, 2024, p. 4).

X. Agenda for 2025

1. Continued Debate over the Ratification of Family Affairs Laws

In 2024, the Council of Representatives engaged in debates concerning several legislative proposals, some of which were approved while others were rejected. Notably, an amendment to the Personal Status Law was deliberated, which permits the regulation of marriage and inheritance matters at the expense of fundamental rights established in prior legislation. This amendment legalizes marriages solemnized by clerics that are not registered with personal status courts, marriages that are deemed illegal under Personal Status Law No. 188 of 1959. Additionally, the amendment removes criminal penalties previously imposed on men entering into such marriages.

The amendment's provision for unregistered marriages is anticipated to facilitate the increase of underage marriages, a phenomenon that has escalated over the past two decades. This development adversely affects women and girls' access to governmental and social services related to their personal status, including the registration of their children's births and the assertion of rights to dowry, alimony, and inheritance. Furthermore, it impedes their access to education and employment opportunities and exacerbates their vulnerability to health-related

issues, sexual abuse, and domestic violence. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reports that 28% of Iraqi girls marry before reaching 18 years of age. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) indicates that 22% of unregistered marriages involve girls under 14 years old. These high rates of child marriage are arguably linked to poverty, insecurity, and low educational attainment among girls (Human Rights Watch, 2025).

It is imperative to enact anti-domestic violence legislation aligned with international standards that criminalize such acts. This legislation should incorporate appropriate sanctions for perpetrators while ensuring victims' access to justice and providing safe shelters for those at risk (UNAMI & OHCHR, 2024, p. 19). Concerning the protection of children from domestic violence, the following measures are recommended:

1. Improving Legal, Policy, and Institutional Frameworks: Strengthening child protection mechanisms in accordance with international standards, ensuring consistent implementation and enforcement. Institutions responsible for safeguarding children or addressing experiences of violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect must be reinforced, alongside efforts to enhance public confidence in these institutions' protective capacities.
2. Increasing the Availability of Child Protection Services: Providing assistance to children exposed to abuse, exploitation, neglect, and violence. Access to services must be equitable and just, with particular attention to children with disabilities.
3. Changing Violent Attitudes and Practices: Engaging communities to transform deeply entrenched behaviors detrimental to children and women, ensuring that children and families are informed of their rights and the availability of supportive services.

2. The 2024 Parliamentary Elections and Social Participation

Elections in Iraq encounter numerous challenges, primarily due to the absence of a secure and equitable environment that permits voters to cast ballots freely and enables new political actors to compete fairly without coercion or the influence of wealth.

The wealth of politicians exerts a pernicious influence. Various politicians exploited the 2021 Federal Supreme Court ruling, which removed restrictions on campaign donations, to leverage financial resources for vote-buying and to tie their constituencies' economic prospects to their political success. Consequently, political discourse became saturated with populist electoral promises that neither reflect citizens' realities nor offer genuine solutions. This environment marginalizes reformist voices seeking systemic change, as they lack the resources to compete with entrenched patronage networks that sustain major parties. Deprived of funding and support, these reformist actors often abstain from political engagement.

Parties practicing grassroots patronage consolidate control over ministries and government institutions, enabling them to appropriate state resources for private interests. In the absence of effective oversight and accountability, government funds are easily diverted to electoral propaganda or to advance political agendas within the system. These dynamics contribute to widespread public distrust in the electoral process, evidenced by low voter turnout; in the 2022 elections, participation was 41% of registered voters, a figure that is significantly lower when considering the total eligible population.

The decline in electoral participation reflects citizens' disillusionment with political options dominated by traditional parties, their affiliates, and the influence of wealth. Voters perceive their ballots as ineffective, particularly when outcomes favor wealthy and influential candidates. The Iraqi political landscape requires the emergence of independent leadership capable of offering authentic and viable alternatives.

The future of democracy in Iraq depends on a genuine political commitment to reforming the electoral process fundamentally. This entails creating a safe and neutral environment that facilitates genuine participation by voters and candidates; regulating political financing through stringent legislation; holding accountable those involved in vote-buying or voter manipulation; preventing the misuse of state resources for electoral purposes; ensuring the independence of the Independent High Electoral Commission as mandated by the Iraqi Constitution; supporting reformist movements by providing equitable media access and funding; promoting electoral awareness to cultivate a participatory culture, especially among youth; and upholding the peaceful transfer of power and respect for election outcomes (al-Mūsawī, 2025).

3. Continued Erosion of Iraqi Civil Society

Numerous civil society organizations in Iraq face the threat of extinction due to the depletion of foreign funding sources and the near absence of internal financial support. The organizations likely to endure are those maintaining favorable relations with influential parties, predominantly members of the political elite or prominent political parties. Concurrently, politicians have begun establishing and financing their own organizations. This dynamic compromises the independence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which tend to align with political parties or influential figures who advance their agendas through these entities. Alternatively, NGOs may align with commercial interests, thereby diverging from their original vision, mission, and objectives. Their activities increasingly focus on delivering direct services and aid to attract popular support and influence electoral outcomes. Even when mobilizing public advocacy or defense campaigns, these efforts often serve partisan interests rather than genuine human rights causes or civic advocacy aimed at safeguarding citizens' rights and fostering democratic culture. Consequently, civil society is unlikely to engage meaningfully in decision-making processes or development partnerships, as it no longer represents the citizenry but rather the objectives of political parties and their affiliates.

The shortcomings of civil society organizations in becoming robust, active, influential, and effective are partly attributable to their own failure to adopt bold measures or to serve as inspiring models of success, change, and influence on policymaking, although some organizations have impacted specific sectors. Additionally, international organizations bear responsibility for allocating funds to ineffective entities and treating local organizations as mere executors rather than partners. There has been inadequate monitoring and evaluation of success indicators, with an emphasis on short-term projects rather than long-term strategic initiatives. Furthermore, coordination between donors and implementers has remained weak. Reports of corruption within civil society organizations, including international ones, have further entrenched negative perceptions of these entities and civil society at large (Madanī, 2024).

XI. Obligations for 2025

1. Continued Efforts to Reduce Poverty and Unemployment

These efforts are exemplified by the success of the Ministry of Planning in approving the Third National Strategy for Poverty Alleviation in Iraq for the period 2025-2029. The final version is scheduled for submission to the Council of Ministers for official ratification, paving the way for program implementation over the next five years. The Minister of Planning emphasized that the strategy's development reflects a national and ethical commitment to vulnerable populations and responds to the urgent need to strengthen sustainable development pathways and achieve social justice. The strategy aims to reduce the poverty rate to below 10% by the end of 2029, while continuing to establish policies that sustain achieved gains and foster further positive outcomes (Ministry of Planning, 2025, June 25).

2. Continued Efforts to Combat Crime

Crime rates in Iraq declined significantly in 2024, with a continued decrease anticipated in 2025. According to the Ministry of Interior, a 15% reduction was recorded compared to 2022 and 2023, years during which Iraq experienced the highest murder rate in the Arab world, exceeding 11.5 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants annually.

The reduction in crime rates reached 20%, with theft-related offenses decreasing by 12% and murder cases declining by 22%, from 1,540 cases in 2023 to 1,200 in 2024. Serious assaults decreased by 18%, with 3,500 incidents reported in 2024 compared to 4,270 in 2023.

Home robberies fell by 10%, with 8,000 cases reported in 2024 versus 8,900 in 2023, while car thefts decreased by 14%, from 6,400 incidents in 2023 to 5,500 in 2024. Financial crimes also saw notable declines; bribery and embezzlement cases dropped by 25%, from 1,600 in 2023 to 1,200 in 2024, and financial fraud decreased by 20%, from 1,125 cases in 2023 to 900 in 2024. Regarding narcotics-related offenses, drug trafficking cases declined by 18%, with 2,500 incidents

recorded in 2024 compared to 3,050 in 2023, and drug use cases decreased by 15%, from 4,700 in 2023 to 4,000 in 2024.

The decline in crime rates is attributed to enhanced security measures, stricter law enforcement, and intensified anti-corruption efforts, despite ongoing challenges in addressing organized crime and illicit drug networks (Middle East Monitor, 2025, January 31).

XII. Addressing Challenges and Fulfilling Obligations

1. Leveraging Population Census Data

By utilizing census results, the state can successfully realize its strategic goals, which encompass the following (al-Ḥilū, 2024):

- **Strengthening National Identity in Public Discourse:** The government should implement media and educational awareness initiatives that emphasize the census as a developmental instrument rather than a political tool. During the census process, concerns arose regarding attempts by certain factions to manipulate data, indicating a fragile sense of national belonging and apprehension about politicizing the results.
- **Regular Data Updates:** Censuses should be conducted at regular intervals; for example, each new government should undertake a census to improve the training of personnel, prepare the public, and cultivate a culture of census participation to ensure data accuracy. To minimize costs, the government may engage civil society organizations, volunteers, educators, and law enforcement. Additionally, conducting the census on weekends rather than suspending official work hours would be more efficient.
- **Enhancing Transparency and Trust:** Public involvement is crucial for the census's success and for fostering trust between citizens and governmental institutions. Neglecting issues related to trust and data integrity risks transforming the census into a mechanism that perpetuates existing inequalities rather than promoting progress.
- **Establishing a National Census Charter:** It is recommended that all political parties reach a consensus to guarantee the process's integrity and neutrality, with oversight by popular committees representing diverse Iraqi national components to bolster transparency and credibility.
- **Adopting Modern Technology:** The development of digital applications should be prioritized to facilitate citizen participation and reduce fraud, thereby improving data accuracy and operational efficiency.

2. Social Control

This concept promotes social stability and equilibrium by regulating interpersonal relationships. Societies, including Iraq, share commonalities and differences in the customs, habits, and traditions employed to achieve social control.

By contextualizing this theory locally, tribal sheikhs can apply specific methods to maintain order, especially during periods when national state institutions were absent, such as in Iraq during the early occupation years. Given that some tribal sheikhs lack legal and human rights knowledge, resulting in reliance on traditional punitive measures, it is imperative for human rights organizations and legal bodies to enhance their awareness and capacity in line with contemporary requirements (Raḥḥāl, 2019, pp. 8-9).

For tribal reconciliation to effectively complement the formal judiciary, it is essential to prosecute and hold accountable individuals who impose unlawful sanctions through tribal reconciliation mechanisms. Official authorities must oversee reconciliation decisions and review outcomes to ensure compliance with legal standards and human rights. Moreover, security and judicial bodies should not tolerate retaliatory acts following criminal offenses (Banī-Faḍl & Ismāʿīl, 2019, p. 13).

3. Addressing the Increasing Threat of Narcotics

Effectively addressing this challenge necessitates a mix of productive mechanisms, encompassing the following actions (INCB, 2025, pp. 154-156):

- Strengthening national coordination by creating collaborative task forces involving all pertinent governmental bodies.
- Investing in early warning systems and employing continuous monitoring, machine learning, and organized intelligence to detect synthetic drugs and anticipate alternative chemical precursors.
- Sharing operational intelligence on psychotropic substance trafficking and providing detailed seizure reports.
- Strengthening law enforcement by monitoring supply chains, disrupting illicit networks, and training personnel in safe narcotics handling and disposal, with an emphasis on human rights and alternatives to severe punitive measures.
- Fostering private sector partnerships by encouraging e-commerce platforms and social media to assist in identifying criminal activities and sharing intelligence. This also includes collaboration with the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) of the United Nations to map chemical, pharmaceutical, medical, and biotechnology sectors for improved market oversight and to address misuse of industrial veterinary sedatives.
- Implementing youth-focused national and local strategies by building robust partnerships among public, private, and civil society sectors to reduce drug demand. This involves creating an emergency warning system akin to the European Union's early warning system for new psychoactive substances to alert healthcare and law enforcement agencies. Additionally, efforts should focus on maintaining adequate medical drug stockpiles and facilitating access policies.

- Promoting international cooperation to enhance strategic and operational dialogue, exchange best practices, and encourage information sharing through multilateral and bilateral forums.

4. The Call to Abolish the Death Penalty for Narcotics Crimes

The call to abolish the death penalty for narcotics crimes requires the following actions:

- Enhancing the active involvement of civil society and experts in the formulation and oversight of narcotics legislation, policies, and the application of the death penalty, as well as in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of cooperation and funding agreements related to anti-narcotics efforts.
- Ensuring that reform initiatives are locally driven, grounded in a comprehensive understanding of the relevant stakeholders.
- Advocating for complete transparency and access to information, whereby the government regularly publishes accurate data on death sentences and executions, categorized by crime type, gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, and socio-economic status.
- Collaborating with all influential actors in policymaking, including institutional bodies, civil society, academia, international and multilateral organizations, religious leaders, corporations, and other private entities, to raise awareness about the dangers of narcotics.
- Promoting structural reforms by partnering with organizations and activists engaged in related issues and narcotics policy reform. Discussions or initiatives aimed at reducing the use of the death penalty must critically evaluate and reform narcotics policies, shifting from punitive approaches toward policies that uphold dignity, health, and human rights.
- Developing strategies and establishing effective networks to facilitate international coordination, cooperation, and the exchange of best practices with other countries (Girelli et al., 2025, pp. 54-55).

5. Domestic violence

Domestic violence issues necessitate three patterns of treatment (UNAMI & OHCHR, 2024, pp. 19-21):

A. Improving the reporting of domestic violence cases, which includes:

- Strengthening the legal framework by repealing discriminatory provisions in the Iraqi Penal Code that allow perpetrators to cite “honor defense” to obtain mitigated sentences for murder, in accordance with Articles 128, 130, 131, and 409 of the law.
- The Ministry of Interior strengthening and empowering the departments of the Directorate of Family and Child Protection from Domestic Violence by increasing the number of branches and the quantity and quality of staff across all Iraqi governorates.

- Training law enforcement personnel and service providers, including women, on how to identify and respond to domestic violence cases.
- Implementing a periodic and transparent reporting mechanism for domestic violence cases by family and child protection departments, divided into different categories, while strengthening confidential and secure reporting mechanisms such as hotlines and online reporting.
- The participation of several relevant ministries in providing legal assistance and psychological support to victims of violence, as well as cooperation with community, tribal, and religious leaders to raise awareness.

B. Improving investigations involving domestic violence victims, which includes:

- Ensuring that investigative judges receive specialized training in conducting investigations for domestic violence cases, prioritizing the safety and well-being of the victim and providing emotional support.
- Ensuring the comprehensive and effective collection, preservation, and documentation of all relevant evidence by investigators, while providing them with the tools and resources necessary to conduct investigations efficiently and promptly.

C. Improving judicial procedures regarding domestic violence, which includes:

- Enhancing victim safety through court-taken measures that make victims feel more secure when reporting their cases and pursuing them through the legal system.
- Increasing awareness of domestic violence and educating judges, lawyers, and court staff on the subject.
- Improving cooperation between courts, law enforcement, and community organizations to enhance the response to domestic violence through information exchange, service coordination, and providing training for participants in the trial process.
- The Supreme Judicial Council should secure adequate funding for courts handling domestic violence cases. Additional funds could be used to establish separate domestic violence courts and employ additional judges and court staff to work specifically on these cases.
- Working to establish specialized legal offices to provide legal assistance to domestic violence victims.
- Regarding the Kurdistan Region, it is essential for authorities to promptly end impunity in domestic violence cases by ensuring that investigations are effective and survivor-centered. There is a necessity to abolish mandatory reconciliation procedures as a prerequisite for criminal proceedings, increase funding for institutions supporting domestic violence survivors, and remove requirements for court orders or formal criminal complaints to enable survivors to access shelters and improve

their living conditions. Furthermore, major legal reforms are needed to remove barriers to justice, alongside the launch of public education and awareness campaigns against discrimination practiced against women and girls (Amnesty International, 2024).

6. Anti-Begging Efforts

Prior to launching any campaign aimed at combating begging in Iraq, it is imperative to enhance economic conditions, recognizing that employment opportunities are not universally accessible, nor are all citizens employed by the state. Consequently, the government must prioritize reducing unemployment and poverty rates by initiating new productive projects and revitalizing thousands of factories that have remained inactive for decades throughout the country. Moreover, the implementation of effective social programs is necessary to support families who have lost their primary breadwinner, thereby alleviating poverty and facilitating educational attainment among family members to enable sustainable income generation. Additionally, specialized educational initiatives should be targeted toward vulnerable populations in collaboration with civil society organizations, ensuring that these interventions are sustained rather than temporary. Addressing a phenomenon of this scale necessitates comprehensive and realistic strategies rather than transient campaigns. Furthermore, enforcement of Article 93 of the Iraqi Penal Code No. 111 of 1969 is essential; this provision mandates imprisonment for adult beggars whose health permits employment. Traffic officers should also play a role by reporting beggars located at street intersections and other public areas to the appropriate authorities. Complementary media campaigns are required to discourage citizens from encouraging begging and to promote assistance exclusively for those genuinely in need who do not engage in begging as a profession (Tūmā, 2024).

7. Civil Society Organizations

The absence of civil society organizations would yield significant negative consequences for Iraqi society. Since international support was bound to end eventually, or at least change its form and intervention mechanisms, it is better to prepare for this stage through two strategies that may save Iraqi civil society from the brink of collapse:

- Developing local community dynamics that encourage charitable work and ensure its continuity without relying on external support, while strengthening the capacities of civil society to diversify sources of funding and support.
- Maintaining lines of communication between international and local organizations, even in the absence of international institutions' physical presence, offices, and field staff, to foster cooperation in studying situations, providing solutions, and engaging in work partnerships (Madanī, 2024).

8. Anti-Extortion Efforts

Addressing the phenomenon of extortion requires the concerted efforts of governmental authorities and institutions. For instance, the legislative authority should utilize its oversight and legislative role through the following:

- Expediting the legislation of the Cybercrime Law, ensuring its articles include the imposition of heavy fines and strict penalties for anyone using electronic sites for extortion or to entice youth into drug use and trafficking, while granting financial rewards to whistleblowers who report extortionists.
- Reviewing other legislations relevant to combating extortion, such as Penal Code No. 111 of 1969, by amending its texts to include the concepts of electronic media and means to remedy existing legislative deficiencies.
- Intensifying parliamentary efforts to monitor electronic extortion through oversight mechanisms, such as forming follow-up committees, conducting field visits, and hosting relevant authorities.
- Developing non-traditional oversight methods for relevant committees in the Council of Representatives (including the Committees for Combating Narcotics, Security and Defense, Communications, and Women, Family, and Childhood) and enabling them to utilize electronic oversight through training courses to master the monitoring of extortion cases.
- Presenting and discussing the issue of electronic extortion and its consequences in a special parliamentary session, hosting the Prime Minister and relevant authorities.

As for the role of the Judiciary, it should focus on providing all necessary means to combat this phenomenon legally through specialized courts and ensuring the rapid resolution of lawsuits arising from these crimes. This includes preparing investigative judges professionalized in the field of cybercrime and conducting training to provide them with the skills and expertise appropriate for this new type of crime.

As for the role of the Executive Authority, it should focus on the following:

- Formulating a specific policy and a national strategy concerned with combating electronic extortion crimes.
- Eliminating the root causes of these crimes by reducing poverty and improving economic conditions in the country.
- Developing mechanisms for criminal prosecution and strengthening the rule of law and the application of existing legislation.
- Directing all executive institutions, each according to its tasks and powers, to establish special programs to combat electronic extortion.
- Cooperating with local and international entities and organizations to develop expertise and skills in curbing such crimes.

Finally, the role of the Media and Communications Commission lies in establishing programs capable of combating electronic extortion through all media channels and disseminating awareness programs within society against these crimes (Mūsá, 2024, pp. 3-4).

XIII. Conclusions

For several decades, the development of Iraqi society has been impeded by corruption, limited institutional and technological capacities, socio-economic challenges, armed conflicts, and environmental issues. These factors have contributed to a social pattern that perpetuates existing conditions through outdated mechanisms, thereby exacerbating vulnerabilities and limiting the capacity to devise constructive, purposeful, and sustainable solutions. Consequently, this has hindered the effective utilization and positive adaptation of social strengths for the advancement of the Iraqi state and its citizens.

Mobilizing the elements of strength to serve national interests necessitates a high level of maturity among both political leaders and the people, accompanied by pragmatic interventions aligned with current realities, as outlined below:

1. It is imperative to enhance cooperation between the Border Guard and the Narcotics Control Directorates in border governorates with high drug prevalence (namely al-Baṣrah, Maysān, al-Muthanná, and al-Anbār) to prevent drug infiltration. This objective should be pursued through the adoption of advanced technologies, the expansion of highly trained personnel in this sector, and the provision of substantial financial incentives that exceed those of counterparts in similar ministries, commensurate with the risks and challenges inherent in their operational environment.
2. The recent rapid population growth in Iraq has altered the demographic composition, resulting in two primary consequences: firstly, increased pressure on the labor market, which is increasingly unable to absorb the growing number of employable youth, including graduates, thereby fostering social issues such as unemployment, poverty, and crime; secondly, heightened demand on social services, including education, healthcare, water, electricity, and other state-guaranteed provisions. This escalating pressure risks culminating in a social crisis unless governmental bodies implement effective mechanisms, such as increased funding for social and health service programs.
3. Poverty, while constituting a barrier to development and stability, also stems from various adverse social phenomena, notably ignorance, backwardness, the proliferation of crime and disease, family disintegration, divorce, begging, and suicide. This situation reflects the inadequate response of successive governments in mitigating poverty and its repercussions, underscoring the necessity for prioritizing transformative change within strategic agendas.

4. Climate change and environmental degradation, particularly drought and desertification, have compelled thousands of families to migrate from southern regions to central and northern areas, as well as from rural to urban areas. This migration has strained aging infrastructure and generated persistent social tensions due to the cultural integration challenges posed by incoming populations. In this context, local governments bear responsibility for alleviating these impacts by facilitating population absorption and fostering social cohesion, while the federal government must enhance national capacities to address environmental challenges effectively.

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6. Human Rights

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Iraq has yet to attain the status of a nation that fully guarantees human rights and ensures their implementation within a robust legislative framework. Throughout 2024, the fifth parliamentary session enacted several legislative measures and practices that are anticipated to significantly impact human rights. These include the passage of contentious laws, notably amendments to the General Amnesty Law and the Personal Status Law. More than two decades after the fall of the authoritarian Ba'thist regime and Iraq's transition toward democracy (supposedly prioritizing human rights) successive Iraqi administrations continue to confront substantial challenges that jeopardize progress in this domain. These challenges primarily arise from difficulties in establishing a cohesive legislative and executive system capable of providing a secure environment for human rights protection, free from discrimination and irrespective of political or social affiliations. Moreover, the rapid advancement of technology, coupled with a marked increase in cybercrime, exacerbates risks to international human rights standards within Iraq. Consequently, this situation imposes heightened responsibilities on relevant authorities and institutions to fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which place the human being at their core, thereby securing international support and restoring confidence in Iraq as a nation committed to safeguarding the rights of all its citizens, regardless of regional, religious, sectarian, or political affiliations.

I. The Status of Human Rights in Local and International Official Documents

1. Iraqi Government Documents and Data

The Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR), established in 2008, functions as an independent body linked to the Council of Representatives, alongside other entities such as the Communications and Media Commission (CMC), the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), and the Commission of Integrity. The primary responsibilities of the IHCHR include monitoring human rights violations within Iraq, receiving and investigating complaints, filing judicial actions against perpetrators of violence, and overseeing the operations of prisons and correctional facilities. Since the expiration of the IHCHR Board of Commissioners'

term in July 2021, the election of a new board comprising 11 members and a chairperson has been delayed due to political disagreements among parliamentary blocs, resulting in the commission's effective paralysis for nearly four years. As of September 2023, the commission's administrative and financial affairs have been managed on an acting basis by the Minister of Justice.

The absence of the IHCHR Board of Commissioners has created a legal vacuum, leading to a lack of rigorous monitoring and follow-up on human rights issues in Iraq. The Parliament and political factions have been criticized for their responsibility in this matter. This suspension has affected the commission's operations, which include over 500 monitors across its offices in various Iraqi governorates. Moreover, the failure of the Council of Representatives and the Presidency of the Republic to issue a decision to relieve current board members from their positions, thereby allowing them to return to their previous roles, has left these members in a state of uncertainty. Former IHCHR member 'Alī al-Bayyātī remarked that the absence of a functioning human rights commission has resulted in the loss of the commission's "A" status concerning independence and effectiveness. Nūr Shāhīn, a member of the Inṭilāq Organization for Development, a local human rights organization, asserted that Iraq's absence of the commission has significantly diminished its standing at conferences addressing human and social conditions, resulting in the loss of international representation in civil society discussions (al-Bāsim, 2024).

Similarly, journalist Ayyūb Ḥasan observed that the suspension of the commission's activities has adversely affected Iraq's international reputation regarding human rights. Iraq's status was downgraded from "A" to "B" due to the Council of Representatives' failure to appoint new board members during the current parliamentary session. This downgrade has serious implications, including Iraq's inability to submit reports to specialized United Nations committees and the loss of the right to raise sensitive human rights issues in international forums. Additionally, Iraq forfeited the opportunity to secure a seat on the Global Human Rights Council. He criticized the practice of "political quotas" in board member selection, whereby political blocs impose representatives from their respective components, weakening board decisions and diverting focus from mandated issues to politically motivated agendas. He further noted the inseparability of politics from Iraqi state institutions, as legislative and executive bodies are continuously shaped by historical political agreements and temporary power-sharing arrangements based on religious, sectarian, partisan, or ethnic affiliations (al-Bāsim, 2024). These observations underscore the critical need to elect the Board of Commissioners to fulfill its mandate and restore Iraq's international standing in human rights.

In February 2023, the Council of Representatives established a committee of experts, chaired by the Second Deputy Speaker, Shākhawān 'Abd-Allāh Aḥmad, to oversee the selection of the IHCHR Board of Commissioners. This initiative recognized the commission's importance in promoting human rights culture, sustaining democratic processes, and ensuring the commission's continued oper-

ation as an independent institution aligned with international laws, treaties, and conventions. The nomination process adhered to Article (8) of IHCHR Law No. 53 of 2008.

On September 20, 2024, the committee announced that it had reviewed over 10,000 applications, necessitating extensive evaluation time. The committee emphasized the importance of representing all Iraqi components within the commission and acknowledged that the volume of applications contributed to delays. They expressed concern that further postponement could result in Iraq's status being downgraded to "B," stressing the significance of preserving national institutions such as the IHCHR.

On the 46th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Minister of Justice, Dr. Khālid Shawānī, who has been managing the IHCHR since January 2024, urged the Council of Representatives to expedite the election of the Board of Commissioners to ensure the commission's operational continuity and enhance its international reputation as an independent national institution. He highlighted the commission's progress in field monitoring, complaint reception, activity implementation, seminar and workshop organization, research preparation, and legislative recommendations to align national laws with international standards. He reiterated the call for swift completion of the election process to safeguard the commission's future and reinforce Iraq's commitment to human rights and its international obligations, reflecting the country's cultural heritage and civilized identity (Ministry of Justice, 2024, December 8).

2. United Nations Documents

During its first session in 2024 (April 29 to May 3), the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) expressed significant concern regarding the continuity of the compliance of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) with the Paris Principles, particularly questioning its actual or perceived independence from the Iraqi government and its capacity to function independently and effectively (SCA, 2024a, p. 76).

At its second session in 2024 (October 14-18), the SCA resolved to downgrade the IHCHR's accreditation to status "B" pursuant to Article 1.18 of the GANHRI Statute. This statute stipulates that such a downgrade takes effect after one year, with the IHCHR retaining its "A" status until the SCA's second session in 2025. This period allows the IHCHR to submit necessary documentation demonstrating its continued adherence to the Paris Principles. The decision was motivated by concerns that the institution's independence and effectiveness were insufficiently upheld, citing the absence of a Board of Commissioners as a significant impediment to fulfilling its duties, including the publication of annual and thematic reports. Additionally, the appointment of the Minister of Justice was perceived to undermine the IHCHR's institutional independence, credibility, and its ability to address serious human rights issues, collaborate with civil society organizations, and engage with international human rights mechanisms (SCA, 2024b, pp. 62-63).

Additionally, the SCA report highlighted several specific concerns (SCA, 2024b, pp. 64-67):

- **Independence:** The commission has operated without a Board of Commissioners since 2021. Furthermore, the appointment of the Minister of Justice to oversee administrative and financial affairs compromises the distinction between the IHCHR and the executive branch, resulting in operational paralysis and diminished independence.
- **Selection and Appointment:** The expert committee responsible for selecting the Board of Commissioners, as per Commission Law No. 53 of 2008, is largely influenced by political parties. The SCA recommended expediting the appointment of the Board of Commissioners and amending the law to prevent prolonged vacancies in leadership positions.
- **Addressing Human Rights Violations:** Articles 4-8 of Law No. 53 of 2008 mandate the IHCHR to submit annual reports to Parliament assessing the human rights situation in Iraq, with requirements for publication in various media. The SCA noted that the IHCHR's inability to independently and publicly issue its annual, special, and thematic reports (due to administrative controls under the Minister of Justice) undermines its compliance with the Paris Principles and limits institutional credibility and accessibility.
- **Handling Complaints:** The SCA observed a decline in individual complaints and allegations of human rights violations. The commission attributed this decline not to the absence of commissioners but maintained that it retains public trust. The SCA urged the IHCHR to enhance efforts to address all human rights violations, increase public awareness of its mandate, and rebuild trust concerning complaint handling.
- **Interaction with International Human Rights Mechanisms:** The IHCHR prepared parallel reports for the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; however, these reports were neither submitted nor published due to the lack of approval from the Board of Commissioners, which has not been constituted since June 2021.
- **Cooperation with Civil Society:** The SCA emphasized the importance of strengthening collaboration with local institutions and civil society organizations dedicated to human rights promotion and protection. It underscored that regular, constructive engagement with all relevant stakeholders is vital for national human rights institutions to fulfill their mandates effectively. The IHCHR recognizes that national human rights institutions must maintain independence and pluralism, distinguishing themselves from government bodies and civil society to effectively protect and promote human rights.

II. Freedom of Expression and Social Media Regulation

On February 8, 2023, the Supreme Judicial Council issued Circular No. 204 addressed to the Public Prosecution Presidency, the Judicial Oversight Commission Presidency, and all Courts of Appeal. This circular mandates the enforcement of stringent legal measures to deter individuals who utilize social media platforms to disseminate content deemed offensive to public decency and morality, including intentional abuse directed at citizens and state institutions under various classifications. In response, the Ministry of Interior established a committee tasked with monitoring what was then classified as “indecent content” on social media. Numerous activists on these platforms were prosecuted under Article 403 of the Penal Code No. 111 of 1969 (amended), which stipulates that any person who produces, imports, exports, possesses, transports, or acquires for exploitation or distribution any material offensive to public decency or morality shall face imprisonment for up to two years, a fine not exceeding two hundred dinars, or both. The statute further penalizes those who advertise, publicly display, sell, rent, or distribute such materials, even privately, with aggravated penalties if the intent is to corrupt morals.

The Ministry of Interior also launched the “Balligh” (Report) platform, enabling the public to report such content. By August 2024, reports submitted through this platform surpassed 152,000 (al-Arab Newspaper, 2025, January 25), provoking significant debate within social, cultural, and human rights circles. Critics argued that these measures infringe upon freedoms of opinion and expression guaranteed by the 2005 Constitution (Articles 38, 42, and 46), Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and Articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The controversy primarily arises from the absence of clear, binding criteria defining “offensive to public decency or morality” content, which risks selective enforcement and potential suppression of free expression.

In August 2024, the Board of Commissioners of the Iraqi Communications and Media Commission (CMC) ratified resolutions outlining a media vision and strategies to combat misinformation and digital content challenges. Subsequently, in January 2025, the Council enacted regulations governing the activities of celebrities and digital content creators on media and social networking platforms. This decision elicited widespread criticism, with some perceiving it as an additional constraint on Iraqi social media content, particularly on platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook, which dominate the country’s digital landscape. Notably, Iraqis predominantly consume news and daily updates via social media rather than traditional satellite channels, newspapers, or websites. Experts suggest that certain political factions seek to infiltrate and control these platforms to advance their propaganda. Conversely, others, including Fāḍil al-Gharrāwī, head of the Strategic Center for Human Rights in Iraq, view these measures as necessary,

highlighting that 50% of women in Iraq face digital violence, bullying, electronic extortion, and human trafficking (Infoplus, 2025, February 17).

It is acknowledged that social media contains indecent content and has been exploited by various segments of Iraqi society, necessitating regulatory frameworks. However, such regulations must be founded on explicit and transparent standards to prevent misuse and must safeguard freedom of opinion and the right to critique corruption and poor governance. Legislative authority over these regulations should reside with the Iraqi Council of Representatives, adhering to the principles of separation of powers and legality (no penalty without law), as enshrined in the 2005 Constitution (Articles 47 and 19/First), which are inviolable.

III. Women's and Children's Rights

Human rights in Iraq continue to face numerous challenges due to various factors. Reports and documents issued by international organizations consistently indicate a decline in these rights based on their adopted standards and perspectives, often derived from field visits and personnel observations. For example, the Human Rights Watch report on human rights in Iraq during 2024 highlighted that despite improvements in security and stability following decades of armed conflict, significant concerns persist. These include impunity, lack of justice and accountability for serious crimes, shrinking civic space, discriminatory legal standards affecting women, children, and minorities, and inadequate government services (HRW, 2025). The following provides an objective review of the status of human rights for women and children in Iraq based on these documents:

1. Women's Rights

The issue of women's rights in Iraq remains critical, particularly given the ongoing suffering of many women due to the impunity granted to male perpetrators of violence against them. This includes legal provisions permitting husbands to discipline their wives and parents to discipline their children, as well as lenient sentences for violent acts, including killings justified by so-called "honor motives." Additionally, perpetrators of rape or sexual assault often evade prosecution, especially if they marry their victims. In January 2025, the Council of Representatives contributed to weakening human rights indicators by approving amendments to the Personal Status Law No. 188 of 1959 through a package deal.

The amendment restricts personal status matters (such as marriage, divorce, custody, and inheritance) to the rulings of the Shī'ī jurisprudence. It permits polygamy and removes penalties for unregistered marriages, thereby hindering women and girls from accessing governmental and social services related to their personal status, registering their children's births, and claiming rights to dowry, alimony, and inheritance. The Human Rights Watch report notes an increase in child marriage rates over the past two decades. While the amendment requires mutual consent of spouses for marriage contracts concluded after its enactment, it applies to prior contracts with the consent of only one spouse, as stipulated in Article (1) of the Law Amending the Personal Status Law No. (1) of 2025.

Furthermore, the Council of Representatives has yet to legislate an Anti-Domestic Violence Law, despite government approval in 2020 and persistent demands from civil society organizations. This delay is attributed to divergent views between civil and religious groups regarding the law's purpose. The Iraqi judiciary currently addresses domestic violence under Article 41 of Penal Code No. 111 of 1969, which states: "There is no crime if the act is committed in the exercise of a right established under the law. It is considered an exercise of a right: 1- The husband's disciplining of his wife and the disciplining by parents, teachers, and their counterparts of minor children within the limits prescribed by Sharia, law, or custom."

During a press conference, Brigadier General Miqdād Mīrī, spokesperson for the Ministry of Interior, reported that from January 1, 2024, to May 1, 2024, 13,857 domestic violence cases were recorded, predominantly involving physical violence. He attributed the rise in violence to economic, cultural, and social changes, religious misunderstandings, widespread unemployment, and unregulated social media exposure, which has fostered illicit relationships outside marriage, increased infidelity, and escalated alcohol and drug use. A study cited by General Mīrī indicated that females constituted 73% of domestic violence victims, while males accounted for 27%. Physical violence represented 46% of cases, whereas sexual assault comprised the lowest percentage at 16% (INA, 2024, June 12).

2. Children's Rights

Statistical data and reports concerning the status of children in Iraq offer valuable insights for stakeholders, policymakers, and advocates dedicated to advancing children's rights within the country. The Human Rights Watch report on human rights in Iraq for 2024 documented a persistent increase in child marriage rates since 2003. Although the Iraqi Personal Status Law establishes 18 as the legal age for marriage, it permits marriage at 15 with judicial approval based on religious maturity and physical capability, a provision that conflicts with international legal standards and best practices (HRW, 2025).

According to the report, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) found that 28% of girls in Iraq marry before reaching 18 years of age. Additionally, 22% of unregistered marriages involve girls under 14 years old. The increase in child marriage rates has been attributed to factors such as poverty, insecurity, and low educational attainment among girls. The report further highlighted that child marriage and adolescent pregnancy result in significant adverse health outcomes, restrict access to education and employment opportunities, and increase the risk of sexual and domestic violence (HRW, 2025, March 10).

The report also noted that the Parliament has yet to enact the Child Protection Law, despite its introduction in June 2023. The legislation of this law would provide essential protections for children in Iraq, addressing issues including child labor, exploitation, and abuse. It would also codify fundamental rights for children, such as the rights to life, health, education, and nationality (HRW, 2025).

In June 2024, Brigadier General Miqdād Mīrī, spokesperson for the Ministry of Interior, stated during a press conference that a study confirmed the escalation of violent crimes against children is linked to economic, cultural, and social transformations, misinterpretations of religion, rising unemployment, and unregulated exposure to social media. The study recommended strengthening official institutions involved in family care and protection from domestic violence, including educational institutions, research centers, and endowment offices. It emphasized the importance of fostering social upbringing during childhood and adolescence in Iraq, particularly by monitoring parental caregiving practices to prevent violence, ensuring justice and equality in child treatment, and eliminating gender-based discrimination. General Mīrī underscored the urgent need for legislation protecting families and limiting discrimination and violence, specifically advocating for the Family and Child Protection Law (INA, 2024, June 12).

Dr. Fāḍil al-Gharrāwī, head of the Strategic Center for Human Rights in Iraq, affirmed that 2024 witnessed a concerning continuation of violence against children globally, with record numbers of victims and violations. According to Ministry of Interior statistics for 2024, 14,000 cases of domestic violence were recorded, predominantly involving physical violence, with females constituting 73% of the victims. In response, al-Gharrāwī called upon governmental and relevant institutions to implement urgent and comprehensive measures to safeguard children from all forms of violence. These measures include strengthening national legislation, providing psychological and social support to victims, and enhancing community awareness regarding the risks and detrimental effects of violence on future generations (al-Arabī al-Jadīd, 2025, February 2).

The UNICEF report on the impacts of climate change on children and youth in Iraq for 2024 ranked Iraq 61st out of 163 countries on the UNICEF Children's Climate Risk Index. The country is identified as the fifth most vulnerable globally to water and food shortages and extreme temperatures. This ranking reflects the severe climate change risks faced by Iraqi children. The report also highlighted that approximately 60% of the Iraqi population is under 25 years old, underscoring the necessity of mitigating climate change impacts on their health, education, and protection to secure a better future (UNICEF, 2024, p. 1).

Furthermore, UNICEF reported that approximately 8.7 million children in Iraq live in multidimensional poverty, representing 47% of the child population. These children experience educational discontinuation, malnutrition, violence, and conflict, which undermine their rights and potential. In collaboration with the Iraqi government, UNICEF aligns its efforts with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) to reduce child poverty by 50% by 2030 and to strengthen social protection systems beyond material poverty. The organization prioritizes measuring and monitoring various dimensions of child well-being and aims to enhance national capacities for data-driven policy-making, strategic research, and analysis on child poverty. These efforts support the development of evidence-based plans and programs and the allocation of necessary resources for their implementation (UNICEF, n.d.).

IV. Displaced Persons and Refugees

The occupation of various regions in Iraq by the terrorist organization ISIS from 2014 to 2017 resulted in the displacement of nearly six million individuals. Eight years following the defeat of this organization by Iraqi forces, and considering the presence of Syrian displaced persons within Iraq, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Migration and Displaced, Karīm al-Nūrī, reported in January 2024 on the status of displaced persons and camps. He stated that approximately 32,000 families, totaling around 154,000 individuals, remained in 24 camps (16 located in Duhok, 6 in Erbil, and 2 in al-Sulaymānīyah). Additionally, he noted that five camps had been closed in the previous year, with the displaced families returning to their original residential areas (INA, 2024, January 20).

In June 2024, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) disclosed that Iraq hosts over 300,000 refugees and asylum seekers, 90% of whom originate from Syria, predominantly residing in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, alongside more than one million internally displaced Iraqis. The UNHCR highlighted significant improvements in Iraq's general situation since the cessation of large-scale military operations against ISIS in 2017. Nonetheless, refugees face limited prospects for return in the near future due to ongoing insecurity and persistent violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, particularly in northeastern Syria. By September 2024, the Ministry of Migration and Displaced reported that the number of remaining camps in the Kurdistan Region had decreased, with over 3,000 displaced persons across six camps in Erbil and more than 21,000 across sixteen camps in Duhok, while no camps remained in al-Sulaymānīyah (Baghdād Today, 2024, September 22).

A 2024 survey conducted by the UNHCR on return intentions revealed that 93% of Syrian refugees in Iraq did not intend to return to their country, citing concerns about safety, security, and limited livelihood opportunities in Syria. Regarding Iraqi displaced persons, approximately 143,000 individuals reside in 22 camps within the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The UNHCR reported that these populations suffer from insecurity and restricted access to essential public services, including education, healthcare, water, electricity, and employment opportunities, compounded by damage to their homes in their areas of origin. The UNHCR further emphasized that the ongoing needs of forcibly displaced populations in Iraq are predominantly associated with socio-economic challenges, human rights issues, and the absence of the rule of law, rather than displacement status alone. Addressing these needs effectively requires sustainable development approaches, which involve strengthening national efforts and enhancing the capacity of public service providers to deliver protection and other services. This strategy also includes promoting the integration of refugees into social protection programs, advocating for improved access to labor markets and livelihood opportunities for refugees and internally displaced persons, and transitioning from a humanitarian response to a development-oriented approach, as undertaken by the UNHCR and its partners (UNHCR, 2024, October 9).

According to a 2024 report by Human Rights Watch on human rights in Iraq, Iraqi Army forces and the US-led International Military Coalition successfully reclaimed the last territories previously controlled by ISIS. The report estimated that approximately 1.1 million Iraqi displaced persons originated from these areas, with the majority residing in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The Iraqi Council of Ministers designated June 30, 2024, as the deadline for closing the final displacement camp in the Kurdistan Region to encourage return. The Ministry of Migration and Displaced announced a package of aid and incentives for returnees, including a one-time payment of four million Iraqi dinars (approximately 3,000 USD) per family, employment opportunities within the government, social security benefits, and interest-free loans for small enterprises. The report also indicated that between April and August 2024, 7,699 families departed displacement camps, primarily returning to the governorates of Nīnawá and Šalāḥ-al-Dīn. However, the organization expressed concern over the premature closure of displacement camps by July 30, warning that this action jeopardizes the rights of displaced persons amid ongoing security challenges, delayed reconstruction efforts, lack of employment opportunities, unresolved property rights, and social tensions. Some families reportedly fear retaliation or persecution by local communities that associate them with ISIS (HRW, 2025).

V. Prison and Death Penalty Sentences

The United Nations General Assembly has issued multiple resolutions, the latest dated December 17, 2024, reaffirming its condemnation of all extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions globally. These resolutions emphasize the imperative to eradicate such inhumane practices and call for immediate, effective, exhaustive, comprehensive, independent, impartial, and transparent investigations conducted with due diligence in accordance with international standards and best practices in forensic evidence (United Nations General Assembly, 2024, November 29). Despite global opposition, several countries continue to implement the death penalty. In 2023, Iraq ranked fifth worldwide in the number of known executions, following Iran, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and the United States. By 2024, Iraq advanced to third place, behind Iran and Saudi Arabia, with North Korea and the United States following, having conducted 92 executions that year (DPI, 2024).

According to the 2024 Human Rights Watch report on Iraq, the country has consistently maintained one of the highest execution rates globally. Approximately 8,000 prisoners, predominantly accused of terrorism-related offenses, remain on death row in Iraq. Executions were carried out in 2024; however, the Iraqi government did not release official statistics regarding these actions. The report further notes that the Directorate of Corrections within the Kurdistan Regional Government reported 466 individuals detained under death sentences. The regional government spokesperson indicated a *de facto* moratorium on the death penalty since 2008, permitting its application only in exceptional cases (HRW, 2025).

While the international community largely opposes the death penalty, it is not invariably retaliatory. Advocates contend that it serves as a deterrent and upholds justice and equality through retribution. Execution is viewed as commensurate with the criminal act. Life imprisonment may fail to satisfy victims' families, potentially prompting retaliatory violence if perpetrators are not executed, thereby perpetuating conflicts, particularly given documented instances of terrorist escapes from Iraqi prisons. Provided that judicial procedures are fair and based on conclusive evidence rather than solely on confessions, the death penalty may function as a deterrent. This rationale underpins recent amendments to the Amnesty Law, which include provisions for re-investigation and retrial, as reflected in ongoing legislative discussions.

VI. Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a crime that has become active in Iraq in recent years and is being recorded continuously. On July 30, 2024, the United Nations Network on Migration (UNNM) in Iraq, in a press statement marking the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, called for intensifying efforts to combat this crime. The statement indicated that despite the stability and security enjoyed by the country today after years of challenges, Iraq remains exposed to the crime of human trafficking. Although significant progress has been made since Iraq ratified the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, more efforts are needed to combat this flagrant violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The statement also mentioned that Iraq, being a source and destination country for victims of human trafficking, is particularly exposed to the risk of human trafficking, and the majority of trafficked individuals are women and children. Nevertheless, perpetrators continue to operate with impunity, exploiting new technologies, social media, and the Dark Web to avoid detection, entice potential victims, and attract potential clients for their human "commodities." Significant efforts have been made to combat human trafficking in Iraq, but the road remains long to address gaps in the field of prevention and protection for victims of human trafficking, as well as the prosecution of perpetrators. Through strong governmental measures combined with UN support, more progress can be achieved. The UNNM in Iraq called for joint action to end human trafficking, especially for all child victims, while placing the needs of survivors at the heart of prevention and response plans (UNODC, 2024).

The statement concluded by calling on the Iraqi government to strengthen its Anti-Human Trafficking Law No. 28 of 2012 to ensure respect for the rights of trafficking victims. It also urged the government to work to guarantee unconditional access to shelter for trafficking victims, including male and minor victims; to ensure victims are not criminalized under other laws, such as the residency law or the anti-prostitution law; to ensure that government mechanisms and local actors are better equipped to identify, investigate, and respond to potential human trafficking cases; and to fully analyze, understand, and address the factors contrib-

uting to child trafficking. The UNNM renewed its support for Iraq in combating this crime to address this issue for the benefit of all Iraqis (UNODC, 2024).

In the same context, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Interior, Miqdād Mīr, indicated in December 2024 that terrorist crimes had decreased by 83%, in addition to Iraq achieving advanced ranks in combating financial crimes. He noted that Iraq had attained the first rank globally in combating the crime of human trafficking, characterizing this as an international achievement that is not subject to diplomatic pleasantries (al-Jibāl, 2024, December 29).

VII. General Amnesty Law and Personal Status Law (Human Rights Controversies)

1. General Amnesty Law

On January 21, 2025, during its fifth session, the Presidency of the Iraqi Council of Representatives approved the amendment to General Amnesty Law No. 27 of 2016 as part of the political agreement accompanying the formation of the current government. The Council's presidency adopted a novel legislative approach by passing three contentious laws (General Amnesty, Personal Status, and the Restitution of Real Estate to its Owners) through a single vote. This modernized "single package" legislative method prompted some parliament members to challenge the procedure before the Federal Supreme Court, alleging violations of the effective 2005 Constitution and the Council of Representatives' Internal Rules of Procedure No. 1 of 2022. They also requested an interlocutory order to suspend the implementation of these laws pending a final decision by the Constitutional Court regarding their validity. The Court granted this request and issued the interlocutory order (3, unified with 4, 18, 19, and 21/Federal/Interlocutory Order/2025) on February 4, 2025. This decision disrupted the political consensus that had accompanied the federal government's formation, which was contingent upon passing these laws, particularly the amendment to General Amnesty Law No. 27 of 2016. However, seven days later, the Court rescinded the interlocutory order and dismissed case (23/Federal/2025) due to the plaintiff's lack of standing. Subsequently, the second amendment to the General Amnesty Law was published in the Official Gazette of Iraq as Law No. 2 of 2025.

The amendment contains several loopholes likely to eliminate legal deterrents, thereby preventing accountability for those committing the most serious crimes against national security, supreme interests, and citizens' rights, such as murder, kidnapping, and administrative corruption. These loopholes facilitate impunity and encourage perpetrators and others to repeat such offenses, confident that established legal penalties will be circumvented. Amnesty laws are inherently exceptional and temporary, applying to crimes committed in the past that were not covered by previous general amnesties. Conversely, the latest amendment applies to crimes committed prior to the amendment, as stipulated in Article 6, thereby encompassing all offenses not included in prior amnesty laws, such as Law No. 19 of 2008 and Law No. 27 of 2016, up until the amendment's effective date.

The amendment set the implementation date of its provisions as the date of the Council of Representatives' vote, in accordance with Article 8, without awaiting publication in the Official Gazette of Iraq. The underlying motives for this expedited legislation concerning the country's security, supreme interests, and public funds, without awaiting official publication, remain undisclosed. Furthermore, the amendment established that a tribal settlement, documented and signed by tribal sheikhs, shall serve as a waiver document by the complainant or their family against the perpetrator. Given the current context, where tribal settlements are sometimes imposed on those whose rights or interests were violated by the crime, in accordance with tribal customs and traditions, the release of perpetrators under this amendment without an explicit waiver from victims or their families (as required under previous amnesty laws) will likely engender a sense of injustice. The release of perpetrators without acceptable compensation, apology, or genuine reconciliation may provoke individual vendettas and exacerbate security challenges within the country.

Moreover, Law No. 2 of 2016 (the previous amnesty law) required perpetrators to repay embezzled funds to qualify for amnesty, as per Article 3. The recent amendment replaced this provision with "conducting a settlement with the damaged party." Consequently, an individual who embezzles or steals public funds can repay them through a settlement with the damaged party. This change favors corrupt individuals, demonstrates leniency toward them, undermines governmental and judicial efforts to combat corruption, encourages its persistence within government institutions, results in further squandering of public funds, and weakens the legal deterrent against administrative corruption. It also incentivizes committing such crimes in anticipation of future amnesties. Therefore, the amendment to the Amnesty Law conveys a negative social message: that justice in Iraq is ineffective and that perpetrators of administrative corruption can evade punishment as long as general amnesties are periodically issued, allowing them to settle illegally obtained amounts without full repayment.

Additionally, the previous Law No. 2 of 2016 generally excluded kidnapping crimes from amnesty. The amendment, however, limited the exclusion to kidnapping crimes resulting in the victim's death, unknown fate, or permanent disability. Perpetrators of other kidnapping offenses (those not resulting in death, unknown fate, or permanent disability) are included in the general amnesty under Article 2/Sixth of the recent amendment, despite the severity of other kidnapping forms and their detrimental impact on national security, the economy, and citizens' safety.

The previous General Amnesty Law No. 2 of 2016 generally excluded drug trafficking offenses from the scope of the general amnesty. However, the recent amendment to the General Amnesty Law incorporated such offenses, provided that the quantity of the drug substance seized in the offender's possession does not exceed 50 grams, irrespective of the purpose of possession, as stipulated in Article 2/Sixth of the recent amendment. This inclusion lacks a clear rationale for permitting individuals trafficking this quantity of drugs to evade punishment, and it remains ambiguous to what extent this provision may incentivize drug

trafficking within the specified limits. Moreover, drug traffickers may not necessarily be in possession of drugs at the time of arrest; they might successfully sell the drugs and relinquish possession prior to apprehension, thereby potentially evading punishment by exploiting the amnesty law.

The previous General Amnesty Law No. 2 of 2016 vested the committee established by the Supreme Judicial Council with discretionary authority to determine whether to re-investigate or retry convicts based on statements from a secret informant or confessions from other defendants. In contrast, the recent amendment mandates that the aforementioned committee must re-investigate or retry convicts based on such statements or confessions. This mandate constitutes a blatant interference in judicial affairs and violates the principle of separation of powers enshrined in Article 47 of the effective 2005 Constitution, which states: "The federal authorities shall consist of the legislative, executive, and judicial authorities, exercising their competencies and tasks based on the principle of separation of powers."

2. Personal Status Law

Concerning the amendment to Personal Status Law No. 188 of 1959, published in the Official Gazette of Iraq as Law No. 1 of 2025, which confines personal status matters of the Shi'i Iraqis (such as marriage, divorce, custody, and inheritance) to the Shi'i Ja'fari school of jurisprudence, the amendment delegates most of its provisions to a jurisprudential code. This code is to be prepared by the Scientific Council at the Shi'i Endowment Office, with assistance from several judges and legal experts, in coordination with the State Council. The code is to be submitted to the Council of Representatives within four months of the law's enactment, with the Council obligated to approve and implement it within 30 days of receipt.

Although the amendment conditions the application of jurisprudential provisions on the consent of both spouses for marriage contracts concluded after the amendment's effective date, its application to prior contracts requires the consent of only one spouse, without necessitating mutual consent, as per Article (1) of the Law Amending the Personal Status Law No. (1) of 2025. The amendment also specifies several parameters regarding the age of marriage, polygamy, and custody that the forthcoming code must not overlook:

- **Age of Marriage:** The amendment states that no provision shall be made for any reduction, nor shall any allowance be granted that contravenes the stipulations set forth in Article (8) of the Law. This provision is ambiguous because Personal Status Law No. 188 of 1959 defines the age of marriage as 18 years in Article 7, while Article 8 (addressed by the amendment) permits marriage for individuals aged 15 and above under specified conditions. Consequently, the minimum age of marriage that the code cannot reduce or permit violation of, according to the amendment, is 15 years.
- **Polygamy:** The amendment does not explicitly address conditions for polygamy but references maintaining certain prior conditions by stating:

"Ensuring no violation of the conditions stipulated in paragraphs (4 and 5) of Article (3) of the aforementioned law." These paragraphs require prior judicial permission for polygamy, contingent upon financial capacity to support multiple wives, a legitimate interest in the new marriage, and equitable treatment among wives. Additionally, the removal of penalties for unregistered marriages in courts is likely to increase their prevalence following the amendment.

- **Custody:** Despite widespread discourse suggesting the amendment deprives wives of custody rights post-marriage, it includes the provision: "Ensuring that the mother's right to custody of the child, male or female, is not stipulated to be less than seven years." This age threshold is considered reasonable and more balanced toward the husband compared to Article 57 of Personal Status Law No. 188 of 1959, which grants custody to the mother until the child reaches fifteen years, after which the child may choose to reside with either parent or a relative until reaching eighteen years.

VIII. The Gender Crisis

On April 27, 2024, the Iraqi Council of Representatives enacted Law No. 15 of 2024 (the First Amendment to the Anti-Prostitution Law No. 8 of 1988), as published in the Official Gazette of Iraq (No. 4781, 2024). This amendment criminalizes homosexual acts, effeminacy, and biological sex reassignment, except in cases of congenital malformation, alongside wife-swapping for sexual purposes. It prescribes stringent penalties, including imprisonment ranging from 10 to 15 years for individuals engaging in homosexual relations, and imprisonment up to seven years accompanied by fines of 10 to 15 million dinars for those promoting or facilitating such acts.

The amendment further introduces penalties for individuals proven to engage in prostitution, stipulating imprisonment not exceeding seven years and fines between 3 and 5 million dinars. Previously, Article 4 mandated placement in reformatories designated for the guidance and rehabilitation of women for periods ranging from three months to two years. Additionally, the amendment prescribes imprisonment up to seven years, fines ranging from 5 to 15 million dinars, and confiscation of movable and immovable property used in the commission of procuring, thereby repealing Revolutionary Command Council Decree No. 234 of 2001, which had imposed the death penalty for procuring. Penalties for effeminacy or its promotion include imprisonment from one to three years and fines of 10 to 15 million dinars. The amendment categorizes crimes related to prostitution, homosexuality, sex reassignment, and their promotion as offenses involving "moral turpitude." Any public official or individual holding a public service position convicted under these provisions shall be dismissed from their post by operation of law.

A significant critique of the amendment to Law No. 8 of 1988 concerns its lack of specificity regarding the forms of criminalized effeminacy. The amendment vaguely refers to “every intentional practice of mimicking women,” excluding considerations for acting purposes, without clarifying criteria for determining such mimicry, such as whether it encompasses wearing makeup or specific attire. Moreover, it omits criminalization of women mimicking men. Concerning the newly criminalized act of “wife-swapping,” classified among queerness offenses, the amendment fails to specify whether culpability extends to both spouses or solely to husbands.

International human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch, have expressed concern over the amendment, particularly its prohibition and punishment of individuals accused of mimicking women and promoting homosexuality. However, Human Rights Watch’s concerns also underscore the amendment’s justification: Iraq possesses distinct religious, moral, and social customs and values that reject manifestations of effeminacy and homosexuality. Consequently, criminalizing these behaviors within legal frameworks aims to curtail practices occurring outside state and legal oversight. Iraqi society broadly rejects such behaviors. Legal provisions function as social conduct regulations responsive to social circumstances and needs; they serve corrective purposes by regulating individual behavior and maintaining social order.

IX. Agenda for 2025

Despite the efforts exerted by the government and parliament to safeguard human rights in Iraq, the practical reality necessitates further implementation of standards and guarantees to ensure the optimal protection and exercise of these rights, particularly given the challenges currently faced by the country. Consequently, additional efforts are required in 2025 and subsequent years, which are outlined as follows:

1. **Expediting the election of the Board of Commissioners for the Independent High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR):** This measure is essential to guarantee the commission’s operational continuity and to enhance its international reputation as an independent national institution dedicated to human rights protection and the fulfillment of its international obligations. It also aims to address the legal vacuum that has hindered effective monitoring and follow-up on human rights issues in Iraq.
2. **Reforming oversight of the Ministry of Justice:** The current appointment of the Minister of Justice to supervise the administrative and financial affairs of the IHCHR compromises the commission’s independence from the executive branch, resulting in operational paralysis. This situation led the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) to downgrade the accreditation of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights to “B” status under Article 1.18 of the GANHRI Statute. Rectifying this issue requires the Council of Represen-

Table 6-1: Domestic Violence Cases (January 1, 2024 - May 1, 2024).

No.	Cases	Number
1	Total number of cases	13,857
2	Number of those released on bail	3,101
3	Number of convicted persons (sentences issued)	100
4	Number of those acquitted	1,196
5	Reconciliation and mutual consent	4,400
6	Under procedure	1,500
7	Number of reviews	3,550

Table 6-2: Percentage of Domestic Violence Crimes (January 1, 2024 - May 1, 2024).

No.	Domestic Violence Crimes	Percentage
1	Recorded in Baghdād	31%
2	Recorded in Şalāḥ-al-Dīn Governorate	5%
3	Assaults against females	73%
4	Assaults against males	27%
5	Physical violence cases	46%
6	Sexual assault	16%

tatives to elect the commission’s board and eliminate political party influence to maintain Iraq’s “A” status in accordance with the GANHRI Statute.

3. **Resolving cases of unlawful assaults:** These assaults, targeting demonstrators, critics, and activists, must be addressed through prompt, independent, and transparent investigations and judicial proceedings.
4. **Establishing clear and explicit standards for content offensive to public decency or morality:** Such content, disseminated via social media, should be regulated without undermining freedom of public opinion or the criticism of corruption and poor political practices. The Iraqi Council of Representatives, as the legislative authority, should legislate these standards in adherence to constitutional principles, the separation of powers, and the principle of legality.
5. **Addressing the issue of internally displaced persons and refugees:** This involves providing adequate resources to meet their needs and facilitating their voluntary return to their original areas, contingent upon the restoration of basic services and infrastructure in regions affected by post-conflict challenges.
6. **Accelerating the enactment of the Anti-Domestic Violence Law:** This legislation is necessary to eradicate violence against women and children through explicit and unequivocal provisions that ensure their protection. It should also address child labor, exploitation, and abuse, and mitigate social violence stemming from misinterpretations of religion, unemployment, and unregulated social media exposure, which have contributed to increased illicit relationships outside the marital framework and consequent infidelity cases.

7. **Mandating Iraqi authorities to fulfill their constitutional, national, and moral responsibilities:** This includes preventing violations of public freedoms and rigorously confronting offenders, particularly concerning the freedoms of peaceful assembly, expression, and the press, while respecting the national, religious, moral, and social values of individuals.

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7. Public Services

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The public services sector in Iraq during 2024 reflects persistent structural challenges that have been deeply rooted due to decades of political instability, security conflicts, and economic and environmental crises. Various public services (including health, education, housing, electricity, water, sanitation, transportation, and communications) continue to experience significant disparities between planned initiatives and actual implementation, as well as between social needs and the services effectively provided.

Within this framework, data from the 2024 government program indicate ongoing governmental efforts to enhance service delivery through the initiation of new projects, infrastructure rehabilitation, and partnerships with international firms in sectors such as electricity, energy, transportation, and housing. However, the completion rate of these projects remains limited, with only approximately 5.6% of 128 projects fully realized, while about 20% have yet to commence.

Regarding the electricity sector, despite investments exceeding 81 billion USD since 2005, Iraq continues to face a substantial deficit in meeting rising demand, with a shortfall estimated at approximately 11,000 megawatts in 2024. In the water sector, Iraq is confronted with a severe decline in water resources, with water storage levels reaching approximately 10 billion cubic meters by mid-2025 (the lowest in decades) highlighting an ongoing crisis in potable water provision. The housing sector faces a deficit exceeding three million units, compounded by the persistence of informal settlements and escalating real estate prices, underscoring the urgent need to expand housing programs and support concessional loans. In the health sector, despite efforts to rehabilitate hospitals and construct new health centers, the system continues to suffer from shortages of personnel and equipment, alongside disparities in service quality across governorates. Additionally, the waste management and environmental pollution crisis is pronounced, with waste production exceeding 4.4 million tons in 2024 amid inadequate collection, treatment, and recycling capacities, adversely affecting public health and urban environments.

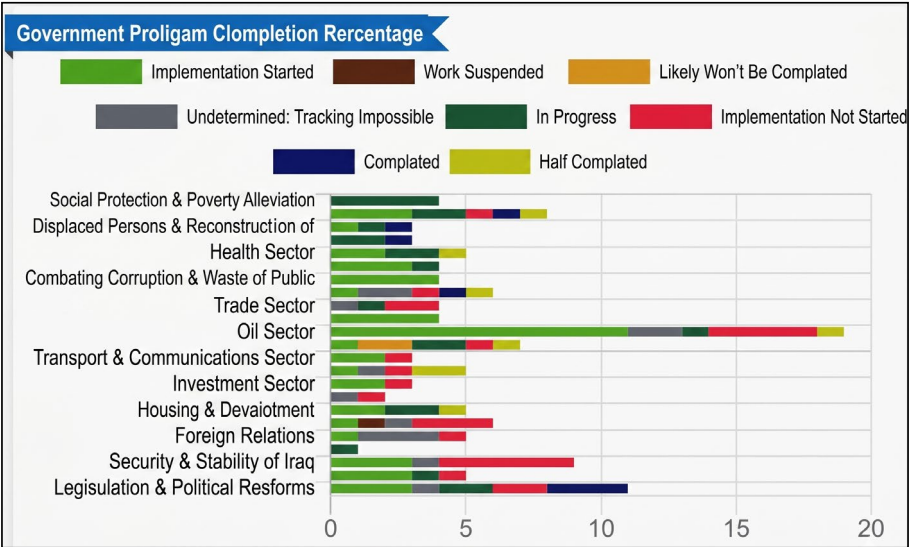
I. General Evaluation of the Government Performance for 2024

The overall performance of the government led by Muḥammad Shiyā' al-Sūdānī (the eighth government) in 2024 can be assessed through Figure 7-1, which depicts the completion rates of its government program up to the end of 2024. This figure categorizes the program's projects into eight indicators: Completed, Half-completed, Undefined (implementation cannot be tracked), Under implementation, Implementation not yet begun, Implementation begun, Work suspended, and Unlikely to be completed. The program encompasses twelve fundamental pillars:

1. **Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation:** Encompasses initiatives aimed at enhancing social assistance and reducing poverty.
2. **Displaced Persons and Reconstruction of Liberated Areas:** Focuses on the rehabilitation of conflict-affected regions and support for displaced populations.
3. **Health Sector.**
4. **Combating Corruption and Public Fund Waste:** Pertains to measures addressing corruption and promoting transparency.
5. **Trade Sector.**
6. **Oil Sector:** Involves the advancement of oil and gas projects.
7. **Transport and Communications:** Concerns the enhancement of transportation and communication infrastructures.
8. **Investment Sector.**
9. **Population and Development:** Includes housing construction and urban development projects.
10. **Foreign Relations.**
11. **Security and Stability of Iraq.**
12. **Legislation and Political Reforms:** Encompasses efforts to improve the legal framework.

Analysis of the figure reveals that key sectors such as oil and electricity exhibit notable activity with higher completion rates relative to other sectors. Conversely, sectors including anti-corruption, housing, and transport demonstrate limited progress, with numerous projects yet to commence. The security and stability of Iraq, alongside legislation and political reforms, are characterized by project suspensions and a substantial proportion of projects not yet initiated. Consequently, the figure highlights a significant disparity between the projects planned within the government program and those completed. A considerable proportion of projects are "Under implementation," accounting for 17.6%, indicating ongoing efforts on numerous projects that remain incomplete due to various factors. Projects not yet initiated constitute 20%, underscoring a notable gap between planned and executed initiatives. The proportion of completed projects is modest, repre-

Figure 7-1: Completion rates of al-Sūdānī government's program until the end of 2024.



Source: Government Observatory: Open Data (The Eighth Government). Accessed January 22, 2025: <https://www.gop-iraq.org/>.

Table 7-1: Implementation Rates of the Government Program for 2023 and 2024.

Status	2023	2024	Change
Completed	6	7	1
Unlikely to be completed	2	2	0
Likely to be completed	1	0	(1)*
Half-completed	8	8	0
Implementation begun	40	48	8
Under implementation	24	22	(2)*
Implementation not yet begun	30	25	(5)*
Undefined (cannot track implementation)	15	13	(2)*

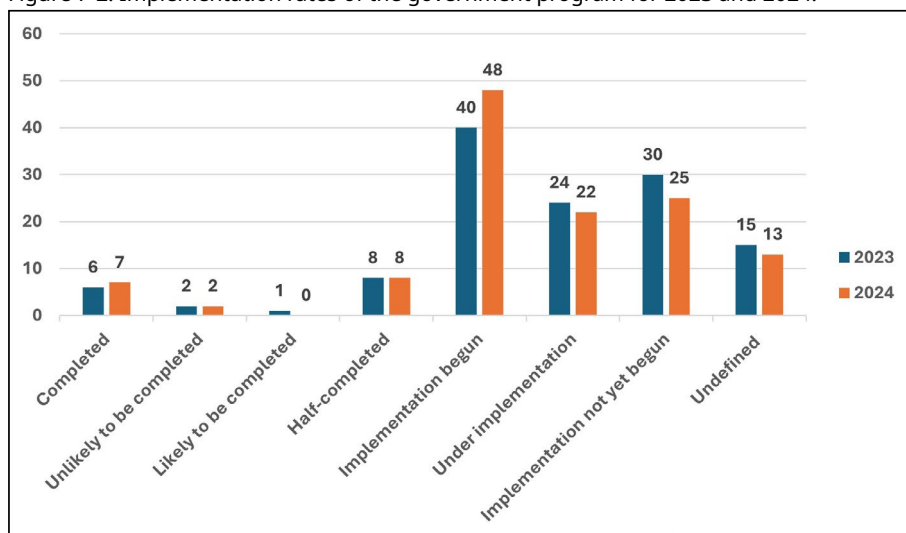
(*) Numbers in parentheses indicate negative values.

Source: Researcher's analysis based on Open Data, The Eighth Government (al-Sūdānī 2022–2024), available at: <https://www.gop-iraq.org/opendatashow>. Accessed January 22, 2025.

senting 5.6% of a total of 128 projects. Additionally, undefined projects, where implementation tracking is unfeasible, constitute 10.4%, reflecting challenges or issues that hinder monitoring.

Table 7-1 presents the implementation rates of the government program for 2023 and 2024, illustrating an increase in completed projects and those with initiated implementation, alongside a decrease in undefined projects and those not yet started. Conversely, half-completed projects remain stable, projects unlikely to be completed remain unchanged, and projects under implementation show a slight decline.

Figure 7-2: Implementation rates of the government program for 2023 and 2024.



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the data in Table 7-1.

II. Electricity: Promising Opportunities and Rooted Obstacles

Services are generally distinguished from goods in that goods are tangible objects that can be produced, sold, or stored for later use, whereas services are intangible and perishable, created and consumed simultaneously or nearly so (Haksever & Render, 2018, pp. 3-5). Electrical energy constitutes one of the most vital services, directly influencing the lives of the population and various economic sectors. Despite many countries leveraging their energy potential to advance social development, Iraq continues to grapple with a persistent electricity crisis characterized by a significant imbalance between supply and demand. The nation's electricity generation capacity, derived from both domestic production and imports, fails to meet the rapidly escalating demand, which the International Energy Agency (IEA) projects will double by 2030 (Jamal, 2025, p. 4).

Given that electricity is generated at specific locations and cannot be stored for future use, supply must consistently align with immediate demand. Efficient electricity generation hinges on two critical factors:

- Adequate infrastructure to ensure sufficient production capacity.
- Reliable and consistent supplies of fuel and resources to sustain operations. Most power plants in Iraq depend on natural gas and oil as primary energy sources; however, these facilities have experienced low efficiency and output.

1. Improvement and Decline in Supply Hours

In recent years, Iraq has observed a relative improvement in electricity supply hours due to increased investments in power generation plants, enhancements

Table 7-2: Actual and Expected Production and Demand for Electrical Energy in Iraq (2022–2030) (in thousands of Megawatts).

Year	Actual and Expected Production	Expected Demand	Gap	Production to Total Demand Ratio (%)
2022	20.5	33	-12.5	62.12
2023	18	34	-16	52.94
2024	24	35	-11	68.57
2025	32	36.7	-4.7	87.19
2026	35	37	-2	94.59
2027	39	38.7	0.3	100.78
2028	42	41.3	0.7	101.69
2029	45	43.3	1.7	103.93
2030	48	44	4	109.09

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on: Bakhit, 2024, p. 188; Istepanian & Raydan, 2022, p. 11.

in distribution networks, and the adoption of modern technologies to monitor and optimize the electrical grid's efficiency, thereby reducing energy losses and improving distribution. Since 2005, Iraq has invested approximately 81 billion USD in the electricity sector. Despite this substantial expenditure, improvements in supply hours have been modest, as the country continues to face a severe electricity shortage, indicating persistent challenges within the sector. The Iraq Energy Institute estimates that investments exceeding 8 to 10 billion USD will be necessary between 2020 and 2025 to modernize transmission and distribution infrastructure. These funds are intended for replacing outdated power lines, rehabilitating substations, and installing smart energy meters, which are fundamental components of smart grids. A smart grid integrates energy distribution with digital communication technology, enabling two-way data flow.

According to reports from the Ministry of Electricity, electricity demand surpassed 35,000 megawatts, while actual production did not exceed 24,000 megawatts, resulting in a deficit of 11,000 megawatts. This shortfall has led to reduced supply hours for citizens, particularly during peak periods and high temperatures when demand increases due to air conditioning use. During certain intervals, especially in the hot summer months, supply hours declined. Table 7-2 presents actual and expected production and demand for electrical energy in Iraq.

In October 2024, the General Company for Central Electricity Distribution announced a smart transformation project for the electrical grid, aiming to increase energy supply hours to more than 20 hours per day. This initiative includes upgrading the electrical grid infrastructure, both underground and overhead, to enhance efficiency and reliability. Additionally, the project seeks to facilitate communication between the company and citizens through electronic applications and modern social media platforms, such as WhatsApp, enabling timely notifications regarding energy supply and billing.

2. Iraq's Electricity Sector and International Collaborations: Companies and Agreements

Since 2017, Iraq has increasingly depended on importing electricity and natural gas from Iran, which has contributed to enhancing the national grid's capacity to supply electrical power and alleviating energy shortages. However, this reliance has imposed a significant financial burden on Iraq, as it pays 8 USD per million British Thermal Units (BTU) for Iranian natural gas (al-Aloosy, 2022), whereas the estimated cost of domestic gas production is less than 2 USD per million BTU. This dependency was further solidified in March 2024, when the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity and the state-owned National Iranian Gas Company signed a five-year agreement to supply up to 50 million cubic meters of gas per day.

Iraq has sought to collaborate with international companies to improve its electricity sector. In May 2024, cooperation was established between the Ministries of Electricity and Oil to double electricity production from the al-Anbār gas power plant by resuming work with the Chinese company SEPCO III. The plant is projected to add approximately 1,640 megawatts to the national grid by mid-2025. Furthermore, in December 2024, the Ministry of Electricity developed a four-pillar plan to support the distribution sector, including enhancing plant efficiency and securing alternative fuel sources to Iranian gas, with the aim of improving the stability of the electrical system. Currently, the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity maintains contracts with several international energy companies, including:

- a. **Agreement with the German company Siemens:** This agreement aims to develop electricity infrastructure, increase production capacity, improve grid efficiency, and reduce energy losses through the construction of new power plants, modernization of existing facilities, and development of transmission and distribution networks.
- b. **Agreement with the American company General Electric (GE):** This collaboration focuses on increasing production capacity and enhancing grid efficiency through the construction of new power plants and modernization of existing ones. In April 2024, an agreement was reached to modernize and develop gas plants and recover wasted energy from existing units, thereby contributing to improved energy production efficiency.
- c. **Agreement with the Japanese Toyota Tsusho Corporation:** This agreement aims to develop the networks and capacities of the electrical system through the company's financing and implementation of several projects in the production, transmission, and distribution sectors.
- d. **Smart Transformation Project for Electrical Energy:** In October 2024, the Ministry of Electricity signed contracts with several specialized companies to implement the smart energy transformation project in four governorates as a first phase. This project seeks to provide continuous 24-hour electrical service and immediate maintenance, with the goal of enhancing service quality for citizens.

- e. **Natural Gas Supply Agreement with Turkmenistan:** In October 2024, the Ministry of Electricity signed an agreement with Turkmenistan to import natural gas in quantities up to 20 million cubic meters per day via Iran. This agreement aims to meet the needs of power plants in Iraq and ensure the stability of energy supplies amidst fluctuations in Iranian gas availability and American pressure on Iraq to curtail Iranian gas imports.
- f. **Solar Energy Project with TotalEnergies and QatarEnergy:** In October 2024, QatarEnergy announced its acquisition of a 50% stake in a 1.25-gigawatt solar power project in Iraq, in partnership with the French oil and gas group TotalEnergies. This project is part of the Gas Growth Integrated Project (GGIP) initiative in Iraq, which aims to improve electricity supplies and reduce reliance on imports.

Additional energy agreements exist with Arab and international companies, including an agreement with the Algerian company SONELGAZ to construct power plants and develop transmission networks; an agreement with the Egyptian Orascom Construction to enhance the electrical grid and increase production capacity; as well as agreements with the Japanese Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, the British Petrofac, and the Swiss ABB, among others, for the supply of electrical equipment and grid modernization.

3. Development of Sustainable Energy

Iraq's electricity challenges primarily stem from its heavy dependence on fossil fuels for power generation, a strategy increasingly at odds with the global transition toward sustainable energy sources. This reliance on volatile resources exposes Iraq to fluctuations in international oil and gas prices, which directly affect its fiscal revenues. Moreover, inefficiencies in the transmission and distribution sectors exacerbate the crisis. Technical and commercial losses have created significant bottlenecks in the energy supply chain, as efforts have predominantly focused on expanding generation capacity rather than upgrading transmission and distribution infrastructure.

A contributing factor to Iraq's electricity issues is the underutilization of renewable energy resources. Given the country's substantial solar radiation, particularly in its western and southern regions, over half of Iraq has the potential to harness solar power. Meeting the increasing electricity demand through cost-effective and self-sufficient solar energy is feasible. Currently, solar, wind, and biomass energies remain underexploited despite their considerable potential to contribute to Iraq's renewable energy future. Additionally, offshore wind energy in the Gulf region near al-Baṣrah presents untapped opportunities for development.

Research indicates that the capital, Baghdad, receives more than 3,000 hours of solar radiation annually, with solar intensity varying from 416 W/m² in January to 833 W/m² in July. Previous Iraqi initiatives employing photovoltaic (PV) cells for street lighting were unsuccessful due to the low quality of cells and their unsuitability for Iraq's climate, which is characterized by frequent dust storms. Furthermore, solar panels exhibit reduced efficiency at high temperatures, particularly

during midday. These challenges can be addressed by utilizing high-quality PV cells adapted to Iraq's climatic conditions, benefiting from recent advancements in solar technology.

Regarding wind energy, Iraq can be divided into three distinct regions based on wind speed. The first region, covering 48% of the country, experiences wind speeds between two and three meters per second and includes most northern areas such as Duhok, al-Mawṣil, Erbil, Tikrīt, and al-Sulaymānīyah, as well as parts of Diyālā and al-Dīwānīyah. The second region, comprising 35% of Iraq's territory, has wind speeds ranging from 3.1 to 4.9 meters per second and includes Baghdād, al-Ruṭbah, and al-'Amārah, where geographical conditions favor higher wind speeds. The third region, accounting for 8% of the area, experiences wind speeds exceeding five meters per second and encompasses al-Nāṣirīyah and al-Baṣrah, making these locations suitable for wind energy exploitation with current technologies.

Biomass, derived from organic plant or animal matter, is a significant renewable energy resource. It can be combusted directly to produce heat and electricity or converted into various biofuels. The terms biomass and biofuel are often used interchangeably due to their conceptual similarities. According to official definitions from the United States and the European Union, biofuel refers to any fuel convertible into liquid or gas for vehicle propulsion. Solid biofuels, including firewood, wood chips, and pellets, consist of raw or processed biological organic matter used for energy. Diesel fuel, commonly termed "biodiesel," is derived from vegetable or animal fats. Despite the substantial potential of biomass resources, Iraq has yet to exploit this renewable energy source (Saleh et al., 2022, pp. 38-42).

Iraq adopted its first National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP) in 2013 and has been a member of the Regional Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (RCREEE) since 2008. The government aims to generate between 2.24 and 7.5 gigawatts of electricity from renewable sources by 2025, with plans to add 12 gigawatts of solar energy capacity by 2030 (MCEDD, 2024). However, Iraq faces challenges including the absence of a coherent solar energy policy, a weak legal framework, and difficulties attracting foreign investment due to administrative bureaucracy. Concurrently, the government must balance its ambitions for a diversified energy portfolio with priorities such as distribution, transmission, fee collection, and infrastructure reconstruction. The solar energy sector is a particular focus, with projections indicating it will supply half of Iraq's electricity by 2050. In 2023, Iraq signed a contract with the French company TotalEnergies to develop solar energy infrastructure by installing millions of solar panels near al-Baṣrah for a 1-gigawatt photovoltaic power plant. Additionally, initiatives to improve energy efficiency in government buildings have commenced, covering 165 buildings nationwide, including the Governmental Palace. Numerous other solar projects are currently in the bidding phase.

4. Challenges Facing the Electricity Sector in 2024

The electricity sector in Iraq has encountered persistent challenges over several decades, leading to reduced supply hours and instability in electrical current reliability. The public sector continues to dominate this sector, contributing approximately 70% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Ministry of Planning, 2024, p. 13). In 2024, these challenges remained prevalent; reports indicate that the insufficient availability of electricity results in direct economic losses estimated at billions of dollars annually across multiple economic sectors. Moreover, citizens endure frequent outages and a significant shortage in electricity supply hours, a crisis intensified by corruption and mismanagement. In December 2024, the Ministry of Electricity introduced a four-pillar strategy to bolster the distribution sector, focusing on enhancing plant efficiency and securing alternative fuel sources to Iranian gas, with the objective of stabilizing the electrical system.

A notable issue within the electricity sector is the flaring of associated gas. Of the approximately 3.55 billion cubic feet per day of gas produced in Iraq, 2.1 billion cubic feet per day are captured, whereas 1.4 billion cubic feet are flared.

Financial constraints also impede electrical energy projects. Iraq faces substantial operational expenditures within the 2023–2025 budgets, complicating the government's capacity to allocate sufficient funding to the energy sector, particularly given a projected deficit of approximately 65 trillion dinars.

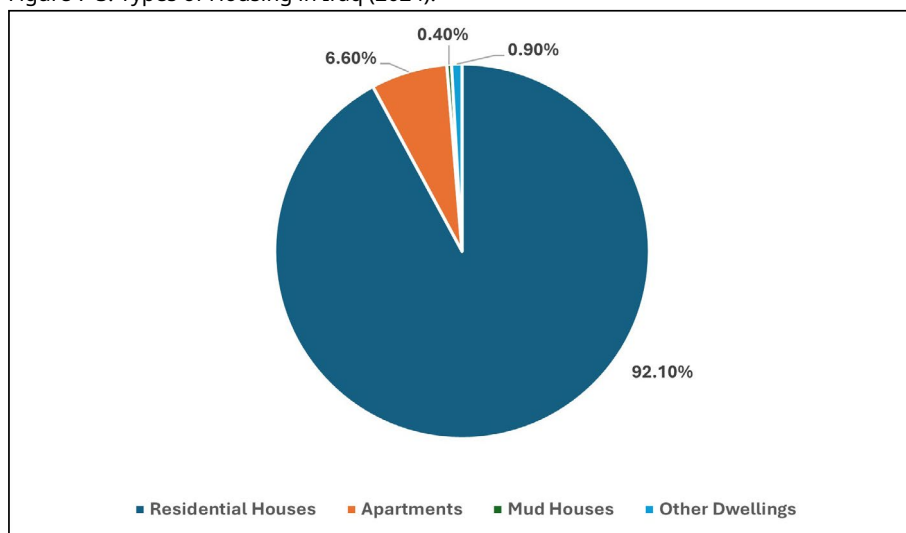
III. Construction and Housing: Achievements and Challenges

1. Reality of the Housing Sector in Iraq

The housing issue in Iraq constitutes a major social, economic, and political challenge, characterized by its complexity due to intertwined economic, social, and administrative factors. These challenges have been compounded by the historical context the country has experienced over several decades. Since the 1950s, the Iraqi housing sector has encountered cumulative difficulties, which intensified notably from the mid-1980s onward, coinciding with the Iraq-Iran War (1980–1988), the Gulf War in 1991, and the imposition of international sanctions from 1990 to 2003. The post-2003 period further exacerbated these issues, marked by the proliferation of terrorism, occupation, and widespread administrative and financial corruption.

According to data from the Ministry of Construction, Housing, Municipalities, and Public Works, Iraq currently faces a housing deficit exceeding three million units. Projections suggest that approximately 150,000 housing units must be constructed annually to accommodate the growing population, which increases by about one million individuals each year. Urban homeownership rates remain low, while informal settlements have expanded significantly, with over 4,000 irregular residential sites identified nationwide.

Figure 7-3: Types of Housing in Iraq (2024).



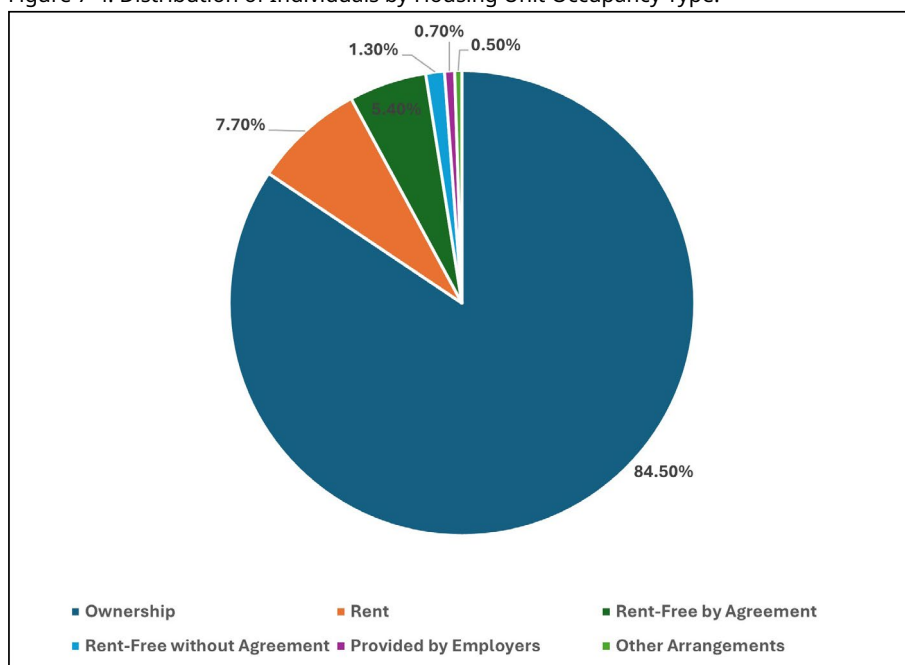
The 2024 census reports approximately 8.04 million dwellings in Iraq, of which 92.1% are residential houses, 0.4% are mud houses predominantly located in rural and peri-urban informal settlements, and 6.6% are apartments (vertical housing). The remaining 0.9% comprise rest houses, caravans, tents, tents, reed huts, and shacks. Recent statistics (CSO, 2022) indicate that 84.5% of the population owns the housing units they occupy, demonstrating a predominant reliance on direct ownership. Other occupancy arrangements include:

- 7.7% residing in rented housing units.
- 5.4% living in housing units free of charge through agreements with owners.
- 1.3% occupying housing units informally without owner agreements.
- 0.7% residing in employer-provided housing.
- 0.5% utilizing alternative housing forms, such as caravans or temporary shelters.

These data underscore the semi-traditional nature of housing ownership, while simultaneously revealing a substantial portion of the population dependent on unstable or informal housing arrangements. This situation highlights vulnerabilities within the housing sector and underscores the imperative for comprehensive planning and legislative reforms to promote equitable access to housing.

The intensification of the housing crisis in Iraq can be attributed to multiple factors, including a high annual population growth rate of 2.33% as reported in the 2024 census (CSO, 2024). Additional contributing elements encompass inadequate urban planning, characterized by the absence of integrated housing policies over several decades and poor coordination between planning and executive bodies. Moreover, the private sector's involvement remains limited, and foreign

Figure 7-4: Distribution of Individuals by Housing Unit Occupancy Type.



Source: Researcher's work based on: CSO, 2022, p. 28.

investors exhibit reluctance to participate in housing projects due to bureaucratic obstacles and market instability. Financial resources allocated to the housing sector have been insufficient, with investment expenditures in annual budgets failing to correspond to the magnitude of the problem. Furthermore, delays in land allocation suitable for housing, complex legal frameworks, and inadequate infrastructure in many designated areas (where land often lacks essential utilities) compound the challenges. Lastly, speculative practices in residential complexes, locally termed *al-taṭlū'ah* (Property flipping), whereby speculators resell units at inflated prices, further exacerbate the housing difficulties.

2. Achievements of the Housing Sector

The federal government, alongside local governments, has attempted to mitigate the housing crisis in Iraq through a series of measures and initiatives. These included launching new residential city projects, such as 'Alī al-Wardī City in Baghdād and other cities in the governorates of Maysān and al-Muthanná, as well as the "Rent-to-Own" initiative aimed at enabling citizens to gradually own housing units through a lease-to-own system. These efforts also involved raising the ceiling of housing loans granted by the Iraq Housing Fund to sixty million Iraqi dinars. These loans are granted interest-free and disbursed in three installments coinciding with various construction stages. Additionally, several supported housing projects were implemented through the National Investment Commission, targeting support for low- and middle-income groups.

These measures have yielded tangible results, manifested in the rise in the number of licenses granted for building new housing units across various Iraqi governorates, an increase in completed projects and executed housing units, and a rise in the number of loans granted by the Housing Fund. The Fund announced the allocation of approximately nine hundred billion Iraqi dinars during 2024, distributed over more than sixteen thousand lending transactions. Currently, in 2024, the Ministry of Construction, Housing, Municipalities, and Public Works oversees sixteen ongoing residential projects under the management of the Housing Department, comprising a total of 7,691 housing units. These fall within low-cost housing initiatives aimed at narrowing the housing gap in the country. The Ministry also reported that it completed more than 270 projects in various sectors, including housing, during the period from 2022 to 2024 (Erem Business, 2024, December 22).

3. Challenges of the Housing Sector

The housing sector in Iraq continues to face significant and persistent challenges that have intensified over recent years. Key issues include (Ministry of Planning, 2024, pp. 107-109):

- Subdivision of housing units into excessively small areas, which exacerbates pressure on infrastructure services.
- Presence of multiple government entities involved in land and housing matters complicates the development of cohesive and unified housing policies.
- Financial constraints limit the capacity to fund the construction of affordable residential complexes for low-income populations.
- Delays in the completion of essential infrastructure projects for residential subdivisions persist, with some areas remaining either unserved or only partially serviced.
- Encroachments and the construction of housing units on agricultural and unserved lands have resulted in extensive informal housing clusters that lack basic services and adequate housing standards. These clusters impose additional burdens on urban services, particularly in the capital, Baghdād, and contribute to the degradation of surrounding vegetation.
- Traditional building practices often neglect environmental considerations and climate change impacts, failing to incorporate effective insulating materials.
- Real estate speculation and the uncontrolled escalation of land and housing prices continue to hinder homeownership opportunities for low- and middle-income groups, despite governmental attempts to regulate these trends.
- High population growth rate necessitates the annual addition of approximately 150,000 new housing units to accommodate demographic increases.

- Many government housing projects initiated in previous years have experienced delays or suspensions due to administrative corruption, inadequate planning, and insufficient funding.

IV. Health Services

During the 1980s, Iraq maintained a relatively advanced health system within the Eastern Mediterranean region. However, prolonged periods of conflict, economic sanctions, terrorism, financial crises, and underfunding have severely compromised the health infrastructure and eroded public confidence (WHO, 2024b, p. 4). Health facilities are predominantly located in areas developed during the 1970s and 1980s, whereas neighborhoods established subsequently face significant disparities in healthcare access. Given that the distribution of public and private hospitals correlates with population density, these facilities are concentrated in urban centers, leaving rural populations underserved. This situation presents considerable challenges for residents of dispersed villages spanning 10 to 15 kilometers, who often rely on a single, inadequately equipped hospital (UK Home Office, 2024).

The Iraqi healthcare system comprises both public and private sector facilities, offering a range of services to the population. Private healthcare generally provides superior quality and reduced waiting times but remains financially inaccessible to many. Conversely, public hospitals and clinics charge nominal fees for consultations and dispense medications at substantially lower costs. Public hospitals have also introduced a “semi-private” surgical option, enabling patients to access surgeries at approximately half the cost of standard public healthcare, targeting individuals with limited financial resources or facing economic hardship. Notably, intensive care services are provided free of charge in such cases. Nonetheless, these provisions do not guarantee universal accessibility within the public sector, as patients frequently encounter prolonged waiting periods, particularly in major cities and specialized medical fields.

Although much of the health infrastructure has undergone rehabilitation and service availability has improved in recent years, many governorates continue to experience shortages that adversely affect healthcare quality. The standard of care is often contingent upon the condition of local facilities (IOM, 2024, p. 1).

The health sector in Iraq is potentially undergoing a substantial transformation, propelled by investments from both public and private entities aimed at infrastructure modernization and reconstruction. Despite persistent challenges, governmental efforts focus on enhancing healthcare services and improving accessibility. These initiatives include renovating existing hospitals and clinics and constructing new facilities to accommodate growing healthcare demands. Iraq currently has 347 hospitals, comprising 229 public and 118 private institutions. However, the majority of public hospitals urgently require modern medical equipment and technologies to enhance diagnostic and therapeutic capacities and address increasing service demands. Estimates for 2024 indicate that 40% of

hospitals lack advanced diagnostic tools, despite an annual medical equipment expenditure of approximately 500 million USD, projected to increase by 15% annually (Mohammed, 2024, p. 5).

1. Key Health Indicators in Iraq for 2024

- Physician density is reported at 0.8 per 1,000 individuals, which is considerably lower than the global average of 1.5 per 1,000.
- Nursing density stands at 1.6 per 1,000 individuals.
- Immunization coverage reached 75%, with an objective to attain 90% by 2025.
- The maternal mortality rate has improved to 50 deaths per 100,000 live births, compared to 84 deaths in 2010.
- Infant mortality rate (under one year) slightly decreased to 20.7 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2024 from 20.8 in 2023.
- The under-five mortality rate is estimated between 22 and 23 cases per 1,000 live births in 2024.
- Cancer incidence rate is 118.6 per 100,000 individuals, which is below the global range of 90 to 200 cases per 100,000 (IARC, n.d.).
- Cardiovascular diseases remain the leading cause of death in Iraq, accounting for 32% of total mortality.
- Life expectancy at birth is approximately 73 years in 2024, with men averaging 71.3 years and women 75.1 years.

2. Achievements

In 2024, the Iraqi government inaugurated al-Sha'b Hospital in Baghdad, the first public hospital opened in the capital in nearly four decades; no comparable facility had been constructed in Iraq since 1986. The hospital has a capacity of 246 beds and is equipped with advanced medical technologies. Additionally, 13 new hospitals, three specialized centers, two burn treatment units, and 25 kidney disease treatment centers were established across various governorates. The Ministry of Health plans to construct 16 additional hospitals, each with a capacity of 100 beds, to be managed in collaboration with specialized companies. Insurance coverage expanded in 2024 to encompass 776,000 individuals across 27 public institutions, alongside the inclusion of private healthcare providers within the national health insurance system. Furthermore, the Ministry of Health, in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), initiated a project to digitize health information. Over 5,200 health facilities were surveyed under the Health Resources and Services Availability Monitoring System (HeRAMS) to enhance data collection and its application in health planning (Sultany, 2024). Although primary healthcare remains underdeveloped, the private sector has experienced significant growth over the past decade, particularly in specialized fields such as cosmetic medicine and laboratory diagnostics.

3. Challenges

Despite the aforementioned achievements, the health sector continues to face substantial challenges, including shortages of medical personnel, especially in rural areas, disparities in service quality among governorates, and insufficient sustainable funding. Reports indicate that fewer than one-third of citizens express satisfaction with the health system’s performance, with satisfaction levels varying across regions (BTI, 2024).

Recent reports highlight notable disparities in service availability among governorates, with those in the Kurdistan Region exhibiting higher rates in certain services compared to central and southern governorates. The primary obstacles impeding medical service provision include a shortage of medical staff (68%), particularly in facilities located outside urban areas, followed by shortages of medical equipment (41%) and financial resources (35%), as detailed in Table 7-3.

Table 7-3: Key Obstacles Hindering the Provision of Medical Services in Iraq.

Obstacles	Percentage	notes
Shortage of high-level medical staff	68%	Especially in health institutions outside cities
Shortage of medical equipment	41%	
Lack of financial funding	35%	Public, private, and international funding
Shortage in vocational training	31%	
Shortage in medical supplies	31	

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on: WHO, 2024a.

V. Municipal Services

Municipal services encompass a range of fundamental provisions delivered by municipalities or local governments to inhabitants of both urban and rural regions. These services are designed to enhance quality of life, regulate the urban environment, and thereby establish a healthy, safe, and orderly setting for the populace. Additionally, they contribute to improving urban aesthetics and promoting environmental and economic sustainability. Core functions include the collection and transportation of waste and solid refuse to sanitary landfills or recycling centers, street and sidewalk cleaning, debris removal, and the upkeep of sidewalks and alleys. Furthermore, municipal services involve the issuance of building permits, enforcement of regulations, land-use planning, development and maintenance of public parks, afforestation efforts, urban beautification, market oversight, licensing of vendors, and public hygiene establishments.

In Iraq, municipal services remain deficient in numerous respects due to the country’s historical challenges, including wars, terrorism, political conflicts, mismanagement, and entrenched economic and administrative corruption. These challenges are exacerbated by substantial demographic pressures, evidenced by a population growth rate of 2.33% as reported in the 2024 census,

alongside increased urban migration driven by water scarcity and land desertification resulting from drought conditions.

1. Sanitation Services

Sanitation services represent a fundamental component of technical infrastructure and are among the most essential basic technical services for any community. The advancement of wastewater treatment peaked during the twentieth century, driven by the recognition of wastewater as a potential health hazard and a nuisance in urban environments. The primary aims of an integrated sanitation system are to safeguard human health and protect the environment; however, the establishment of such systems necessitates substantial financial and institutional resources. Wastewater management in Iraq encounters numerous challenges that can be addressed through strategic planning and the implementation of appropriate policies. The deficiency of sanitation services adversely affects the urban environment and public health, as well as the social and urban development of Iraqi cities and their inhabitants. The degradation of these services is likely to result in significant economic and social consequences. Consequently, prioritizing the services sector, including sanitation, is imperative to enhance service delivery across Iraqi governorates. Moreover, it is crucial to devise strategies to secure the necessary funding to complete planned projects within designated timelines (al-Obaidi et al., 2019).

The General Directorate of Sewerage, previously under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Construction, Housing, Municipalities, and Public Works, has undergone decentralization. Authorities have been established in each Iraqi governorate (excluding those in the Kurdistan Region), operating under the administrative oversight of the Directorate of General and Local Administration within each governorate (UNICEF, 2023, p. 5). According to data from the Ministry of Construction, Housing, Municipalities, and Public Works and the Municipality of Baghdād, there are 30 central wastewater treatment plants and 29 secondary treatment plants distributed across all governorates. The majority are located in Baghdād Governorate, which contains nine plants and treatment units. The total design capacity of these facilities is approximately 2,090 thousand m³/day, whereas the volume of generated wastewater reaches 5,859 thousand m³/day. Only 1,554 thousand m³/day undergo treatment, representing 27% of the total wastewater produced.

According to the most recent official data from the Central Statistical Organization in the 2022-2023 Statistical Abstract, the public sanitation network covers a small proportion of the population, varying among Iraqi governorates. Overall, it serves less than 10% of the total population (excluding the Kurdistan Region governorates) and is predominantly concentrated in urban areas. Approximately 63% of the population relies on Septic tanks for sanitation, primarily rural residents. Those utilizing Covered drains constitute 8.4%, while approximately 17.4% depend on Open drains. A further 1.3% did not specify their sanitation method.

Many Iraqi governorates face considerable challenges in adequately treating the substantial volumes of wastewater generated (5,859 thousand m³/day), resulting in significant environmental pollution. Wastewater treatment in Iraq employs various techniques, including sedimentation, sterilization, and biological purification; however, these processes are hindered by a lack of modern equipment and technologies, insufficient funding, and the impact of administrative and financial corruption.

Wastewater sources encompass domestic, commercial, and service-related uses (such as educational institutions, hotels, and restaurants) as well as industrial and agricultural activities. Additionally, rainwater contributes to wastewater in combined drainage networks, alongside groundwater seepage.

The discharge of untreated wastewater constitutes a major environmental and public health risk. Direct release into rivers and streams without adequate treatment contaminates groundwater and surface water, particularly given the low water levels of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. This contamination poses a threat to public health, especially when wastewater originates from healthcare facilities or oil and industrial operations. The unsafe use of untreated wastewater in agriculture further jeopardizes crop safety and consumer health, compounded by issues related to wastewater accumulation, such as unpleasant odors and outbreaks of infectious diseases like cholera. Existing treatment plants exhibit limited capacity to manage large volumes of wastewater, leading to operational inefficiencies.

Addressing these challenges requires the establishment of new, highly efficient treatment plants in residential, industrial, and service areas, with connections to the public sanitation network. Furthermore, integrating villages and households into centralized sanitation systems is essential. Enhancing public awareness regarding the sustainable use of water resources constitutes a critical component of this strategy. Post-treatment, wastewater represents a vital tertiary resource in Iraq, alongside surface and groundwater, and can be utilized for agricultural irrigation or groundwater recharge (Muhammad-Ālī, 2024).

2. Waste Management Services

Waste disposal results in both direct and indirect environmental impacts, including land occupation, resource depletion, and the intensification of global warming due to methane and other greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, it contributes to water toxicity through landfill leachate and causes acidification and toxic effects from air emissions associated with incineration. While the direct impacts of waste disposal, such as land use and localized water and air pollution, constitute a measurable portion of the environmental footprint, they are relatively minor compared to their contribution to climate change when compared with other sectors like energy. Indirect environmental impacts primarily relate to resource depletion, as these consequences are linked to the extraction and processing of various resources required for producing different products, with many industries emphasizing outputs rather than inputs.

Waste management encompasses the methods and procedures designed and implemented to identify, control, and handle various types of waste from generation through disposal. Comprehensive implementation of waste management processes (including prevention, reuse, and recycling where feasible) has mitigated, and can continue to mitigate, severe environmental impacts when assessed from a life-cycle perspective, considering both direct impacts such as emissions and indirect impacts like resource exhaustion. From the standpoint of material resource efficiency, waste disposal methods such as landfilling and incineration do not represent best practices for separately collected recyclable materials and mixed municipal solid waste. Consequently, it is crucial to identify the impacts associated with these disposal methods to evaluate the environmental, economic, and social benefits derived from adopting sound waste management practices (Mubaslat, 2021, p. 1).

In Iraq, the waste management infrastructure has been severely depleted over recent decades due to economic sanctions, armed conflicts, and terrorism. Historically, waste management in Iraq relied on a basic system for collection and disposal within municipal areas. However, this system has deteriorated in recent years, resulting in limited waste collection in some urban areas and disposal frequently occurring at uncontrolled landfill sites lacking environmental licensing. This situation varies regionally; inadequate waste management poses a greater public health risk in densely populated urban areas compared to sparsely populated rural regions. Moreover, the proximity of large populations to waste disposal sites in high-density areas exacerbates health risks (al-Manshi, 2022, pp. 1-2). To safeguard public health and the environment, it is imperative to re-establish an effective waste management system that includes capacity building, training programs, private sector involvement, support for private initiatives, infrastructure development, and operational improvements, ensuring that the sector possesses adequate knowledge and fosters comprehensive community participation in environmentally sound practices.

Waste generation in Iraq increased from 3.33 million tons in 2022 to 4.41 million tons in 2024, reflecting an annual growth rate of approximately 25% between 2021 and 2024. Waste produced in Baghdād alone is estimated at around 9,000 tons per day. This increase intensifies the pressure to provide optimal waste management services; consequently, most Iraqi governorates face challenges related to waste accumulation on roads and in public spaces, a phenomenon increasingly common in many cities and neighborhoods. These areas often suffer from inadequate solid waste engineering infrastructure and a pronounced shortage of vehicles dedicated to municipal services. The waste generated comprises domestic, commercial, industrial, and medical waste, collected through rudimentary methods and subsequently transported to landfill sites. The majority of these sites are irregular, with only 28% having obtained environmental approval, and they lack effective treatment or recycling processes. This situation poses significant environmental risks with serious implications for human health. According

to the most recent data, Iraq has 87 transfer stations distributed across its governorates, of which only 14 have secured environmental approvals.

3. The Problem of Sulfur Pollution in the Iraqi Atmosphere

Sulfur pollution represents a significant air quality concern in Iraq, especially within oil-producing, industrial, and densely populated governorates. This pollution predominantly arises from the combustion of fossil fuels and their derivatives, refining activities, and emissions from electricity generators and heavy industrial facilities. Sulfur dioxide (SO₂) emissions are particularly hazardous, as they undergo atmospheric transformations into acidic particles that contribute to acid rain and adversely affect human health and the environment.

Recent years have witnessed an escalation in sulfur pollution levels, attributable to the extensive use of low-quality fuels, deteriorating infrastructure, and inadequate enforcement of environmental regulations. Major urban centers such as Baghdad and al-Basrah, which host numerous oil fields, refineries, and rudimentary brick factories, have experienced elevated sulfur dioxide concentrations surpassing internationally accepted thresholds. These elevated levels have been linked to increased incidences of respiratory ailments, ocular conditions, and aggravated cardiovascular diseases among the populace, alongside broader environmental degradation including vegetation damage and contamination of soil and water resources due to acid deposition. Despite governmental acknowledgment of the issue's gravity, interventions remain limited and insufficient, hindered by the absence of rigorous environmental monitoring and low public awareness.

According to the 2023 report by IQAir, which monitors global air quality, Iraq ranks as the sixth most polluted country in terms of atmospheric contamination. In 2024, the annual average concentration of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) in Iraq reached approximately 38.4 µg/m³, exceeding the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommended annual limit of 5 µg/m³ by a factor of 7.7. Consequently, Iraq is categorized among the most polluted nations worldwide, ranking 13th in 2024 for countries with annual PM_{2.5} concentrations above 35 µg/m³.

At the governorate level, Baghdad ranks 191st globally in 2024. The recurrent presence of sulfur odors in the capital's atmosphere is primarily attributed to the proximity of brick factories and other industrial establishments to residential areas. In response, the Baghdad Governorate Council has recommended relocating these factories to sites distant from residential zones. Furthermore, the Ministries of Health and Environment have been urged to enforce the installation of filters and other technical measures to mitigate odor dispersion due to associated health risks. Environmental pollution mapping indicates sulfur dioxide concentrations in Baghdad's atmosphere reaching approximately 60 mg/m³, resulting in noticeable sulfur-like odors. The principal sources of sulfur dioxide emissions include fossil fuel combustion near power plants, oil refineries, industrial zones, and the incineration of waste at non-compliant sites. Similarly,

al-Baṣrah Governorate experiences elevated sulfur levels due to drilling activities, crude oil extraction, associated gas flaring, and refining operations.

4. Other Services

A. Potable Water

The potable water sector in Iraq confronts numerous critical challenges, chief among them being the scarcity of water resources. By mid-2025, Iraq's water reserves had diminished to approximately 10 billion cubic meters, representing the lowest level in eight decades and falling substantially below the minimum requirement of 24 billion cubic meters necessary to meet summer demand. Moreover, water sources are affected by environmental pollution stemming from industrial and agricultural activities, compounded by inadequate infrastructure for water treatment. Additionally, water loss within distribution networks reaches up to 50% in certain regions. This predicament has been intensified by climate change, resulting in a prolonged drought lasting at least five years and a reduction in the flow of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers by as much as 50%. In some years, the inflow from these rivers has been estimated at less than 30 billion cubic meters annually, whereas Iraq requires approximately 48 billion cubic meters annually to satisfy domestic, agricultural, industrial, and service demands. Consequently, Iraq faces an annual water deficit potentially reaching 18 billion cubic meters.

Although 99.8% of the urban population has access to basic water services, the proportion of individuals receiving "safely managed drinking water" does not exceed 60% of the overall population. In rural areas, improved service coverage reaches 47.6%, while the threshold for basic service in urban centers is 94.8%. According to estimates for 2024, 76.3% of the total population obtains water for domestic use from the public network, with only 1.8% accessing water via public network taps in Iraqi governorates. Furthermore, 4.4% of the population depends on water tankers, 12% on rivers, 3.4% on open wells, and 2.2% on alternative sources. These figures are consistent with data from 2023, indicating no significant changes in 2024.

B. Traffic Decongestion Projects

The Ministry of Construction, Housing, Municipalities, and Public Works initiated a comprehensive campaign encompassing 60 traffic projects, organized into three distinct packages. The first and second packages each comprise 15 projects, whereas the third package awaits additional funding. Work on the first package commenced in March 2023, with the majority of projects reached completion by the end of 2024. Concurrently, implementation of the second package commenced, while the third package is projected for future launch. These projects are predominantly situated in the capital, Baghdad, as well as in other governorates such as Nīnawá, aiming to mitigate the prevalent traffic congestion. According to official statements from the Ministry of Construction, these initiatives are expected to enhance traffic flow by 30% to 70%, contingent upon the specific location and project type. In conjunction with these infrastructure devel-

Table 7-4: First Package of Traffic Decongestion Projects in the City of Baghdad.

No.	Project Name	Details
1	Road linking Muḥammad al-Qāsim Expressway to Kirkuk-Baghdād Street	Construction of a flyover and a main road on the Qanāt al-Jaysh road linking the bridge to the expressway via two spans.
2	Flyover linking Qanāt al-Jaysh to Muḥammad al-Qāsim Expressway	Project located at the al-Rustumīyah side with widening of adjacent roads along the path.
3	Flyover on the Army Canal (1)	Connects al-Dākhil Street toward Palestine Street (al-Muhandisin neighborhood).
4	Flyover on the Army Canal (2)	Connects the Jamīlah area with the extension of al-Jihād-Bāb al-Mu'azzam Street.
5	Street 77 Flyover	Connects Street 77 at the al-Quds-al-'Ubūr intersection.
6	al-Za'farānīyah Flyover and approaches (Gaza)	Connects al-Za'farānīyah to the al-Dawrah-al-Yūsufīyah Expressway, extending from al-sharikāt Street to Ḥārith bin Kaldah Street.
7	Qurṭubah Intersection Development	Construction of a flyover with a total length of 725 meters and a width of 19 meters, with two lanes for both directions extending along Port Said Street.
8	al-Maṣāfī Intersection Flyover	Connects the Two-Story Bridge to the Hanging Bridge with the construction of a tunnel at the Aḥmad 'Urābī Square intersection.
9	al-Dawrah-al-Sayyidiyah Intersection Flyover	Includes two bridges aimed at developing the al-Dawrah-al-Sayyidiyah intersection on the al-Ḥillah-Baghdād road.
10	New Central Bank Bridge	Connects Zaha Hadid Street on the al-Ruṣāfah side with the approaches of al-Nusūr Square on the al-Karkh side.
11	al-Nusūr Square Development Project	Development of the square and construction of two flyovers, one over the railway toward Umm al-Ṭubūl intersection; the project also includes tunnels.
12	'Adan and al-Nusūr Squares Development	Consists of two bridges, each 525 meters long and 11–14 meters wide, with approach lengths totaling 1.3 thousand meters.
13	al-Shālījīyah and al-Ṭūbjī Intersection Development	Removal of two side approaches of the four al-Ṭūbjī flyovers and construction of another U-turn flyover to improve traffic movement.
14	al-Ṭalā'ī Flyover	Connects the bridge to al-Bayjīyah Street (Street 80) near al-Turāth College, passing through the Shaykh Ma'rūf al-Karkhī cemetery and al-Muthannā Airport.
15	al-Rashīd Camp Intersection Development	Development of the al-Rashīd Camp intersection with the al-Dawrah Expressway (al-Mishin Complex) via a flyover and a tunnel.

Source: Researcher's work based on multiple official source.

opments, the Traffic Directorate has advocated for the activation of mass transit systems and the adjustment of official working hours across ministries.

Notable projects within the first package include the road connecting the Muḥammad al-Qāsim Expressway to the Kirkuk-Baghdād road, traversing the

al-Basātīn and al-Sarīdāt neighborhoods; the construction of a flyover and main road along the Qanāt al-Jaysh road, linking the bridge to the expressway canal via two spans; a flyover connecting the Qanāt al-Jaysh to the Muḥammad al-Qāsim Expressway from the al-Rustumīyah side, accompanied by the widening of adjacent roads; and a flyover on the Qanāt al-Jaysh, linking al-Dākhil Street toward Palestine Street in the al-Muhandisīn neighborhood. Table 7-4 provides detailed information regarding the first package of traffic decongestion projects.

Despite the completion of most first-package projects within Baghdād and the commencement of several second-package projects, which complement the first, some specialists argue that bridges alone do not constitute a permanent solution. Instead, they form part of an integrated system encompassing public transportation and urban planning.

In late July 2024, it was announced that an international coalition consisting of French, Spanish, and Turkish companies, supported by Deutsche Bank, secured the contract to implement the Baghdād Metro project, with an estimated cost of approximately 17.5 billion USD and an anticipated completion date of May 2029. The project comprises seven rapid transit lines covering 80% of the capital, Baghdād. It is designed to be expandable and includes both underground and elevated tracks (Sky News Arabia, 2024, July 25).

C. Transport Sector

The transport sector constitutes a critical component in facilitating and supporting other economic sectors, thereby serving as a pivotal driver of overall economic growth. Its development is intrinsically linked to the performance of other sectors. The government assumes primary responsibility for ensuring the safety and efficiency of road networks and infrastructure. The sector's condition generally mirrors the broader economic environment in Iraq. Despite considerable potential for growth and expansion, ongoing security, economic, and political challenges have constrained development in various regions.

As of 2024, Iraq's land road network extends approximately 45,990 kilometers, including about 1,200 kilometers of expressways. This network comprises 6,640 kilometers of main roads, 8,829 kilometers of secondary roads, and 18,226 kilometers of rural roads. The private sector owns an estimated 8 million vehicles, encompassing temporary, permanent, and newly registered plates, while the public and mixed sectors collectively own approximately 141,830 vehicles. The railway system spans 3,072 kilometers, consisting of 1,697 kilometers of main tracks and 676 kilometers of branch lines, unchanged from the previous year (2023). The fleet includes 375 locomotives, divided between mainline and shunting operations, supported by 3,604 employees within the General Company for Iraqi Railways. Over 3,000 kilometers of main roads have been renovated recently, with plans to develop an additional 4,000 kilometers of expressways.

In the air transport sector, the Iraqi Airways General Company operated 41 aircraft of various sizes in 2024. Passenger traffic (arrivals and departures) via Iraqi Airways, including international and domestic flights, reached 3.4 million,

Table 7-5: Key Indicators of the Air Transport Sector in Iraq for 2021 and 2024.

Indicator	2021	2024
Number of operational aircraft in Iraqi airports for Iraqi Airways	32	41
Total number of flights (landing + departure) on Iraqi Airways (intl. + domestic)	20,376	Unavailable
Total number of aircraft (civilian + military) transiting Iraqi airspace	137,949	219,000
Total number of passengers (arrivals + departures) via Iraqi Airways (intl. + domestic)	1.44 million	3.4 million
Total revenue generated for the Civil Aviation Authority (billion dinars)	67.42	324
Number of airports	6	8
Total revenue for the General Company for Air Navigation Services (GCANS) (billion dinars)	76.471	76.471

Source: Table prepared by the researcher based on multiple sources.

representing a substantial increase from 1.44 million in 2021 due to the repercussions of COVID-19 and associated lockdown measures. Iraq operates eight civilian airports, with the Civil Aviation Authority generating total revenues of 76.471 billion dinars in 2024. This revenue remains relatively low compared to the sector's potential. Table 7-5 presents key indicators of Iraq's air transport sector for 2024.

Iraq has six principal ports, including four major commercial ports: Umm-Qaşr, al-Ma'qal, Khawr al-Zubayr, and Abū-Fulūs. However, these ports do not fully satisfy Iraq's expanding maritime transport and trade requirements, as they are inland ports with limited depths and lack direct access to the Gulf. Umm-Qaşr, established in 1961, is the most significant port, featuring 21 berths distributed between its northern and southern sections, with an annual handling capacity of 10 million tons. Following in importance is Khawr al-Zubayr, an industrial port established in 1980, which comprises 12 berths and has an annual handling capacity of 7 million tons. al-Ma'qal, Iraq's oldest port, was constructed during World War I in 1916 and consists of 15 berths with a handling capacity of 3 million tons annually. Abū-Fulūs, established as a public port in 1977, includes 3 berths

Table 7-6: Status of Iraqi Ports according to Berth Count and Productive Capacity.

Port	Cargo Type	Date Established	Classification	Number of Berths	Handling Capacity (million tons/year)
al-Ma'qal	General	1916	Riverine	15	3
Umm-Qaşr (North & South)	General/ Containers	1961	Maritime	21	10
Abū-Fulūs	General	1977	Riverine	3	0.75
al-Amīq	Oil	1980	Maritime	4	-
al-Başrah	Oil	1980	Maritime	4	-
Khawr al-Zubayr	Industrial	1980	Maritime	12	7

Source: Bakhīt & al-Amīrī, 2021.

with an estimated annual handling capacity of 0.75 million tons. In addition to these commercial ports, Iraq operates two oil export ports, al-'Amīq and al-Başrah, both established in 1980 and each equipped with four berths.

D. al-Fāw Port

Since the completion of the al-Başrah-Baghdād-al-Mawşil-Rabī'ah (Syria) railway line in 1940, Iraq has held the potential to serve as an alternative to the Suez Canal for maritime shipments traveling between the Far East and destinations in Turkey and Europe. Presently, Iraq is advancing the construction of the Grand al-Fāw Port, which is being connected to a high-speed railway line known as the Dry Canal. If achieved, these projects could significantly transform global transportation by offering a shorter and more cost-effective shipping route compared to the Suez Canal. The completion of this ambitious undertaking will require extensive time and substantial financial investment. Moreover, it will necessitate considerable political resolve to navigate the internal and external political, social, and security challenges associated with the project. Financing poses a major challenge due to increased government expenditures and the insufficiency of oil revenues to cover these costs, compelling reliance on both domestic and foreign debt to address the budget deficit (Gunter, 2023, p. 1).

The concept of this project originated in the early twentieth century but was hindered by political instability, revolutions, wars, and economic difficulties. Following Iraq's political transition, the Ministry of Transport convened a meeting in 2004 to deliberate on the project, resulting in the formation of a committee within the General Company for Iraqi Ports tasked with preparing project requirements and identifying a suitable location. In 2005, the General Company for Ports petitioned the Ministry of Planning twice to incorporate the project into that year's investment plan, estimating costs at 3 billion USD; however, implementation did not commence at that time. Progress continued until 2009, when Italian firms completed economic and technical feasibility studies, which were subsequently approved by the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers at a cost of 64.5 million euros. Despite this, the contract was not activated until 2011, following protracted negotiations between the Ministries of Transport and Finance to secure necessary funding. In this context, the Iraqi Ministry of Transport laid the foundation stone for the project in April 2010 in the al-Mamlḥah area at Ra's-al-Bīshah (the southernmost land extension of Iraqi territory located on the eastern bank of Khawr Abd-Allāh within the al-Fāw District).

This project is anticipated to enhance Iraq's regional relations and strengthen economic ties with neighboring countries, thereby promoting political and economic stability in the region. Additionally, it is expected to generate substantial employment opportunities, support local development, and improve living standards, contributing positively to the national economy (Bakhīt & al-Amīrī, 2021).

According to data from Iraqi Ports, the Grand al-Fāw Port is planned to include a total of 92 berths, allocated as follows:

- 50 berths designated for container shipments.

- 15 berths for dry bulk materials (Bulk berths).
- 20 berths for general cargo.
- 6 berths for petroleum products.
- One RO-RO berth, dedicated to the transportation of cars and vehicles.

The port's annual handling capacity is projected to reach 99 million tons, distributed as follows:

- 25 million tons annually for container berths.
- 50 million tons annually for bulk material berths.
- 5 million tons annually for general cargo berths.
- 400,000 cars annually for RO-RO berths.
- 230,000 barrels per day for petroleum product berths.

The Grand al-Fāw Port encompasses five principal projects forming the core infrastructure. The first project involves five fully completed berths. The second project consists of constructing a 62-kilometer road connecting the al-Fāw Port to the city of Umm-Qaṣr, representing the initial phase of the Development Road project aimed at reducing transit times and logistical distances. The third project is the submerged tunnel, with the third concrete segment prepared and ongoing work on the remaining segments. This tunnel is the first of its kind in the Middle East, with implementation involving specialized international firms. The fourth project includes the container yard, where construction is progressing rapidly according to established schedules. The fifth project is the navigation channel for the Grand al-Fāw Port, which is also advancing significantly. Several stages are expected to be completed in 2025, constituting a vital component of the Development Road project, which seeks to enhance Iraq's geo-economic position and establish it as a regional logistical hub.

E. The Development Road

On May 27, 2023, during a conference in Baghdād, the Iraqi government announced an ambitious strategic initiative termed the "Iraqi Development Road." This initiative involves constructing a 1,190-kilometer expressway alongside a 1,176-kilometer double-track railway, with an initial projected cost of 17 billion USD. The project is a collaborative effort with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Jordan, Oman, Iran, and Turkey, aiming to connect the ports of the Gulf to Turkey's southern borders, thereby establishing a commercial corridor linking the Gulf region to Europe. Integral to this initiative is the creation of an integrated industrial city designed to facilitate industrial relocation and stimulate domestic production, thereby enabling a transformative shift in Iraq's economy after decades marked by conflict, economic sanctions, and internal challenges exacerbated post-2003. The project aspires to rejuvenate the national economy, foster regional cooperation, and generate substantial employment opportunities aligned with Iraq's sustainable development objectives.

The project is structured for phased implementation, with completion (including all principal components such as the Grand al-Fāw Port) anticipated by

2050. The Italian consulting firm PEG developed the project design, with execution expected to be undertaken by Iraqi, Chinese, and Italian companies. The expressway, known as the HWB route, spans approximately 1,190 kilometers, featuring a main lane width of 3.65 meters and an additional 3-meter-wide side lane. Infrastructure provisions include 26 service areas (18 designated for trucks and 8 for vehicles), 24 rest areas equipped with comprehensive traveler amenities, 11 multi-modal parking facilities, 26 public transport exchange points, 13 checkpoints, and 15 passenger stations categorized into 3 main, 8 intermediate, and 4 minor stations.

The railway component, designated as the RW1 route, extends 1,176 kilometers and is engineered to support high-speed trains, with operational capacities reaching 140 km/h for freight and 300 km/h for passenger services, accommodating between 80 and 90 trains daily. Facilities include 15 passenger stations, 11 freight stations, and 4 multi-modal hubs. Supporting infrastructure plans encompass several auxiliary airports, 7 train maintenance centers, and 24 power stations supplying electricity to trains at intervals of 50 kilometers, complemented by mailboxes distributed along the route at similar intervals.

Additionally, the project incorporates training and maintenance centers located in al-Baṣrah, Baghdād, and al-Mawṣil, alongside operations control centers in al-Baṣrah and Baghdād. The expressway is aligned parallel to the railway, deliberately routed outside urban centers through desert terrain to leverage favorable topography and minimize costs by circumventing the need for tunnel construction that urban routing would necessitate (Bakhīt, 2023).

F. Internet Services and Website Blocking

Information and communication technology offers developing countries, including Iraq, unprecedented opportunities to achieve critical development objectives such as poverty alleviation and the enhancement of basic health-care and education services more effectively than previously possible. Despite the instability experienced in Iraq, successive governments have succeeded in advancing the telecommunications sector and fostering the information society and engaging the private sector through the establishment of a regulatory framework embodied by the Communications and Media Commission (CMC). This engagement has facilitated the expansion of Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) services, with ongoing efforts to restructure the sector and formulate policies through the enactment of relevant legislation and governmental regulations (Makki & Hanna 2011).

The telecommunications sector in Iraq is regulated by the Ministry of Communications and the Communications and Media Commission (CMC), which oversee licensing and frequency spectrum management. Under the former regime, internet access was heavily censored; by 2002, only an estimated 25,000 Iraqis had internet connectivity. Since the early 2000s, Iraq's internet infrastructure has experienced substantial growth.

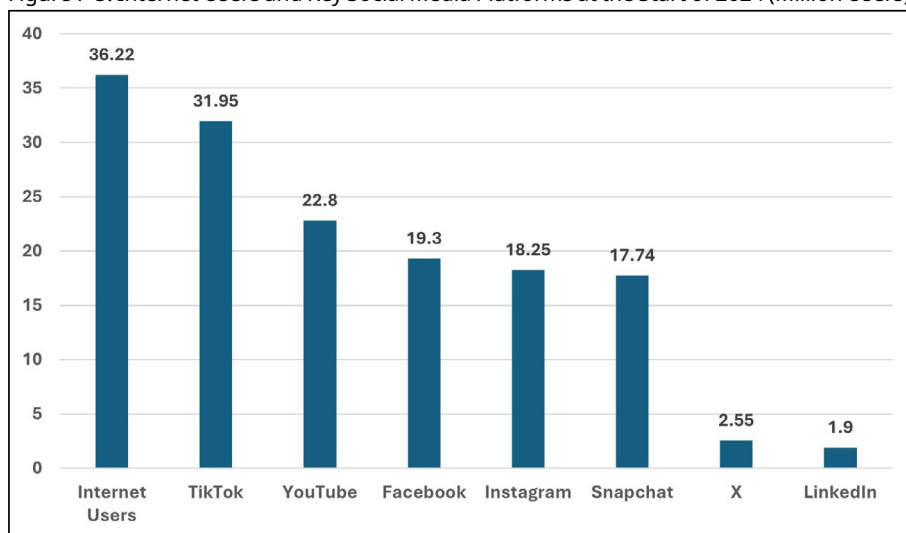
The Ministry of Communications manages the national fiber-optic backbone and international gateways, leasing bandwidth to private internet service providers (ISPs). Iraq is connected via terrestrial fiber links to all six neighboring countries and through undersea cables such as Gulf Bridge International. Nevertheless, the state-owned fixed-line network remains in a deteriorated state, with limited Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) initiatives reaching approximately 2.1 million subscribers as of 2021, predominantly in Baghdād. Consequently, the majority of Iraqis access the internet through wireless means, including mobile networks, Wi-Fi in internet cafes, or local Wi-Fi providers in urban areas. Due to the limited availability of last-mile fixed broadband, these community networks share bandwidth, which is costly (approximately 50 USD per Mbps at wholesale) resulting in relatively low user speeds.

The market for internet service providers has diversified significantly since the era when the state-owned Uruklink was the sole provider. Currently, numerous ISPs operate, frequently reselling capacity obtained from the Ministry of Communications. Earthlink Telecommunications stands as the largest and fastest-growing ISP, offering nationwide services encompassing fiber optics and wireless broadband. Other notable private ISPs include ScopeSky, IQ Networks, Newroz Telecom, and regional providers in the Kurdistan Region such as Tishknet, which often utilize wireless and VSAT links. Iraq's three mobile network operators (Zain Iraq, Asiacell, and Korek Telecom) also serve as major internet providers, delivering 3G and 4G mobile data services nationwide. Supported by foreign investments, including Kuwait's Zain (owner of Zain Iraq) and Qatar's Ooredoo (owner of Asiacell), these operators launched 4G LTE services in 2021, now covering most populated areas. Additionally, a fourth telecommunications operator in Baghdād (formerly SanaTel) and several smaller wireless ISPs contribute to the market. While competition exists in the retail internet sector, the Ministry of Communications' monopoly over the core infrastructure maintains high wholesale prices and impedes infrastructure development (Frackiewicz, 2025).

Key Digital Technology Indicators in Iraq for 2024

1. **Internet Usage:** At the beginning of 2024, Iraq had 36.22 million internet users, marking an increase of 801,000 (+2.3%) compared to 2023. The internet penetration rate was 78.7%.
2. **Social Media Usage:** In January 2024, the number of social media users in Iraq reached 31.95 million, representing 69.4% of the total population. This figure reflects a growth of 7.7 million users (+31.5%) from 2023. Among these users, 31.7% were female and 68.3% were male.
3. **Platform Statistics:** Data from Meta's advertising resources indicate that Facebook had 19.30 million users in Iraq in early 2024, an increase of 1.4 million (+7.5%) from 2023. YouTube had 22.8 million users, a decrease of 1.5 million (-6.2%) from 2023, with a user base comprising 46.2% females and 53.8% males. Instagram recorded 18.25 million users, TikTok had 31.95 million users aged 18 and older, LinkedIn had 1.9 million members,

Figure 7-5: Internet Users and Key Social Media Platforms at the Start of 2024 (Million Users).



Source: Researcher's work based on: DataReportal, 2024.

Snapchat had 17.74 million users, and Platform X (formerly Twitter) had 2.55 million users during the same period.

4. **Mobile Connectivity:** The total number of active mobile cellular connections in Iraq reached 46 million at the start of 2024, equivalent to 100% of the population. This high figure suggests that minors also possess active phones and some individuals maintain multiple active connections.
5. **Internet Speeds:** The median mobile internet connection speed was 29.08 Mbps, while the median fixed internet speed was 32.64 Mbps, both considered low relative to global averages (DataReportal, 2024).

Although the Iraqi Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and privacy, it imposes broad restrictions on content that violates public order, public morality, or national security. Consequently, in March 2024, the Federal Supreme Court mandated the Ministry of Communications and the Media Commission to block websites publishing obscene or indecent content, or content opposing religious and social values. Prior to this, in December 2023, an order was issued to permanently disable pornographic websites, implementing a 2015 Council of Representatives resolution.

From this standpoint, the Ministry of Communications adopted a stringent approach, framing its decision to block certain sites as a measure to protect the moral framework, emphasizing that these actions were based on official decisions rather than personal discretion. The blocks extended to various sites, including IMDb and music platforms such as SoundCloud. Additionally, independent sites like Ultra Iraq and Al-Hudood were disabled within the context of the state's management of critical or journalistic content. Technical measures were also introduced, requiring service providers to connect to DNS servers controlled

by the Ministry of Communications since March 2023, thereby enhancing centralized blocking capabilities. Nevertheless, most internet users circumvented these restrictions by employing DNS over HTTPS or VPNs, highlighting the technical limitations of the blocking infrastructure.

VI. Agenda for the Coming Year 2025

A review of public services in 2024, based on available official data, indicates that the government's agenda for 2025 will continue to support various service projects across multiple economic sectors, as outlined below:

1. **Decongestion Projects:** The government aims to sustain the current progress, particularly in the capital, Baghdād, by operating continuously to complete first-package projects and initiate second-package projects. These initiatives seek to alleviate congestion issues experienced by residents of Baghdād and other Iraqi cities, including al-Mawşil.
2. **Municipal Services:** The Iraqi government prioritizes municipal services as essential to citizens' daily lives, placing them at the forefront of its 2025 agenda. Planned efforts include supporting sewerage projects and continuing water filtration and treatment initiatives, especially in response to significant challenges posed by reduced water inflows from neighboring countries, notably Turkey. Additionally, strategies will focus on enhancing water use efficiency across sectors through well-researched plans to optimize resource utilization. The issue of solid waste management remains complex and multifaceted, ranking high on the government's agenda for 2025 and beyond. The problem extends beyond inadequate collection and transportation to sanitary landfills, exacerbated by improper disposal methods such as dumping in rivers, burning, or burial near urban areas. These practices contribute to pollution of water, air, and soil, adversely affecting public health and the environment.
3. **Electricity:** The government continues to advance projects aimed at strengthening the national electrical grid's generation, transformation, and transmission capacities. These projects seek to improve the grid's efficiency in productive capacity and energy transmission, alongside comprehensive maintenance in preparation for the summer of 2025 and subsequent years. Plans also emphasize utilizing associated gas as a strategic alternative to reduce dependence on gas imports, a significant challenge for the electricity sector. Concurrently, renewable energy projects, particularly solar energy, are being implemented to support the national electrical system and contribute to carbon emission reductions in alignment with Iraq's environmental commitments and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.
4. **Transport:** The transport sector in Iraq faces considerable deterioration in road and bridge infrastructure, coupled with weaknesses in public transportation, making it a government priority for the upcoming year.

The Development Road project is a central focus due to its critical role in advancing the transport sector. Additionally, the Baghdād Metro project is recognized as a vital initiative for enhancing urban transport services. Development plans encompass constructing new roads, modern railway lines, rehabilitating existing roads, importing advanced trains, and upgrading airport facilities. Collectively, these measures are expected to significantly enhance the transport sector's performance, facilitating the movement of people and goods and supporting economic growth and sustainable development.

5. **Housing:** With an estimated annual population increase of approximately one million people, housing remains a pressing concern for the government. This issue is further complicated by sharp increases in real estate prices driven by market speculation and money laundering, exacerbating difficulties in securing adequate housing. The government is implementing a package of measures, including establishing new residential complexes, developing housing strategies aligned with population growth, encouraging private sector investment, and providing concessional loans to citizens to promote homeownership and bridge the supply-demand gap.

VII. Problems of the Coming Year

1. **Continued Over-reliance on Oil:** Oil revenues continue to account for approximately 90% of government revenue, amidst risks posed by global price fluctuations and volatility in the Middle East. This reliance contributes to the persistence of the public budget deficit and ongoing dependence on both internal and external debt to bridge fiscal gaps. The deficit increased to 4.2% of GDP in 2024, up from 1.1% in 2023, resulting in reduced financial allocations for the services sector.
2. **Electricity:** Electricity remains a persistent challenge for successive governments, with the gap between supply (production plus imports) and demand remaining substantial; supply fails to exceed 60% of demand during peak periods. Distribution losses were estimated at approximately 55% in 2024, attributable to network encroachments and wastage. The import crisis from Iran intensified following the cancellation of US waivers, prompting the government to expedite the utilization of associated gas, seek alternative gas suppliers such as Turkmenistan, and implement smart grid technologies to reduce consumption.
3. **Municipal Services:** Despite governmental efforts to enhance municipal services, significant deficiencies persist. Accumulations of waste have become commonplace in the streets and squares of Iraqi cities due to inadequate collection and transportation systems, while sewerage networks fail to cover a substantial proportion of neighborhoods and urban areas. Moreover, the increasing emission of polluting gases such as sulfur and carbon dioxide exacerbates environmental and public health challenges.

- Overall, Iraq continues to rely on aging infrastructure for water, electricity, and sanitation.
4. **Water Scarcity and Drought:** Iraq requires approximately 48 billion cubic meters annually, yet reserves at the beginning of 2025 do not exceed 10 billion cubic meters. This situation exposes Iraq to a severe water crisis, potentially compromising the provision of potable water in addition to agricultural needs. This crisis stems from an approximate 50% reduction in the levels of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers over recent decades, with projections indicating a deficit of 11 to 13 billion cubic meters by 2035.
 5. **Persistence of Administrative and Financial Corruption:** It is estimated that Iraq has lost approximately 150 billion USD in oil revenues since 2003 due to corruption and mismanagement. According to the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index, Iraq scored 26 on a scale from 0 to 100 (where 0 indicates highest corruption), ranking 140th among 180 countries surveyed.
 6. **The Housing Problem:** Housing remains one of the most pressing social and economic challenges in 2025. Iraq requires over 3 million housing units to address the existing deficit, particularly in densely populated governorates such as Baghdād, al-Baṣrah, al-Najaf, and Karbalā', where urban expansion lags behind population growth. More than 4,000 informal residential areas are dispersed throughout Iraqi cities, housing millions of citizens without access to basic services such as water, sanitation, and electricity. The majority of these areas originated from internal displacement caused by wars and security crises following 2003.

VIII. Requirements for the Coming Year

In light of the service challenges confronting Iraq in 2025 and subsequent years, several critical priorities must be addressed by the government to enhance citizens' quality of life and promote sustainable development. The foremost priorities include:

1. The government must continue implementing the provisions of its program according to established timelines, ensuring the fulfillment of declared objectives and effectively addressing prevailing service and economic challenges.
2. Ongoing efforts to alleviate traffic congestion should persist, including the completion of second-package projects, allocation of funds for the third package, and the expedited advancement of the Baghdād Metro project.
3. Addressing the electricity deficit requires the expansion of power generation facilities, routine maintenance of the electrical grid, reduction of dependence on private neighborhood generators through improved national supply, acceleration of associated gas utilization projects, and the adoption of smart meters to manage demand.

4. The housing issue should be tackled by initiating large-scale projects aimed at low- and middle-income populations at affordable prices, alongside the formalization and organization of informal settlements with the provision of essential services during this transitional phase.
5. Enhancements in municipal services necessitate equipping municipalities with adequate resources and personnel for waste management, enforcing regulations on industrial pollution, and curbing unplanned urban expansion. Furthermore, modernization of water and sewage infrastructure in urban and rural areas, establishment of a secure legal framework to attract investment in housing, health, and transportation sectors, promotion of public-private partnerships, and reinforcement of the private sector's role are imperative.

IX. Strategies to Address Challenges and Meet Requirements

1. Allocating financial resources to both planned and stalled government projects, with an emphasis on expediting their completion.
2. Continuing efforts to alleviate traffic congestion in Baghdād and other Iraqi cities, including al-Mawṣil and al-Baṣrah.
3. Accelerating the utilization of associated gas and expanding renewable energy initiatives, particularly solar energy projects.
4. Implementing measures to combat administrative and financial corruption, which has become deeply entrenched within Iraqi state institutions.
5. Expediting the completion of the Grand al-Fāw Port, the Development Road project, and the Baghdād Metro projects, recognizing their critical roles in advancing the transport sector and enhancing sustainable development indicators.
6. Promoting private sector participation in service projects, acknowledging its significant contribution to increasing productivity and improving service quality.
7. Effectively managing water resources and maintaining dialogue with neighboring countries, especially Turkey, to increase water releases, while regulating and rationing water demand proportionate to the severity of the issue.
8. Developing comprehensive service plans grounded in accurate data and statistics, and integrating infrastructure projects with population growth and economic development strategies.
9. Digitizing services to minimize bureaucratic obstacles and reduce administrative and financial corruption, while simplifying electronic procedures for accessing services such as water, electricity, and official documentation.

10. Enhancing the roles of municipalities and local councils in project prioritization, and fostering community initiatives aimed at maintaining schools, streets, and sanitation.
11. Establishing a national monitoring system to assess the quality of public services, issuing annual performance reports for each governorate, and linking these reports to the allocation of financial resources based on performance and service quality.

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8. Anti-Corruption Efforts

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Corruption can permeate all facets of human activity and is regarded as one of the most critical challenges that has intensified in Iraq due to its deep historical roots. Administrative and financial corruption constitutes unlawful conduct perpetrated by groups of employees, manifesting in various forms such as bribery, fraud, deceit, collusion in governmental duties, and the abuse of influence. While corruption is a pervasive issue affecting virtually all nations, whether developing or developed, its manifestation in Iraq is distinct, exacerbated by a socio-political context that tacitly supports corrupt practices. This milieu has normalized corruption, rendering it socially acceptable through justifications extended to corrupt individuals at every stage since the 1990s.

The erosion of moral and religious values, absence of robust anti-corruption legislation and frameworks, and the prevalence of weak governance structures incapable of enforcing anti-corruption measures collectively foster an environment conducive to corruption. Such conditions precipitate a decline in integrity, undermine political legitimacy, and exacerbate deprivation, poverty, and social injustice, culminating in economic and political instability. Administrative and financial corruption, characterized by the abuse of power, influence, and public resources for personal gain, constitutes unlawful actions by officials and infringes upon fundamental human rights. Consequently, financial corruption adversely affects the economic and social frameworks of both developing and developed countries, albeit through differing mechanisms.

This chapter presents a comprehensive account of initiatives aimed at promoting integrity and combating corruption in Iraq, as documented by international and national reports and disclosed through media outlets during the year 2024.

I. Corruption Indicators 2023–2024

The 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), published by Transparency International, revealed that global corruption levels remain critically high, with efforts to mitigate them showing limited progress. The report assessed 180 countries and territories, ranking them according to perceived public sector corruption on a scale from zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). Approximately 6.8 billion indi-

Table 8-1: Iraq's Rank and Score According to the Corruption Perceptions Index 2020–2024.

Year	Score	Rank
2020	21	160
2021	23	157
2022	23	157
2023	23	154
2024	26	140

Source: <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/iraq>

viduals reside in countries scoring below 50 on the CPI, representing 85% of the global population of 8 billion. For the seventh consecutive year, Denmark attained the highest score (90), followed by Finland (88) and Singapore (84). In contrast, the lowest scores were predominantly observed in fragile and conflict-affected states, including South Sudan (8), Somalia (9), Venezuela (10), Syria (12), Libya (13), Eritrea (13), Yemen (13), and Equatorial Guinea (13). Over the preceding five years, seven countries demonstrated notable improvements in their CPI scores: Côte d’Ivoire (45), the Dominican Republic (36), Kosovo (44), Kuwait (46), Maldives (38), Moldova (43), and Zambia (39).

Concerning Iraq, it exhibited significant advancement in the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index. The report indicated that Iraq achieved a score of 26, reflecting a three-point increase from the previous year (2023), and improved its global ranking by 14 positions, moving from 154th to 140th place (Table 8-1). This progress signifies a substantial enhancement in addressing the decline of integrity and transparency indicators, culminating the efforts to contain and eradicate corruption. Iraq has demonstrated a strong commitment to the international anti-corruption framework through ratification and accession to several key international agreements, including the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). Concurrently, the Federal Commission of Integrity has assumed a strategic role in monitoring and ensuring the implementation of this convention, alongside enforcing the National Strategy for Integrity and Anti-Corruption 2021–2024, and the National Strategy for Anti-Money Laundering, Counter-Terrorism Financing, and Arms Proliferation 2023–2027.

In commentary on the Transparency International report, the Federal Commission of Integrity asserted that this classification reflects the seriousness of state institutions, particularly oversight bodies, in their pursuit of transparency and good governance. The commission further noted that this outcome results from concerted efforts by the Iraqi government across all institutions and oversight mechanisms, especially following the simplification of numerous procedures within service-providing entities. Additionally, the commission emphasized Iraq’s adherence to international and regional anti-corruption conventions, the establishment of partnerships with the private sector and civil society, the engagement of youth and women in anti-corruption initiatives, the attainment of high integrity levels in elections, and ongoing efforts to enact the right to information law.

It is noteworthy that Iraq has achieved significant milestones, including its removal from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) list of jurisdictions under increased monitoring and its exclusion from the European Union list of high-risk countries in 2021.

II. Theft of Terrorism Victims' Funds in Diyālā

In April 2024, a corruption scandal emerged concerning the funds designated for victims of terrorism in Diyālā Governorate. These funds, previously stolen and subsequently recovered, were estimated at approximately 9 billion dinars (equivalent to 7 million USD). Employees within the governorate's headquarters were implicated in the embezzlement. The Ministry of Interior, in collaboration with the Diyālā Investigation Office of the Commission of Integrity, continued investigations to identify all individuals involved in the theft. Two suspects were apprehended, and a minor portion of the stolen funds was recovered. The theft had occurred approximately eight months prior but was only uncovered in April 2024 (al-Jazīrah, 2024, April 9).

Ra'd al-Dahlakī, the Member of Parliament representing Diyālā, reported that the theft involved employees from the administration Diyālā Governorate, who committed the embezzlement openly, resulting in the loss of over nine billion dinars. He stated that the Parliamentary Integrity Committee would initiate an urgent investigation into the incident and coordinate with the Commission of Integrity to identify the perpetrators (al-Sā'ah, 2024, December 1).

Similarly, Aḥmad al-Mūsawī, another MP for Diyālā, noted that three employees were responsible for the theft and had fled to an unknown location, and that the embezzlement was executed through the gradual cashing of checks over several months (Iraq Sky, 2024).

III. The "Theft of the Century": Repercussions and Outcomes

The case involving the theft of tax security deposits, widely referred to as the "Theft of the Century," resurfaced in 2024 when the Federal Commission of Integrity announced that the stolen amounts had doubled. Concurrently, the number of defendants and convicted individuals increased to more than 30. Judge Ḥaydar Ḥannūn, the former president of the commission, reported successful extraditions of some defendants who owned companies implicated in the theft. Among these was Qāsim Muḥammad, the authorized director of al-Ḥūt al-Aḥdab Company, who was arrested in the Kurdistan Region. The thefts attributed to him amounted to 988 billion dinars, although these figures were not final. Investigations by the Commission of Integrity revealed that the total stolen amounts could exceed 8 billion USD, distributed among all convicted individuals and suspects. This was a significant increase from the previously announced total of 2.5 billion USD (al-Jazīrah, 2024, August 8).

Muḥammad Falāḥ al-Janābī, the authorized director of al-Qānit Company, was arrested on charges of stealing 1.85 trillion dinars through 79 forged checks. Another suspect, 'Alā' Khalaf Marrān, formerly assigned to the office of Prime Minister al-Kāzimī, remains at large outside the country. Additionally, Ḥusayn Kāwah, the authorized director of one of the accused companies, remains detained in Erbil and is accused of stealing 624 billion dinars through 37 checks. Judge Ḥaydar Ḥannūn confirmed that the number of defendants exceeded 30 and that more than 2 million USD and 155 million Iraqi dinars had been recovered. He emphasized that the primary suspect, Nūr Zuhayr, had been released on bail and was not in custody, asserting that the case would persist despite efforts by corrupt individuals to conceal it from oversight bodies and the public (al-Jazīrah, 2024, August 8).

Nūr Zuhayr, the principal suspect, appeared in a televised interview on the Iraqi channel al-Sharqīyah. Zuhayr denied the allegations, claiming innocence and asserting that the media had exaggerated the case. He maintained that his actions did not constitute theft but involved purchasing checks from intermediaries representing foreign companies to secure commissions for his company, al-Qānit for Exchange. Zuhayr expressed hope that the judiciary would remain impartial and resist political pressure. He stated that if tried publicly, he would disclose all individuals involved in the case. Zuhayr also denied familiarity with most defendants named in the tax security deposits case (al-Jazīrah, 2024, August 21).

The Central Criminal Court in Baghdād postponed Zuhayr's trial to August 27, 2024, after he failed to appear on the originally scheduled date of August 14. It appeared that Zuhayr's release under ambiguous circumstances was intended to compel him to liquidate real estate assets and return the stolen funds, pursuant to an agreement with the Iraqi government approximately one month after his arrest (al-Jazīrah, 2024, August 21). On the trial date, the Integrity Court issued arrest warrants for Zuhayr and Haytham al-Jubūrī due to their absence (INA, 2024, August 27). On November 25, 2024, the al-Karkh Criminal Court for Combating Corruption sentenced Zuhayr to 10 years in prison, Rā'id Jūhī and several employees involved to 6 years. Additionally, the former MP Haytham al-Jubūrī received a 3-year prison sentence (Baghdād Today, 2024, November 25).

IV. The Railway Case

This case concerns allegations of corruption related to the awarding of a contract for the rehabilitation of railway lines in Iraq. MP Yāsir al-Ḥusaynī disclosed that the railway contract involved pledging Iraqi oil in exchange for the rehabilitation and maintenance of already dilapidated railway networks. He indicated that the contract imposed a legal obligation on the government to pay 22.5 billion USD, anticipating that the parliamentary term would conclude, the current government's term would end, and Iraq would subsequently face prosecution in international forums and be fined the full contract amount. Additionally, the former president of the Commission of Integrity, Judge Ḥaydar Ḥannūn,

announced the discovery of fund wastage linked to the “Theft of the Century” within the railway development contract, valued at 18 billion USD. He further asserted that the Iraqi railways had been entirely sold off through the “Theft of the Century” case, which had not been reviewed for two months by the Supreme Judicial Council or the judge authorized with integrity files, Diyā’ Ja’far, thereby calling for the judicial authorities to replace the judges of the Commission of Integrity annually (al-Jazīrah, 2024, September 8).

According to al-Ḥusaynī, the corruption file concerning the rehabilitation of the railways represented multiples of the “Theft of the Century.” He explained that the file was associated with a contract concluded by the General Company for Iraqi Railways with a consortium of three companies, namely Daewoo of South Korea, al-Naḥḥālāh, and al-Mahā, for the maintenance and rehabilitation of old railway lines, rather than electric or modern railways. He clarified that the contract remained legally binding on the state and was considered a contract of adhesion favoring the companies, noting that no effective measures had been taken to address the corruption within it. He further stated that the contract involved not only the sale of the railways but also the sale of oil alongside them (al-Jazīrah, 2024, September 8).

The Iraqi Ministry of Transport responded to the accusations through its spokesperson, Maytham al-Ṣāfi, who denied any wastage of public funds or corrupt activities within the ministry under the so-called “Theft of the Century” or any other suspicious or illegal dealings (al-Jazīrah, 2024, September 8).

V. The Audio Leaks

The year 2024 witnessed what has been described as a “war of audio leaks” and the exposure of a “wiretapping” scandal. This operation was allegedly managed by a senior official in the office of the current Prime Minister and involved wire-tapping the majority of political bloc leaders, particularly within the forces of the “Coordination Framework,” which caused significant rifts among the framework’s leadership. Judicial sources reported an increase in lawsuits submitted to the judiciary regarding this case, reaching 80 lawsuits filed by members of parliament, politicians, and various public figures.

Regarding corruption cases in 2024, an audio leak emerged featuring the head of the General Commission for Taxes, in which he expressed a desire to obtain substantial financial sums from an individual. This led the Prime Minister to suspend him and refer him for investigation. Meanwhile, the audio recording attributed to the head of the Prime Minister’s Board of Advisors sparked widespread controversy (al-Sharq al-Awsat, 2024, November 15). Although the accused individuals denied the allegations and official statements were issued refuting them, the damage to state institutions could be considerable due to the public attention and widespread circulation of these leaks on social media platforms.

In a related matter concerning the national Commission of Integrity, a recording attributed to the commission’s president, Judge Ḥaydar Ḥannūn, surfaced. Subse-

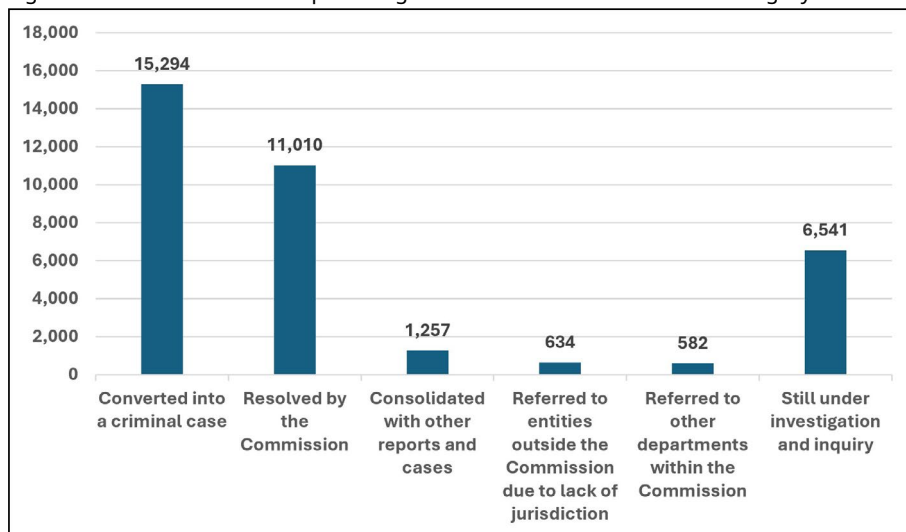
quently, the Supreme Judicial Council directed the Chief Public Prosecutor to request the al-Karkh Third Investigation Court to investigate the audio recordings attributed to the acting president of the Commission of Integrity, Ḥaydar Ḥannūn, involving bribery offenses, according to the council's statement. Meanwhile, Ḥannūn submitted a request to be relieved of his presidency of the commission. On October 22, 2024, Prime Minister Muḥammad Shiyā' al-Sūdānī approved the request to relieve Ḥaydar Ḥannūn from the presidency of the Commission of Integrity based on his own request (Baghdād Today, 2024, October 22). On October 24, 2024, Dr. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Lāmī was appointed president of the Commission of Integrity following the dismissal of Judge Ḥannūn.

VI. The Role of the Commission of Integrity

The annual report of the Commission of Integrity for the year 2024 highlights several key indicators (FCOI, 2025):

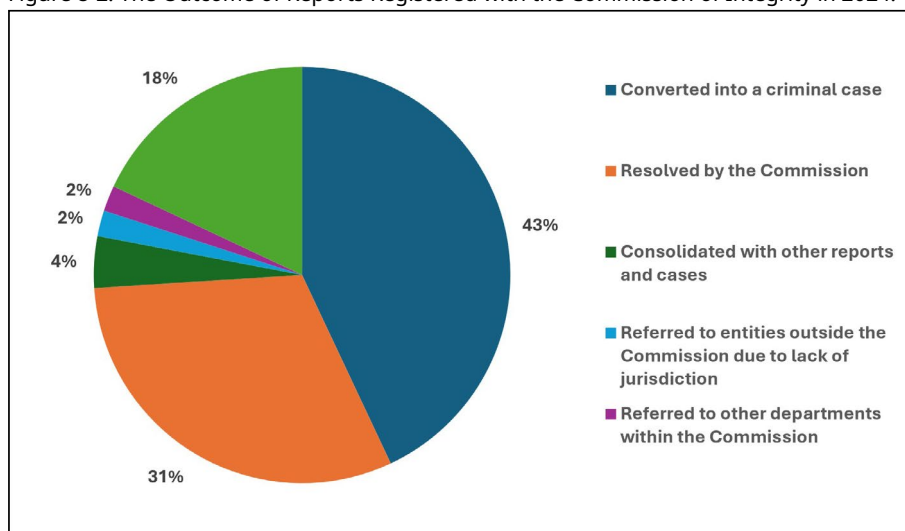
- In 2024, the number of registered reports reached 20,369, representing an approximate 18% decrease from the 24,847 reports registered in 2023. Of these, 15,588 reports (76.5%) were completed. When combined with the 14,949 reports carried over from the previous year, the total number of reports amounted to 35,318. The outcomes of these reports are depicted in Figures 8-1 and 8-2.
- The number of criminal cases (defined as reports submitted to an investigative judge and investigated by an investigator of the Federal Commission of Integrity under the supervision of an investigative judge affiliated with the Supreme Judicial Council) totaled 23,787 in 2024. Of these, 16,654 cases were completed, yielding a completion rate of approximately 70%.

Figure 8-1: The Outcome of Reports Registered with the Commission of Integrity in 2024.



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on (FCOI, 2025, pp. 25-26).

Figure 8-2: The Outcome of Reports Registered with the Commission of Integrity in 2024.



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on (FCOI, 2025, pp. 25-26).

The status of these cases indicated that 33.6% (12,285 cases) remained under investigation, 30% (11,210 cases) were closed by courts specializing in integrity issues, 16% (5,966 cases) were referred to other courts due to lack of jurisdiction, 15.5% (5,647 cases) were referred to trial courts for misdemeanors and felonies, and approximately 4% (1,397 cases) were consolidated with other cases by judicial decision.

- In 2024, the number of defendants in corruption cases included 44 ministers and individuals of equivalent rank, compared to 55 in 2023, with a total of 65 charges. Additionally, the number of defendants holding special grades, director general positions, and equivalent ranks reached 338, compared to 350 in 2023.
- Judicial summons orders issued in 2024 totaled 12,439, of which 10,000 (86.2%) were executed. Arrest warrants numbered 2,328, with 1,507 (71.8%) executed. Detention orders in cases referred to the Supreme Federal Anti-Corruption Commission reached 2,276, including 9 orders against 8 defendants holding special grades, director general positions, and equivalent ranks. These orders pertained to offenses such as deliberate damage to public funds (651 orders), public servants exceeding their duties (333 orders), embezzlement (228 orders), bribery (206 orders), forgery (68 orders), negligence (48 orders), and other acts (742 orders). Concurrently, 1,680 individuals were released on bail, and 261 were referred to trial courts.
- The commission conducted 2,071 caught-in-the-act (in flagrante delicto) seizure operations across various governorates. The number of defendants apprehended in flagrante delicto totaled 599, including 148 defen-

Table 8-2: Number and Value of Stalled Projects and the Initiated Criminal Cases Regarding Them by the Commission of Integrity (2018-2024).

Year	Stalled Projects	Value of Projects		Criminal Cases
		USD	IQD	
2018	2,736	16,227,930,298	16,455,290,348,823	644
2019	1,600	1,941,398,559	12,261,957,481,362	363
2020	26	348,388,432	576,867,456,420	26
2021	290	1,142,332,885	1,882,277,319,387	64
2022	164	507,589,932	480,375,834,627	82
2023	529	1,106,614,566	1,614,315,296,039	34
2024	74	1,042,653,028	6,100,731,023,417	44

Source: FCOI, 2025, p. 17.

dants in bribery cases, 100 in cases related to damage to public funds, 32 involving public servants exceeding their duties, 27 in embezzlement cases, and 24 in forgery cases.

- The number of convicted individuals covered by the General Amnesty Law reached 114 in 2024. The total amount of funds ordered to be returned was 10,107,346,541 dinars, while the amount actually recovered under the General Amnesty Law was 528,111,784 dinars.
- In efforts to combat transnational corruption, the commission's Recovery Department prepared international arrest warrants and information notices. These documents serve as the basis for the General Secretariat of the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) to issue Red Notices, as well as for the General Secretariat of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers to issue search broadcasts. In 2024, 47 Red Notices and international broadcasts were issued for fugitive defendants outside Iraq.

Table 8-3: Key Achievements of the Commission of Integrity in 2024.

Department/Unit	Key Achievements
Presidency of the Commission	International Cooperation: Formalized MOUs with Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and China; Makkah al-Mukarramah Convention. Partnership with Transparency International: Workshops with 300 civil society organizations. Digital Transformation: Upgraded electronic systems for department interconnection.
Investigations Department	Reports: Received 20,999 reports, completed 76.53%. Criminal Cases: Investigated 13,787 cases (70% conclusion). Orders: Executed 85.34% of summons and 65.24% of arrest warrants. Seizures: 2,071 operations, 519 defendants. Recovery: 67.4 billion IQD and 177,622 USD.
Legal Department	Lawsuits: 54.8% favorable conviction outcomes. Legislation: Monitored Right to Information and Smuggled Funds laws. Agreements: Fulfilled UNCAC and Arab Convention obligations.

Table 8-3 (continued)

Department/Unit	Key Achievements
Prevention Department	Conduct: Issued 2024 code of professional conduct. E-Governance: Monitored digital transformation across 19 ministries. Disclosure: 4,294 forms; full compliance by ministers and governors.
Education and Public Relations	Awareness: Media programs “Toward Integrity” and “The Path of Integrity.” Publications: Issued magazines such as “Friends of Integrity” and “The Safe Generation, along with awareness booklets for children.
NGO Relations Department	Questionnaires: Bribery surveys in registration and detention centers (revealing bribery prevalence rates that reached 22.1%). Workshops: Nine workshops with governorate councils.
Administrative and Financial	Human Resources: 1,879 employees (39% with postgraduate degrees). Networking: Integrated unified government network and email systems.
Recovery Department	Extradition: 309 files managed, 13 defendants extradited. Funds: Billion-dinar recoveries through international cooperation.
Planning and Research	Strategies: Developed 2024–2030 National Anti-Corruption Strategy. Studies: Oversight and evaluation reports for decision support.

Source: FCOI, 2025.

- The commission also monitored stalled projects in the governorates since 2018. In 2024, the number of stalled projects reached 74, with a total value of 6.1 trillion Iraqi dinars, equivalent to approximately 1.042 billion USD (see Table 8-2). The distribution of stalled projects included 25 in Nīnawá, 24 in Diyálá, 7 in Wāsiṭ, 5 in Karbalá, 4 each in al-Dīwānīyah and al-Baṣrah, 2 in al-Muthanná, and 1 each in Maysān, Baghdād, and Ṣalāḥ-al-Dīn.

VII. Agenda for the New Year 2025

Despite increasing demands within Iraq to address corruption, numerous challenges hinder substantive progress. Oversight institutions are undermined due to fragile political frameworks and a lack of genuine commitment to establishing effective integrity mechanisms. Ārām Maḥmūd, former advisor to President Barham Ṣāliḥ, expressed concern that the incapacity or unwillingness of Iraqi institutions to effectively combat corruption necessitates international intervention. He emphasized the importance of supporting the global initiative to establish an International Anti-Corruption Court, which would hold corrupt actors accountable when national judicial systems fail. Corruption remains the primary catalyst for conflict, sectarianism, and governmental dysfunction. This pervasive corruption debilitates state capacities and exacerbates issues such as poverty, climate change, mass migration, and violence. Consequently, reliance solely on domestic remedies is insufficient; it is imperative to permit an international court

to prosecute individuals whose corrupt practices threaten the nation's future and endanger civilians (Mahmood, 2023).

Several unresolved cases persist into 2025, notably the "Theft of the Century," whose consequences continue to affect Iraqi society as it awaits final resolution.

A key priority for the forthcoming year is the initiation of the new integrity and anti-corruption strategy, succeeding the conclusion of the second strategy's implementation period in 2024. This forthcoming strategy aims to integrate lessons learned from the previous phase and consolidate achievements, particularly those related to the international dimension that emerged through Iraq's improved standing on the global Corruption Perceptions Index in the past year.

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9. Education and Higher Education

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During the academic year (2023–2024), UNESCO concentrated on several critical issues, including the promotion of digital learning and lifelong education, support for education in crisis-affected regions, and the mitigation of hate speech within educational contexts. This focus was manifested through various reports, initiatives, and conferences, notably:

- The 2023 Global Education Monitoring Report, which underscored the imperative of utilizing digital technology to augment educational processes rather than supplant them, emphasizing access, equity, and inclusion.
- The 2024 UNESCO Report on Gender Equality in Education, which highlighted the role of technology in advancing gender equality in education while identifying disparities in technology access and digital skills development.
- Global meetings convened by UNESCO to assess progress toward the fourth Sustainable Development Goal, aimed at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- The Sixth International Conference on Learning Cities, held in al-Jubayl, Saudi Arabia, under the theme “Learning Cities at the Forefront of Climate Action,” which sought to advance lifelong learning amid global challenges.
- The UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, dedicated to fostering a culture of learning within urban environments and empowering citizens through lifelong learning opportunities.
- The 2024 Learning Cities Awards, which recognized ten cities for their exemplary achievements in promoting lifelong learning.

Educational and instructional institutions in Iraq endeavored to align their efforts with the principal directives outlined in these reports throughout the 2023–2024 academic year.

I. Education

1. Provision of School Textbooks

The Ministry of Education officially announced the commencement of the 2023–2024 academic year on September 22, 2023. This date was considered exceptional and earlier than usual, as the academic year traditionally begins in October, as was the case in the previous year. The rationale for this early start was to optimize time management by finalizing administrative arrangements, distributing textbooks, and establishing examination schedules.

At the onset of the academic year, approximately 12 million pupils and students enrolled in schools across various Iraqi governorates. This number included 1.2 million new first-grade pupils, marking the highest enrollment recorded by the Ministry of Education in this category and reflecting significant population growth. Throughout the 2023–2024 academic year, the Ministry undertook multiple initiatives to address the persistent crisis of textbook provision that had affected previous years. Printing of school curricula began at the Ministry's printing presses in June 2023. Additionally, contracts were secured with both public and private Iraqi printing presses, resulting in the fulfillment of 60% of the primary level textbook requirements and 90% for secondary levels.

The Ministry successfully distributed new textbooks to students in the four primary levels, while reused textbooks were allocated to other grades. A substantial quantity of textbooks for the primary stage was printed, exceeding 10 million copies, accompanied by 36 million notebooks and 27 million examination papers. This achievement was facilitated by al-Nahrayn Company, which printed the materials in accordance with international specifications and standards within the designated timeframe to meet curricular needs.

The textbook shortage remained primarily an issue at the preparatory stage but was anticipated to resolve gradually with the complete printing of curriculum textbooks for distinguished schools (*al-mutamayyizīn*). In terms of supplies, the Ministry also succeeded in providing Iraqi schools with approximately 300,000 school desks and office furniture sets, aligning with a ministerial plan aimed at enhancing national production through reliance on domestic printing. Furthermore, electronic versions of curricular textbooks were made available on the Ministry's official website for primary, intermediate, secondary, and distinguished schools. Students were encouraged to download these resources to mitigate exploitation by individuals trading delayed paper copies in the market. The Ministry acknowledged overcoming the annual challenge of limited financial allocations but noted that the delay in budget approval in mid-June posed significant difficulties, necessitating a race against time to complete printing and distribution to directorates and schools. Although the textbook provision crisis is not new in Iraq, it intensified in the previous year, particularly following warnings from the Parliamentary Education Committee and other bodies regarding the failure to print textbooks due to financial constraints.

The issues related to textbook shortages, insufficient school infrastructure, and the resultant reliance on double, triple, and even quadruple shifts in most Iraqi schools have adversely affected the educational environment. Officials attribute this decline to corruption within certain state institutions, including various sectors of the educational establishment.

2. The New Resettlement of Educational Staff

Educational staff constitute the most valuable asset within any educational system, as teachers significantly influence the quality and appeal of educational offerings, as well as student learning outcomes. Moreover, teachers' salaries represent the largest expenditure item within the educational budget. Despite this, numerous schools, particularly those located in disputed regions, experience shortages of qualified teachers. Consequently, volunteer teachers with minimal qualifications often conduct lessons during afternoon shifts.

To address staff shortages in rural areas, the Ministry of Education reinstated incentives for educational positions in rural localities. Additionally, the Ministry aimed to develop a teacher classification system or career advancement framework that links performance evaluations with professional development opportunities.

During the academic year (2023–2024), the Ministry announced preparations to resettle educational staff to facilitate the smooth continuation of the educational process and to achieve equilibrium between old and newly established schools. These measures included the redistribution of teachers among schools experiencing vacancies in specific specializations. It is anticipated that this initiative will contribute to enhancing educational quality and promoting balance among schools, given that the majority of secondary schools face shortages of teaching staff and require prompt interventions.

The academic year (2023–2024) also saw the appointment of lecturers, post-graduate degree holders, and top-ranking graduates as teachers and instructors within the educational staff. This intervention addressed the crisis of vacancies and shortages of educational staff in most primary and secondary schools, in accordance with the needs of school administrations. In October 2023, the Ministry of Education initiated the application process for approximately 50,000 contractual positions, an initiative expected to alleviate staff shortages upon the announcement of accepted candidates and their commencement of duties in schools. Nevertheless, a significant number of schools continue to experience shortages in certain specializations due to the retirement of instructors, particularly in the disciplines of physics, chemistry, and mathematics (al-Şabāh, 2024, August 5).

3. School Enrollment Rates

An analysis of the data presented in Table 9-1, which details student enrollment in private and public schools during the academic year (2023–2024), reveals several key findings:

Table 9-1: Number of Students Enrolled in Public and Private Schools During the Academic Year (2023–2024).

Stage	Gender	2023	2024			Annual Change Rate (%)	Private Education Share (%)
			Private	Public	Total		
Kindergarten	Male	85,845	13,172	97,577	110,749	-	-
	Female	86,871	12,345	99,514	111,859	-	-
	Total	172,716	25,517	197,091	222,608	28.89	11.46
Primary	Male	3,300,173	211,864	3,324,361	3,536,225	-	-
	Female	3,067,921	141,397	3,098,905	3,240,302	-	-
	Total	6,368,094	353,261	6,423,266	6,776,527	6.41	5.21
Secondary	Male	2,063,331	166,955	2,173,511	2,340,466	-	-
	Female	1,917,337	108,106	2,058,468	2,166,574	-	-
	Total	3,980,668	275,061	4,231,979	4,507,040	13.22	6.1

Source: Ministry of Education, Directorate of Educational Planning and Statistics.

A. Kindergarten Stage

Enrollment at the kindergarten level increased notably from 172,716 pupils in the academic year (2022–2023) to 222,608 pupils in (2023–2024), representing a growth rate of 28.89%. Private education accounted for 11.46% of enrollment at this stage. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) for kindergarten in 2023 was 1.01, indicating no gender parity between male and female students. However, disparities begin to emerge in subsequent educational stages.

B. Primary Stage

Enrollment in the primary stage experienced a modest increase, rising from 6,368,094 pupils in 2022–2023 to 6,776,527 pupils in 2023–2024, reflecting a growth rate of 6.41%. Private education contributed 6.1% to total enrollment at this level. The GPI for the primary stage in 2024 was approximately 0.92, suggesting continued gender parity, albeit with a slight decline compared to the kindergarten stage.

C. Secondary Stage

Secondary stage enrollment increased from 3,980,668 pupils in 2022–2023 to 4,507,040 pupils in 2023–2024, corresponding to a growth rate of 13.22%. Private education represented 5.21% of enrollment at this stage. The GPI for secondary education in 2024 was approximately 0.92, indicating an improvement in gender parity relative to previous years.

4. Status of School Buildings and New Schools

Investment in school infrastructure and the establishment of new schools aim to enhance educational quality and provide a secure and stimulating learning environment for students. The availability of modern, well-equipped schools facilitates student engagement in various extracurricular activities, including artistic and athletic pursuits, which contribute to the development of their skills and competencies.

A. Completion of 1,000 New Schools

To address issues of overcrowding, triple shifts, and stalled projects, the “One Thousand Schools” initiative was implemented. The distribution of these schools is as follows: 144 in Baghdād Governorate, 52 in Maysān, 92 in Nīnawá, 106 in Dhī-Qār, 51 in al-Anbār, 78 in Ṣalāḥ-al-Dīn, 61 in al-Dīwānīyah, 40 in al-Najaf al-Ashraf, 45 in Bābil, 44 in Kirkuk, 56 in Diyālá, 44 in Karbalá’ al-Muqaddasah, 48 in Wāsiṭ, 53 in al-Muthanná, and 86 in al-Baṣrah. These schools span various educational levels, including primary and secondary stages, and are designed using contemporary methods to ensure an appropriate learning environment. The exemplary school buildings project is nearing completion of its first phase, reflecting the efforts of the Department of National Projects and School Buildings within the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers. This department has mobilized engineering and technical personnel and enhanced operational mechanisms to meet the Ministry of Education’s needs by providing suitable school facilities aligned with governmental priorities.

Prime Minister Muḥammad Shiyā’ al-Sūdānī inaugurated 790 exemplary schools out of the planned one thousand via video conference across all governorates. This initiative is part of the Chinese-Iraqi Framework Agreement project. He emphasized that the completion rate, around 18%, has become a top priority within the education sector. The government is committed to implementing this project with precise specifications, equitable geographical distribution, and advancing infrastructure development for schools.

B. Contracts Under the Iraq Development Fund

The Prime Minister announced the forthcoming signing of contracts under the Iraq Development Fund to construct 400 schools in Baghdād and other governorates. These projects will be executed by the private sector, which will also be responsible for maintenance throughout the contract duration. This initiative aims to address the significant shortage of schools, which exceeds 8,000, while concurrently developing educational and instructional staff as part of the government’s program to improve educational standards.

C. Opening Exemplary Schools Under the Chinese Loan Project

- **Diyālá Governorate:** Two new schools were inaugurated in Ba’qūbah district, each with 18 classrooms and annexes designed to provide a suitable environment for students.
- **Nīnawá Governorate:** A new girls’ school with 24 classrooms, laboratories, and an art theater was inaugurated.
- **Wāsiṭ Governorate:** Three new schools were opened; one with 18 classrooms and two with 12 classrooms each, featuring integrated administrative wings, sanitary facilities, assembly yards, and laboratories.
- **al-Muthanná Governorate:** Fifty-three exemplary school buildings were opened under the Iraqi-Chinese agreement, alongside the completion of maintenance, restoration, and rehabilitation work on more than 19 school buildings in the governorate’s second phase.

- **al-Dīwānīyah Governorate:** Nine exemplary schools were inaugurated, including six buildings with 12 classrooms each and three with 18 classrooms. These schools were distributed based on population density and areas with the greatest need. Three schools are located in the governorate center, three in al-Budayr district, and one each in Ghammās, al-Shināfiyah, and al-Ḥamzah districts. This distribution aims to alleviate classroom overcrowding, with ongoing efforts to complete all schools under construction in the governorate.
- **al-Baṣrah, Ṣalāḥ-al-Dīn, and Baghdād Governorates:** Eight schools were opened, with capacities ranging from 18 to 24 classrooms per school, including scientific laboratories, administrative wings, and integrated school furniture, as part of an initiative to provide a conducive educational environment for Iraqi students.
- **Bābil Governorate:** Four schools were inaugurated coinciding with the launch of the academic year (2023–2024).

4. Closing Caravan Schools File in al-Najaf al-Ashraf

The Ministry of Education's General Directorate in al-Najaf al-Ashraf concluded the issue of caravan schools in the governorate center following the opening of the al-Shahīd Ḥasan Naṣr-Allāh School under the Chinese loan projects. Additionally, staff and students from 16 caravan schools were transferred to new exemplary buildings, reducing the number of caravans from 40 to 24.

5. Eduba Project

The Eduba project commenced its first phase, aiming to construct 600 school buildings across Iraq under the Iraq Development Fund projects. Accreditation contracts were signed with the international consulting firm Meinhardt, alongside contracts with Yerim Contracting Company (one of twelve private sector firms tasked with executing the first phase) and two other contracts with the Fund's Executive Director.

The Prime Minister described the project's foundational pillars and future strategic plans as a significant advancement in school construction, which will contribute to reducing the country's deficit of 8,000 to 10,000 schools. The project includes finalizing the Iraq Development Fund's structural procedures and preparing a draft law for submission to the Council of Representatives. He noted the Iraqi private sector's readiness and capability to operate under all conditions, contingent upon land allocation for construction and collaboration with local governments.

6. Building and Rehabilitating Approximately 6,000 Schools

The Ministry of Education announced that 5,604 educational infrastructure projects were undertaken during 2024, including the construction of 1,903 new schools and the restoration of 3,701 existing ones. Additionally, ownership of 687 plots of land was transferred to the ministry, 310 encroachments on educational lands were removed, and 11 nursery plots were converted into educational lands.

The nomination of 600 plots for exemplary educational projects across Iraq's governorates within the Iraq Development Fund is underway. These initiatives align with the government's agenda to resolve the school crisis and enhance the educational environment for Iraqi students.

7. Campaign to Remove Illegal Encroachments

As part of a national campaign to preserve public property, the Ministry of Education mobilized efforts to reclaim encroached lands for educational use. Notable achievements include:

- Recovery of three dunams and a real estate property by the General Directorate of Education in Ninawá, following a nationwide campaign to reclaim encroached lands for school construction and educational projects.
- Reclamation of over 25 dunams and 15 shares of land belonging to al-Majar al-Kabīr Industrial Preparatory School by the General Directorate of Vocational Education in Maysān.

Key observations from Table 9-2 include:

- A majority of school buildings in Iraq require restoration, with a significant portion deemed unfit, particularly at the primary education level, followed by the secondary level.

Table 9-2: Structural Status of School Buildings for the Academic Year (2023–2024).

Governorate	Kindergarten			Primary			Secondary		
	Fit	Needs Repair	Unfit	Fit	Needs Repair	Unfit	Fit	Needs Repair	Unfit
Nīnawá	37	18	3	751	433	127	303	127	22
Šalāḥ-al-Dīn	33	11	2	385	445	178	183	115	21
Kirkuk	28	35	3	353	394	75	150	139	16
Diyālā	17	11	5	311	322	178	131	93	40
Baghdād	68	104	12	656	928	287	370	445	70
al-Anbār	28	17	2	468	288	131	226	130	11
Bābil	16	15	9	288	303	77	96	75	12
Karbalā'	21	4	0	165	135	27	110	26	4
Najaf	19	29	0	170	231	38	105	98	6
al-Dīwānīyah	20	13	3	207	264	97	75	75	5
al-Muthanná	8	11	2	221	162	55	85	48	7
Wāsiṭ	28	20	0	300	312	94	95	107	14
Dhī-Qār	13	12	5	260	490	212	86	72	27
Maysān	10	18	6	282	212	43	58	54	2
al-Baṣrah	29	22	14	357	245	151	154	95	47
Total	375	340	66	5,181	5,164	1,770	2,227	1,699	304
Percentage	48	43.5%	8.5%	43%	43%	14%	53%	40%	7%

Source: Ministry of Education, Directorate of Educational Planning and Statistics.

- The quantity and quality of school buildings vary across governorates. Baghdād Governorate leads in fit buildings for kindergarten and secondary education, while Nīnawá Governorate leads in fit buildings for primary education. al-Baṣrah Governorate has the highest number of unfit kindergarten buildings, and Baghdād Governorate has the highest number of unfit primary education buildings. Baghdād Governorate also has the largest number of schools requiring restoration and those classified as unfit, with other governorates exhibiting varied statuses.

5. Educational Wastage

The rate of educational wastage, defined as academic loss encompassing dropout and failure rates, serves as an indicator of the functional efficiency of the educational system. Data obtained from the Statistics Section of the General Directorate of Educational Planning for the academic year (2023–2024), categorized by the directorates of education in Baghdād and various governorates, indicate a significant reduction in educational wastage across all educational levels compared to the academic year (2022–2023). This reduction was especially notable in the central and southern governorates, as well as in Nīnawá and al-Anbār.

Table 9-3: Educational Wastage Rates in the Primary Stage During the Years 2023–2024.

Directorate	Failure Rate 2023	Failure Rate 2024	Dropout Rate 2023	Dropout Rate 2024	Failure Change Rate	Dropout Change Rate
Nīnawá	19.30	19.08	3.60	12.35	-1.12	242.95
Ṣalāḥ-al-Dīn	9.30	3.50	1.30	3.26	-62.36	150.93
Kirkuk	4.70	1.58	1.70	2.66	-66.34	56.62
Diyālá	22.80	0.65	0.50	1.16	-97.14	131.39
al-Ruṣāfah 1	8.60	2.67	2.70	3.57	-68.94	32.09
al-Ruṣāfah 2	15.50	8.66	3.70	9.93	-44.13	168.34
al-Ruṣāfah 3	14.00	3.72	3.90	2.85	-73.45	-27.03
al-Karkh 1	10.80	1.97	3.20	3.02	-81.77	-5.48
al-Karkh 2	15.80	5.61	3.20	5.59	-64.50	74.63
al-Karkh 3	17.00	3.58	3.60	2.95	-78.95	-17.99
al-Anbār	21.20	3.10	4.50	11.37	-85.39	152.67
Bābil	10.70	5.42	6.00	9.43	-49.34	57.22
Karbalá'	17.00	6.26	3.30	4.12	-63.17	24.81
Najaf	15.50	7.12	4.30	5.31	-54.06	23.57
al-Dīwānīyah	11.70	3.95	2.00	1.92	-66.26	-4.25
al-Muthanná	15.20	3.49	2.60	2.20	-77.02	-15.46
Wāsiṭ	3.90	5.12	2.50	3.45	31.19	38.08
Dhī-Qār	4.60	2.34	1.70	3.19	-49.12	87.56
Maysān	14.90	4.47	1.80	4.32	-70.00	140.22
al-Baṣrah	13.30	7.71	2.60	7.35	-42.02	182.82

Source: Ministry of Education, Directorate of Educational Planning and Statistics.

Table 9-4: Educational Wastage Rates in the Secondary Stage During the Years 2023–2024.

Directorate	Failure Rate 2023	Failure Rate 2024	Dropout Rate 2023	Dropout Rate 2024	Failure Change Rate	Dropout Change Rate
Nīnawá	21.60	8.53	4.20	7.83	-60.53	86.40
Şalāḥ-al-Dīn	13.80	2.41	1.20	2.96	-82.53	146.67
Kirkuk	22.50	3.66	3.60	3.37	-83.74	-6.41
Diyālā	20.10	1.26	1.20	1.70	-93.75	41.79
al-Ruṣāfah 1	16.80	4.77	3.50	4.84	-71.60	38.39
al-Ruṣāfah 2	23.90	8.19	4.60	11.38	-65.73	147.33
al-Ruṣāfah 3	30.20	5.71	6.00	6.37	-81.09	6.17
al-Komph 1	18.80	2.73	4.70	2.89	-85.48	-38.48
al-Karkh 2	22.70	5.27	4.00	5.49	-76.78	37.17
al-Karkh 3	29.00	5.20	5.70	5.60	-82.08	-1.79
al-Anbār	17.60	2.59	1.60	2.83	-85.26	76.96
Bābil	20.20	6.70	4.30	7.20	-66.85	67.33
Karbalā'	27.70	6.25	3.50	5.32	-77.43	52.12
Najaf	16.90	5.88	4.30	6.29	-65.23	46.32
al-Dīwānīyah	22.50	5.26	3.60	4.29	-76.60	19.22
al-Muthanná	24.10	3.23	5.00	2.76	-86.59	-44.88
Wāsiṭ	12.40	3.78	2.10	3.31	-69.53	57.59
Dhī-Qār	15.20	3.85	1.90	3.83	-74.66	101.70
Maysān	21.00	3.31	4.00	3.42	-84.25	-14.53
al-Baṣrah	22.00	11.42	3.90	8.32	-48.08	113.38

Source: Ministry of Education, Directorate of Educational Planning and Statistics.

A primary factor contributing to this decline was the restoration of stability in most governorates previously affected by terrorist control. During the academic year (2023–2024), over 6,000 students who had previously dropped out returned to school. This included 1,949 students re-enrolled in formal education, 1,236 students rejoining accelerated learning and youth education programs, and 3,087 students returning to external education, culminating in a total of 6,272 students resuming their studies.

Within this context, mobile teams successfully reached 8,919 dropouts in various areas of Kirkuk Governorate by effectively persuading parents to enroll their children in school under comprehensive government care and integrated ministerial supervision in collaboration with UNICEF. Similarly, the General Directorate of Education in al-Muthanná facilitated the return of 4,000 dropouts to school within days of initiating the “Back to Education” campaign, following proactive field visits by mobile teams. These significant developments are detailed in tables 9-3 and 9-4.

6. Call for the Drafting of a Sovereign Literacy Law

Between 2014 and 2020, illiteracy rates in Iraq increased significantly, particularly following the occupation of extensive regions by terrorist groups in 2014. This challenging period resulted in the suspension of educational activities in numerous schools and a substantial increase in student dropouts, especially in recently liberated areas.

In response to this issue, the Ministry of Education established educational centers within displacement camps and liberated regions, providing essential support to displaced students. Additionally, the ministry initiated comprehensive adult education campaigns targeting state employees, notably those within security institutions.

In 2024, the Ministry of Education advocated for the formulation of a unified sovereign law under governmental auspices. The ministry emphasized that this initiative aims to elevate the fight against illiteracy from a conventional effort to a strategic national project endorsed by all state institutions. Accordingly, it necessitates a cohesive legal framework and a robust central authority to eliminate institutional fragmentation and consolidate efforts under a singular legislative and executive body. This framework seeks to empower illiterate individuals cognitively, economically, and socially, in accordance with the provisions of the Iraqi Constitution.

As part of these endeavors, over 1,233 educational centers were inaugurated, serving approximately 64,389 citizens aspiring to obtain literacy certificates. The ministry provided comprehensive logistical support, enabling these individuals to resume their studies after being previously marginalized by life circumstances. The adult education and illiteracy eradication program is recognized as a national strategic project poised to contribute to sustainable development across social, economic, and educational domains.

7. Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence

In accordance with the directives issued by UNESCO during the academic year (2023–2024) concerning the advancement of digital learning and the integration of contemporary technology into education, the Ministry of Education implemented several initiatives, the most significant of which are outlined below:

1. The General Directorate of Vocational Education established an artificial intelligence department within al-Karkh Vocational Preparatory School. This initiative aimed to enhance education by incorporating the latest technological specializations, with the goal of preparing qualified students in advanced fields such as robotics, big data, computer vision, and natural language processing. This effort sought to strengthen students' capacities to meet the demands of the local labor market and aligned with the ministry's strategic focus on developing modern educational and training programs that support the educational process and promote technological transformation in Iraq.

2. The Ministry of Education announced its forthcoming five-year ministerial plan, which includes the termination of paper-based transactions and the full implementation of digital transformation across educational institutions. This plan emphasizes the role of technology in reducing time and effort, preserving archived information, ensuring the rapid and seamless delivery of data and official documents, and advancing the adoption of electronic signature systems. Additionally, it aims to provide comprehensive electronic learning by developing broadcasting platforms and enhancing the capabilities of educational staff through training in advanced technologies. The plan also incorporates the use of artificial intelligence programs to address citizens' inquiries.
3. The launch of the curricula digitalization standards document, comprising ten strategic programmatic clauses designed to keep pace with the global technological boom at the digital level. This document aims to improve the educational framework, support quality assurance, develop the skills of educational staff, and advance the role of vocational education within the labor market.
4. The advancement of computer curriculum components for the intermediate and preparatory stages, emphasizing the integration of artificial intelligence and cybersecurity into school curricula. This advancement aims to develop the technical competencies necessary to address digital challenges, ensuring that the new curriculum incorporates both scientific and practical aspects to foster innovation and creativity among students.
5. Engagement in discussions with international companies regarding the development of the digital environment within educational institutions.
6. Exploration of collaborative opportunities with Huawei and Hunan companies to enhance the educational digital landscape in accordance with international quality standards.

8. International Cooperation

A. International Cooperation with UNESCO

During the academic year (2023–2024), international collaboration with UNESCO was undertaken to provide training on the Education Management Information System (EMIS). This system is designed to furnish educational institutions with precise and timely electronic statistical reports, thereby enhancing administrative performance. It also aims to improve the security and safety of data related to students, and teaching and administrative personnel, while reducing time and effort. Furthermore, the system facilitates the identification of the Ministry of Education's future needs. Procedures were initiated to acquire the source code for EMIS to achieve integrated electronic data linkage among educational institutions within the Quality Education Program. Training was provided to trainers from the EMIS divisions within the Ministry of Education, the executive body of the Literacy Program, personnel from the General Secretariat of the

Council of Ministers/National Data Center, and the iMAP organization on the information management system.

B. Participation in a Training Workshop Within the ITALEEM Program

The Federal Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Education in the Kurdistan Region, in collaboration with the UNESCO office, participated in a training workshop under the ITALEEM program. The workshop focused on evaluating the current state of educational technology in Iraq, analyzing available resources, identifying challenges and gaps in technical and human capacities, and formulating an integrated strategy for the application of educational technology in the educational sector. The event included a panel discussion and a specialized workshop examining mechanisms for implementing educational technology. The workshop was led by an international expert from Austria specializing in digital learning, serving as a foundational initiative to promote sustainable digital transformation and enhance access to inclusive and innovative education.

C. Greening Education and Artificial Intelligence Initiative

In cooperation with UNESCO, the Ministry of Education initiated innovative projects aimed at promoting environmental sustainability and technological integration to achieve sustainable environmental and technical development. The initiative seeks to engage the educational community actively in addressing environmental challenges through sustainability efforts and attention to school gardens. Additionally, it aims to achieve institutional integration with modern technology by introducing artificial intelligence into various educational fields, aligning with the objectives of the long-term national strategy in collaboration with international organizations.

D. Participation in the Proceedings of the Third ICESCO Conference of Ministers of Education

Iraq participated in the Third ICESCO Conference of Ministers of Education held in Oman to explore the benefits of artificial intelligence and digital tools. The conference addressed key themes related to transforming education into a flexible and comprehensive international system, training youth, and empowering them within the labor market with support from various sectors. Furthermore, the conference discussed awarding a prize for the best invention aimed at enhancing education, particularly focusing on extending educational access to remote areas. The conference also examined the potential incorporation of media literacy into education and strategies for managing social media with transparency to protect pupils and students from electronic extortion.

E. School Participation in a Staff Support Program in Cooperation with IREX

The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), conducted a training workshop for 120 teachers from al-Anbār and Nīnawá. The workshop, held over three consecutive days in Erbil, provided practical and theoretical lectures addressing psychological support, classroom management, and the development of critical thinking skills. Additionally, training was offered on the use of artificial intelligence tools in education and

the application of modern teaching methods aimed at improving student performance. The workshop concluded with the distribution of certificates to participants, who commended the ministry's organizational and coordination efforts.

F. Participation in the Schools Championship for Programming and Innovation

To support programming projects and the use of artificial intelligence in addressing educational challenges in Iraq, the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the IoT KIDS Center, the Office of the Prime Minister's Advisor for Scientific, Academic Affairs and Artificial Intelligence, and Zain Iraq Company, organized the Schools Championship for Programming and Innovation for the third consecutive year. The competition initially registered over 500 students via an electronic form, followed by an examination that qualified 200 students for the second stage. This stage involved an in-person exam covering programming basics, robotics, and artificial intelligence, through which 60 students advanced to the presentation stage. Ultimately, 16 students were selected for the final competition before the judging panel. Eight Iraqi projects won awards, with first place awarded to the innovative project "AI Teaching Assistant," second place to the project "Catch Me If You Can," third place to the project "Intelligence Test," and the public vote awarded to the project "Study Hero."

G. Accession to the International School Sport Federation

In the same year, Iraq became a member of the International School Sport Federation after fulfilling all requirements and obligations. A ministerial delegation participated in the regular meeting of the Federation's General Assembly, held over two consecutive days in Bahrain. The delegation joined representatives from more than 92 countries to complete the work agenda for 2025–2026 and to promote the advancement of school sports. The delegation also aimed to engage Iraq in Arab and international forums and to provide technical support to develop promising youth talents and enhance the skills of athletes (INA, 2024, October 23).

H. Project to Reduce School Dropout in Cooperation with SCI and the Education Above All Foundation in Qatar

The Ministry of Education explored avenues for joint cooperation to reintegrate dropout children into schools through the "Educate a Child" program, in partnership with the Qatari Education Above All Foundation and the International Save the Children organization (SCI) as part of a multi-year recovery initiative. Discussions focused on implementing the program at the start of the upcoming academic year, developing a comprehensive work plan through repeated meetings to study the project's themes, and establishing a joint training workshop supervised by a supreme committee responsible for detailing and monitoring activation steps in targeted governorates.

9. Challenges of the Educational Sector

The educational sector faces several significant challenges, including:

1. Insufficient financial allocations for investment, which have adversely impacted educational infrastructure and substantially hindered the provision of high-quality educational services.
2. The crisis related to the availability of textbooks and the outdated nature of curricula.
3. Limited opportunities for professional development among teachers, inadequate support for counselors, and insufficient attention to learning development programs.
4. The persistence of corruption and private tutoring, which contribute to the decline in efficiency and quality within Iraq's educational system.
5. Deficiencies in electronic readiness and a lack of capacity building for the staff in processing and analyzing statistical data.
6. The marginal role of vocational education, the obsolescence of technical education, and insufficient development of instructors' capacities within vocational education.
7. Weak partnerships between educational institutions in the public and private sectors.
8. Inadequate implementation of administrative decentralization between central and local levels, coupled with weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, resulting in limited progress in transferring authority to governorates.

Requirements for Advancing the Educational Sector

Addressing the current challenges and future goals of Iraq's educational sector necessitates the following actions:

1. Significant investment in infrastructure (construction and rehabilitation) to accommodate the growing student population, including kindergarten-aged children, and to reduce the prevalence of double and triple shifts. Multiple-shift classrooms are a primary factor contributing to the decline in educational quality; thus, prioritizing infrastructure investment is a mid-term educational priority.
2. Annual prioritization of curriculum development by integrating teachers' experiences, redefining curricular objectives, and preparing curricula that align with social and state needs.
3. Increasing salaries and allowances for the educational staff to mitigate private tutoring and discourage dishonest income-generating practices.
4. Enhancing school readiness among primary-stage children by increasing enrollment rates, including expanding public sector kindergarten provisions, which currently remain secondary.
5. Ensuring universal access to and completion of primary education.
6. Addressing internal inefficiencies by reducing failure and dropout rates.

7. Improving teaching and supervisory conditions by lowering the student-to-teacher ratio.
8. Providing enhanced support for children with disabilities as part of the inclusive education agenda.
9. Reducing resource wastage by decreasing the teacher-to-classroom ratio and addressing teacher shortages through improved allocations.
10. Expanding private sector participation in education to meet increasing demands.
11. Enhancing the educational process and quality through school-based management.
12. Strengthening governance in administration and supervision at all educational management levels to achieve greater value for money and improve sector performance.

II. Higher Education

The academic year (2023–2024) marked the implementation of the National Strategy for Education in Iraq (2022–2031), which aimed to broaden the scope of university education by promoting the establishment of private universities to enhance educational opportunities. This initiative was accompanied by a focus on educational integration, positioning private education as a complementary extension of public education.

Additionally, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research introduced a centralized electronic application system for private universities and faculties, extended the application deadline, implemented a comprehensive faculty guide, and strengthened regulatory oversight. This oversight was exemplified by the ministry's revocation of licenses for certain private faculties that failed to comply with academic standards and regulations, underscoring the ministry's commitment to elevating the quality of private education.

1. Quantitative Analysis of Higher Education Institutions

According to the university calendar for undergraduate students for the academic year (2023–2024), the academic year commenced on Tuesday, September 12, 2023, with mid-year examinations beginning on Sunday, December 31, 2023. The spring break started on Sunday, January 14, 2024, followed by the second semester on Sunday, January 28, 2024. Final examinations for the academic year began on Sunday, May 19, 2024. Data from 2024 indicated that the higher education sector comprised 31 public universities enrolling 541,000 students and 165 private universities with 211,000 students. These figures reflect a governmental trend toward promoting private education as a complement to public education, alongside regulatory measures such as the introduction of the centralized electronic application system and enhanced oversight of private faculties.

A. Public Universities

On October 29, 2023, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research announced the results of centralized admissions for universities and institutes for the academic year (2023–2024). The results revealed that 245,291 students were admitted to Iraqi public universities through centralized admission channels. This included 237,066 students admitted via the general and martyrs' relatives channels, 7,998 through direct admission, and 227 through the elite channel.

Within the medical group, 9,333 students were admitted through centralized channels, distributed as 4,931 in faculties of medicine, 2,019 in faculties of dentistry, and 2,383 in faculties of pharmacy. The minimum grade thresholds were 99.43 for medicine, 98.86 for dentistry, and 98.43 for pharmacy.

Admissions in other faculties included 21,047 students in engineering, 29,160 in science, 4,722 in law, 25,076 in administration and economics, 2,798 in medical and health technologies, 3,100 in nursing, 2,264 in veterinary medicine, 4,109 in agriculture, 9,757 in arts, 2,774 in languages, 52,432 in education and basic education, 17,362 in medical institutes, and 8,230 in technological institutes.

During the press conference announcing the admissions, the ministry disclosed the establishment of one university, ten faculties, and over one hundred and twenty departments within public universities to accommodate the intake. Enrollment figures for public universities included approximately 545,632 students in morning studies and 162,439 in evening studies for 2023. Faculty numbers comprised 43,830 instructors for morning studies and 884 for evening studies.

In the private education sector, approximately 343,227 students were enrolled in private universities and faculties, supported by 11,371 instructors. This ratio aligns with the standard benchmark of one instructor per 30 students.

B. Private faculties

The significance of private education increased notably in the academic year 2024 due to its enhanced capacity to accommodate students unable to secure admission to public universities. This included students with lower academic averages and those with higher averages who did not gain admission to faculties aligned with their academic aspirations, particularly in medical and engineering fields. Data from Tables 9-5 and 9-6 illustrate the quantitative growth of private university education. The proportion of students admitted to private institutions rose to 48.13% during the academic year (2023–2024). Female students constituted 44.51%, while males accounted for 51.62%, reflected in a Gender Parity Index of 1.14 for private faculties. Conversely, public universities admitted 51.87% of students, with females representing 55.49% and males 48.38%, corresponding to a Gender Parity Index of 0.83.

The geographical distribution of public and private universities demonstrated a concentration in Baghdad, where over 50% of these institutions are located. Although equitable distribution across governorates is desirable, especially those lacking university education, factors such as high population density, demand volume, and infrastructure availability have contributed to this concentration.

Table 9-5: Admitted and Graduated Students in Universities for the Year (2023–2024).

University	Admitted Students			Graduated Students		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Baghdād	6,149	9,187	15,336	5,187	9,370	14,557
al-Mawṣil	8,829	7,527	16,356	5,755	5,717	11,472
al-Baṣrah	8,856	12,886	21,742	5,102	8,285	13,387
al-Mustanṣiriyyah	5,798	6,298	12,096	5,072	5,759	10,831
University of Technology	2,481	1,185	3,666	2,035	1,557	3,592
al-Kūfah	3,812	5,170	8,982	2,928	4,641	7,569
Tikrīt	7,890	5,447	13,337	5,156	3,354	8,510
al-Qādisiyyah	3,163	3,748	6,911	2,230	2,930	5,160
al-Anbār	2,708	4,290	6,998	2,456	3,897	6,353
Bābil	3,633	4,471	8,104	3,191	4,147	7,338
Diyālā	4,069	5,558	9,627	2,912	4,340	7,252
Karbalā'	3,853	4,328	8,181	2,985	3,828	6,813
Dhī-Qār	3,247	4,049	7,296	2,394	3,051	5,445
Kirkuk	4,502	4,953	9,455	4,011	4,304	8,315
Wāsiṭ	3,378	3,666	7,044	2,340	2,595	4,935
al-Nahrayn	1,007	1,033	2,040	531	887	1,418
al-'Irāqīyah	2,324	3,184	5,508	2,596	3,324	5,920
Maysān	2,319	3,242	5,561	1,921	2,478	4,399
al-Muthanná	1,538	2,271	3,809	1,443	2,188	3,631
Sāmarrā'	1,602	1,395	2,997	912	998	1,910
Sumer	905	1,139	2,044	826	800	1,626
al-Qāsim al-Khaḍrā'	734	516	1,250	403	429	832
Nīnawá	1,042	791	1,833	253	289	542
al-Baṣrah for Oil and Gas	250	135	385	408	207	615
al-Ḥamdānīyah	515	237	752	230	207	437
Tal'afar	386	365	751	160	189	349
al-Fallūjah	894	1,145	2,039	798	872	1,670
Jābir ibn Ḥayyān for Sciences	286	321	607	111	192	303
Information Technology	68	65	133	104	151	255
Ibn Sīnā	127	185	312	92	168	260
al-Karkh for Sciences	193	236	429	324	343	667
al-Shaṭrah	214	566	780	0	0	0
Northern Technical	8,479	7,138	15,617	4,792	3,840	8,632
Middle Technical	6,515	6,760	13,275	5,721	6,095	11,816

Table 9-5 (continued)

University	Admitted Students			Graduated Students		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
al-Furāt al-Awsaṭ Technical	6,494	6,858	13,352	4,141	4,605	8,746
Southern Technical	3,855	3,264	7,119	2,627	2,469	5,096
Public Universities	112,115	123,609	235,724	82,147	98,506	180,653
Private Faculties	119,615	99,145	218,760	55,689	34,353	90,042
Total	231,730	222,754	454,484	137,836	132,859	270,695
Public Universities	48.38%	55.49%	51.87%	59.60%	74.14%	66.74%
Private Faculties	51.62%	44.51%	48.13%	40.40%	25.86%	33.26%

Source: Ministry of Education, Directorate of Educational Planning and Statistics.

Table 9-6: Percentages of Admitted and Graduated Students and the Gender Parity Index in Universities for the Academic Year (2023–2024).

University	Parity of Admitted Students (GPI)	Parity of Graduated Students (GPI)	Admitted Students (1) (%)	Graduated Students (2) (%)	Efficiency (2/1)
Baghdād	1.49	1.55	3.37	5.38	1.59
al-Mawṣil	0.85	2.01	3.60	4.24	1.18
al-Baṣrah	1.46	1.62	4.78	4.95	1.03
al-Mustanṣiriyyah	1.09	1.88	2.66	4.00	1.50
Technology	0.48	2.31	0.81	1.33	1.65
al-Kūfah	1.36	1.63	1.98	2.80	1.41
Tikrīt	0.69	2.54	2.93	3.14	1.07
al-Qādisiyyah	1.18	1.76	1.52	1.91	1.25
al-Anbār	1.58	1.63	1.54	2.35	1.52
Bābil	1.23	1.77	1.78	2.71	1.52
Diyālā	1.37	1.67	2.12	2.68	1.26
Karbalā'	1.12	1.78	1.80	2.52	1.40
Dhī-Qār	1.25	1.78	1.61	2.01	1.25
Kirkuk	1.10	1.93	2.08	3.07	1.48
Wāsiṭ	1.09	1.90	1.55	1.82	1.18
al-Nahrayn	1.03	1.60	0.45	0.52	1.17
al-'Irāqīyah	1.37	1.78	1.21	2.19	1.80
Maysān	1.40	1.78	1.22	1.63	1.33
al-Muthannā	1.48	1.66	0.84	1.34	1.60
Sāmarrā'	0.87	1.91	0.66	0.71	1.07
Sumer	1.26	2.03	0.45	0.60	1.34
al-Qāsim al-Khaḍrā'	0.70	1.94	0.28	0.31	1.12

Table 9-6 (continued)

University	Parity of Admitted Students (GPI)	Parity of Graduated Students (GPI)	Admitted Students (1) (%)	Graduated Students (2) (%)	Efficiency (2/1)
Nīnawá	0.76	1.88	0.40	0.20	0.50
al-Başrah for Oil and Gas	0.54	2.97	0.08	0.23	2.68
al-Ĥamdānīyah	0.46	2.11	0.17	0.16	0.98
Tal'afar	0.95	1.85	0.17	0.13	0.78
al-Fallūjah	1.28	1.92	0.45	0.62	1.38
Jābir ibn Ḥayyān Medical and Pharmaceutical	1.12	1.58	0.13	0.11	0.84
Information and Communications Technology	0.96	1.69	0.03	0.09	3.22
Ibn Sīnā Medical and Pharmaceu-tical	1.46	1.55	0.07	0.10	1.40
al-Karkh for Sciences	1.22	1.94	0.09	0.25	2.61
al-Shaṭrah	2.64	0.00	0.17	0.00	0.00
Northern Tech-nical	0.84	2.25	3.44	3.19	0.93
Middle Technical	1.04	1.94	2.92	4.37	1.49
al-Furāt al-Awsaṭ Technical	1.06	1.90	2.94	3.23	1.10
Southern Tech-nical	0.85	2.06	1.57	1.88	1.20
Private Faculties	0.83	2.62	48.13	33.26	0.69
Total	0.96	2.04	100	100	-

Source: Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Department of Statistics and Data.

2. The Deficiency in Higher Education Buildings

Data for the academic year (2023–2024) concerning university educational buildings reveal a significant shortfall in Iraq. According to Table 9-7, the following key points are noted:

- In 2023, the total number of public university buildings across Iraq, excluding the Kurdistan Region governorates, amounted to 1,490.
- The governorates of Nīnawá, Ṣalāḥ-al-Dīn, and al-Anbār ranked highest in the quantity of university buildings, with counts of 381, 160, and 150 respectively.
- Approximately 107 university buildings were under construction in 2023, predominantly located in al-Anbār (20 buildings), Najaf (19 buildings),

Table 9-7: Deficiency in University Educational Buildings Across Iraq, Excluding the Kurdistan Region Governorates, for the Year 2023.

Governorate	Current Buildings		Under Execution Buildings (2023)		Capacity		
	Number	Capacity	Number	Capacity	Total Current Capacity	Current Number of Students	Capacity Gap
Nīnawá	381	48,710	8	4,156	52,866	59,331	-6,465
Kirkuk	75	38,815	3	1,200	40,015	36,405	3,610
Diyālá	14	4,000	0	0	4,000	36,405	-32,405
al-Anbār	150	16,672	20	13,950	30,622	30,443	179
Baghdād	138	21,699	2	3,000	24,699	165,378	-140,679
Bābil	112	13,012	11	4,192	17,204	35,873	-18,669
Karbalā'	76	26,397	4	3,200	29,597	23,752	5,845
Wāsiṭ	19	16,600	0	0	16,600	22,051	-5,451
Ṣalāḥ-al-Dīn	160	29,233	13	9,050	38,283	39,411	-1,128
Najaf	135	23,593	19	5,703	29,296	37,055	-7,759
al-Dīwānīyah	134	7,526	13	5,920	13,446	23,634	-10,188
al-Muthanná	29	6,605	11	2,200	8,805	15,405	-6,600
Dhī-Qār	59	6,710	1	920	7,630	29,610	-21,980
Maysān	3	90	1	330	420	13,815	-13,395
al-Baṣrah	5	98	1	330	428	51,629	-51,201
Total	1,490	259,760	107	54,151	313,911	620,179	-306,268

Source: Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Department of Statistics and Data.

followed by Ṣalāḥ-al-Dīn and al-Dīwānīyah governorates, each with 13 buildings.

- The capacity deficit was estimated at approximately 306,286 students.

3. The National Strategy for Education and Higher Education in Iraq (2022–2031)

On May 15, 2023, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research announced the National Strategy for Education and Higher Education in Iraq (2022–2031). This strategy represents an ambitious initiative aimed at enhancing the quality, efficiency, and inclusiveness of Iraq's educational system, while also strengthening its role in fostering economic and social development.

The Strategy is structured as follows: the first chapter outlines the strategy's purpose and the process of its formulation; the second chapter provides foundational information regarding the educational context; the third chapter offers an analysis of the education sector; the fourth chapter delineates the strategy's vision, mission, and core values; the fifth chapter identifies the sector's priorities and principal programs; the sixth chapter presents the strategy's cost and financing framework; and the seventh chapter details the mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, coordination, and implementation.

This strategy forms part of the Iraqi government's broader efforts to improve the quality and efficiency of public services accessible to all citizens. It is guided by a forward-looking vision for the educational sector, emphasizing a commitment to core values, the provision of sustainable and innovative learning opportunities for all individuals, the maintenance of high educational standards, and the promotion of a knowledge society aligned with international criteria.

The strategy establishes several key objectives aimed at advancing higher education in Iraq, including:

1. Expanding access to higher education in alignment with demand and labor market needs.
2. Enhancing the quality of higher education components to produce graduates of high caliber.
3. Strengthening graduates' applied skills to meet local and regional labor market requirements.
4. Ensuring a sustainable funding model for Iraqi universities.
5. Promoting higher education systems characterized by flexibility, accountability, transparency, and effective integration.
6. Fostering high-quality scientific research.

The strategy acknowledges the delay in implementing the previous (2011–2022) strategy, attributing it to the deterioration of security and financial conditions in 2014. Nonetheless, it includes a dedicated chapter titled "Evaluating and Overcoming Challenges," which highlights the achievements and initiatives of the Ministries of Education and Higher Education as integral components of the strategy's programs.

This current strategy presents a significant opportunity for reforming Iraq's education sector, particularly in light of the challenges posed by years of conflict and crisis. It also addresses the evolving needs of the labor market and civil society. Successful realization of the strategy's goals necessitates strong political commitment from the government, effective partnerships with all stakeholders (including educators and students), and sustained support from donors and international partners.

Despite its comprehensive and ambitious nature, the strategy exhibits certain limitations, summarized as follows (al-Rubayī, 2024):

1. The strategy does not encompass the entire country, excluding the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Consequently, it primarily addresses education in southern and central Iraq, although it advocates for enhanced cooperation with the Kurdistan Region, donors, and international partners to improve educational quality.
2. There is a notable deficiency in data and statistics concerning private schools, faculties, and universities. The strategy lacks sufficient information on the role of private educational institutions, and it is unclear whether existing figures pertain to public or general education. Therefore,

- the strategy requires revision and updating to incorporate the private and foreign education sectors adequately.
3. The strategy omits discussion of the role of competencies and expertise, particularly those of Iraqis abroad, in advancing education.
 4. It fails to emphasize participation in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).
 5. The strategy pays insufficient attention to the role of civil society in education, the integration of technological advancements, and the alignment of operational plans with strategic objectives.
 6. It inadequately addresses disparities in educational opportunities across regions and demographic groups, especially considering the impacts of conflict and insecurity.
 7. The strategy lacks clear plans for curriculum development, enhancement of teacher and professor skills, and the incorporation of modern technologies and skills training in teaching and learning processes.
 8. It does not sufficiently leverage stakeholder participation (including students, parents, civil society, and the private sector) in formulating educational goals, policies, and programs.
 9. The strategy overlooks the critical issue of combating administrative and financial corruption, which significantly impedes educational reform and development.
 10. It does not underscore the importance of adhering to academic professional ethics to counteract cheating, plagiarism, and scientific misconduct.

4. Development of the Bologna Process Implementation in Universities

On December 2, 2022, the Ministry of Higher Education resolved to implement the Bologna Process within technical universities, demonstrating a commitment to advancing and enhancing technical and vocational education and training. This initiative underscores direct collaboration with UNESCO. The system initially encompassed four programs at the undergraduate first-stage level in technical universities, commencing in the academic year (2022-2023), thereby laying the groundwork for the broader adoption of the new educational framework across all universities. This decision, unprecedented in Iraq and formulated after comprehensive studies, consultations, and joint scientific workshops with UNESCO experts, aims to align national educational systems with international standards, meet quality assurance and academic accreditation criteria, and respond to evolving labor market demands. Consequently, it is expected to strengthen the position and reputation of Iraqi universities within the global academic community, particularly within the European Higher Education Area.

During a conference co-hosted by the European Union delegation and UNESCO, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research announced the successful implementation of the Bologna Process in technical university special-

izations. Concurrently, the ministry affirmed the preparedness of all public and private universities to adopt the Bologna Process and fulfill its implementation requirements across more than 600 departments within faculties of engineering and science during the academic year (2023-2024).

In alignment with the vision for the development and qualification of technical and vocational education and training, the ministry initiated the adoption of the Bologna Process across four undergraduate first-stage programs in technical universities starting in the academic year (2022-2023), serving as a preliminary phase for the comprehensive implementation of the new educational system across all universities.

Furthermore, the ministry announced that over 600 specialized departments within faculties of engineering and science in both public and private universities would undergo the Bologna Process implementation. It emphasized that universities and their faculties bear the responsibility for executing the Bologna Process and ensuring the success of its measures. The evaluation of university institutions and their leadership will be conducted based on the execution and interaction indicators achieved. Simultaneously, the ministry highlighted the importance of leveraging this new framework to directly connect university specializations with labor market needs.

Ms. Barbara Egger, Head of the cooperation department at the European Union Delegation, affirmed that Iraq's adoption of the Bologna Process represents a responsible decision aimed at developing educational systems, addressing institutional needs for competency-based programs, fostering quality environments, and applying academic standards to achieve quality education. She expressed appreciation for the ministry's decision, noting that the Bologna Process constitutes the primary pathway for educational reform in Iraq.

The ministry recommended extending the Bologna Process procedures in the academic year (2024-2025) to include specializations in administration and economics, veterinary medicine, and nursing across all universities. This expansion aims to align university trajectories and graduate outcomes with labor market demands, modernize the academic environment and curricula in accordance with scientific developments and variables, and ensure seamless integration with global educational contexts.

5. Development of Iraqi Universities in Global Rankings

In 2024, Iraqi public and private universities actively participated and competed in several prominent global rankings, notably including the following:

A. Times Higher Education World University Rankings

The Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings employs eighteen core indicators to assess university performance across five domains: Teaching (the learning environment) at 29.5%, Research Environment at 29%, Research Quality at 30%, International Outlook at 7.5%, and Industry Income at 4%.

The 2024 edition of THE evaluated 1,904 universities from 108 countries worldwide. Thirteen Iraqi universities attained competitive rankings, positioning Iraq 37th globally. This represents a significant increase in the number of Iraqi universities featured compared to the previous year. The following universities achieved notable rankings on the global stage:

1. University of Technology: Ranked (801–1000)
2. al-Nahrayn University: Ranked (1201–1500)
3. University of al-Qādisīyah: Ranked (1201–1500)
4. University of Bābil: Ranked (1201–1500)
5. University of Diyālā: Ranked (1201–1500)
6. University of al-Anbār: Ranked (1501+)
7. University of Baghdād: Ranked (1501+)
8. University of al-Baṣrah: Ranked (1501+)
9. University of Karbalā': Ranked (1501+)
10. University of al-Kūfah: Ranked (1501+)
11. Middle Technical University: Ranked (1501+)
12. University of al-Mawṣil: Ranked (1501+)
13. al-Mustanṣirīyah University: Ranked (1501+)

The rankings indicated that the universities of Baghdād, Bābil, al-Kūfah, al-Mawṣil, and al-Mustanṣirīyah secured prominent positions in the Clinical and Health specialization. Additionally, the universities of al-Anbār, al-Mawṣil, Baghdād, al-Baṣrah, al-Kūfah, and al-Mustanṣirīyah attained favorable rankings in the Life Sciences specialization.

In the Engineering specialization, significant rankings were achieved by the universities of al-Nahrayn, al-Qādisīyah, al-Anbār, Bābil, Diyālā, Technology, Baghdād, al-Baṣrah, Karbalā', Middle Technical, al-Mawṣil, and al-Mustanṣirīyah.

The universities of al-Qādisīyah, Bābil, Technology, al-Nahrayn, Diyālā, al-Anbār, Baghdād, al-Baṣrah, Karbalā', al-Kūfah, al-Mawṣil, and al-Mustanṣirīyah obtained competitive rankings in the Physical Sciences specialization. Meanwhile, the universities of al-Nahrayn, al-Anbār, Bābil, Baghdād, al-Kūfah, Middle Technical, al-Mawṣil, Technology, al-Baṣrah, and al-Mustanṣirīyah secured distinguished positions in the Computer Science specialization.

It is noteworthy that Iraq achieved the 37th position globally in the 2024 Times Higher Education World University Rankings, reflecting the competitive presence of Iraqi universities among 2,024 institutions from 108 countries, evaluated based on teaching, research environment, research quality, international outlook, and industry income.

B. Shanghai Global Ranking of Academic Subjects

The University of Baghdād attained an unprecedented competitive position in the Shanghai Global Ranking of Academic Subjects. The 2023 edition ranked

1,900 universities from 104 countries, with the University of Baghdād securing a leading rank within the (201–300) range.

This ranking assessed universities across fifty-five subjects spanning natural sciences, engineering, life sciences, medical sciences, and social sciences, using indicators such as research quality, international collaboration, and international awards.

C. Times Higher Education Arab University Rankings

The Times Higher Education released its 2023 edition of the Arab University Rankings, evaluating 207 institutions from fifteen countries. The assessment employed twenty performance indicators across five main categories: Teaching (31%), Research Environment (31%), Research Quality (24%), International Outlook (8%), and Society (6%).

Twenty-six Iraqi public universities, alongside several private institutions, achieved significant rankings for the first time in this edition. The rankings are as follows:

1. University of Baghdād: Ranked (40)
2. University of Technology: Ranked (50)
3. University of al-Mawşil: Ranked (51–60)
4. University of Bābil: Ranked (61–70)
5. University of al-Başrah: Ranked (61–70)
6. al-Nahrayn University: Ranked (71–80)
7. al-Mustanşirīyah University: Ranked (71–80)
8. University of al-Kūfah: Ranked (81–90)
9. University of al-Anbār: Ranked (101–120)
10. University of Tikrīt: Ranked (101–120)
11. University of Karbalā': Ranked (121–140)
12. University of al-Qādisīyah: Ranked (141–160)
13. al-Qāsim al-Khaḍrā' University: Ranked (141–160)
14. University of Diyālā: Ranked (141–160)
15. University of Kirkuk: Ranked (141–160)
16. University of Wāsiṭ: Ranked (141–160)
17. al-'Ayn University: Ranked (161+)
18. al-Furāt al-Awsaṭ Technical University: Ranked (161+)
19. al-Mustaqbal University: Ranked (161+)
20. University of al-Muthanná: Ranked (161+)
21. The Islamic University: Ranked (161+)
22. Middle Technical University: Ranked (161+)
23. University of Maysān: Ranked (161+)

24. Northern Technical University: Ranked (161+)
25. Southern Technical University: Ranked (161+)
26. University of Dhī-Qār: Ranked (161+)

D. QS World University Rankings: Sustainability 2024

For the first time, the universities of Baghdad and Bābil achieved competitive results in the QS World University Rankings: Sustainability 2024, which evaluates global universities' responses to the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the 2024 edition, approximately 1,400 universities worldwide were assessed using a methodology that measures institutions' capacities to address environmental, social, and governance (ESG) challenges. The University of Baghdad ranked between 921 and 940 globally, while the University of Bābil was positioned in the 1201+ range, focusing on environmental and social impact and governance.

Notably, the QS World University Rankings: Sustainability 2024 interprets educational institutions' efforts toward achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and reinforces universities' missions in executing the response plan extending to 2030.

E. UI GreenMetric Ranking

Seventy-four Iraqi universities and faculties secured competitive positions in the UI GreenMetric ranking for 2024. This ranking evaluated 1,183 university institutions globally. Iraqi universities increased their global competitiveness to seventy-four institutions compared to seventy-three in the 2023 edition.

The UI GreenMetric ranking is based on infrastructure (15%), energy and climate change (21%), waste management (18%), water (10%), transportation (18%), and education and research (18%), alongside sustainability, environment, green spaces, and energy consumption.

The University of Bābil led Iraqi universities in this ranking, securing the 133rd global position, followed by the universities of al-Anbār, al-Mustaqbal, Baghdad, al-Furāt al-Awsaṭ Technical, al-Baṣrah, al-Mustaṣirīyah, Karbalā', Sumer, al-Kaḥl, and al-Qādisīyah, down to the University of al-Ḥamdānīyah.

Iraqi universities and faculties demonstrated escalating competitiveness in global rankings, including the SCImago ranking with twenty-two Iraqi institutions; the UI GreenMetric ranking, which increased to seventy-four institutions in 2024; the URAP ranking featuring four Iraqi universities; and the Webometrics ranking, which included over one hundred Iraqi universities and faculties.

F. URAP Ranking

Iraqi universities attained significant competitive positions in the 2023-2024 global URAP ranking, which evaluated 3,000 universities worldwide. Eleven Iraqi universities reinforced their rankings: Baghdad (1262), Technology (1671), Bābil (2130), al-Baṣrah (2164), al-Mustaṣirīyah (2249), al-Mustaqbal (2315), al-Mawṣil (2362), al-Kūfah (2523), al-Qādisīyah (2729), Middle Technical (2761), and the Islamic University (2836).

The URAP ranking assesses academic performance based on scientific articles (21%), citations (21%), total research papers (10%), total article impact (18%), total citation impact (15%), and international collaboration (15%).

G. International Accreditation from the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME)

The World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) granted full international accreditation to the National Council for Accreditation of Medical Colleges in Iraq (NCAMC) for its quality assurance programs and standards in medical education. The WFME Recognition Committee approved the NCAMC's recognition until 2034, affirming its policies and procedures for ensuring medical education quality.

H. Times Higher Education Asia University Rankings

The Times Higher Education Asia University Rankings 2024 evaluated 739 universities using criteria related to teaching, research environment, research quality, international outlook, and industry. Iraqi universities increased from eight to thirteen competing institutions compared to the previous year. The University of Technology ranked (351-400); al-Qādisiyyah, Bābil, and Diyālā ranked (501-600); while al-Nahrayn, Middle Technical, al-Mustanşiriyyah, al-Anbār, Baghdād, al-Baṣrah, Karbalā', al-Kūfah, and al-Mawṣil ranked (601+). The evaluation criteria include:

- Teaching (24.5%): teaching reputation (10%), staff-to-student ratio (4.5%), doctorate-to-bachelor's ratio (2%), doctorates awarded to academic staff ratio (5.5%), institutional income (2.5%).
- Research Environment (28%): research reputation (15%), research income (6.5%), research productivity (6.5%).
- Research Quality (30%): citation impact (7.5%), research strength (7.5%), research excellence (7.5%), research influence (7.5%).
- International Outlook (7.5%): international students (2.5%), international staff (2.5%), international collaboration (2.5%).
- Industry (10%): industry income (5%), patents (5%).

I. Iraqi Ranking for Universities

The 2023 Iraqi Ranking for Universities evaluated ninety-five public and private institutions based on institutional accreditation (20%), global rankings (10%), scientific research effectiveness (30%), community service (5%), digital maturity (2%), faculty members (10%), awards (5%), students (5%), infrastructure (5%), diversity and international cooperation (5%), and occupational health and safety (3%).

The Supervision and Scientific Evaluation Apparatus ranked the University of Baghdād first, followed by the University of Bābil and the University of Technology among public universities. al-'Amīd University ranked first among private universities, followed by al-Mustaḡbal University and the Islamic University.

J. Times Higher Education Young University Rankings 2024

Iraqi universities participated in the Times Higher Education Young University Rankings 2024, which includes universities 50 years old or younger. Among 673 global participants, nine Iraqi universities were ranked: University of Technology (301–350), al-Nahrayn University (501–600), University of al-Qādisīyah (501–600), University of al-Anbār (501–600), University of Bābil (501–600), University of Diyālā (501–600), Middle Technical University (601+), University of Karbalā' (601+), and University of al-Kūfah (601+). The previous edition included only four Iraqi universities.

These universities were evaluated based on performance indicators from the flagship THE World University Rankings, considering teaching, research, knowledge transfer, and international outlook.

6. Qualitative Initiatives

A. Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence

Among the most significant initiatives in this domain are the following:

- During the Opinion Committee meeting held on May 30, 2024, the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research emphasized the imperative to automate evaluative examinations for the academic year (2024-2025). He also advocated for advancing efforts to establish a specialized faculty dedicated to artificial intelligence. The Minister underscored the importance of aligning with global knowledge advancements and finalizing university procedures to facilitate a deliberate transition toward electronic services, which are central to citizen engagement. He further stressed the continuous modernization of curricula and educational programs, focusing on developing students' competencies to enable effective interaction with both local and global labor markets. Additionally, he highlighted the necessity of intensifying support for the technical and vocational education sector, which constitutes the foundational infrastructure for human resource development and capacity building. The meeting attendees deliberated on several agenda items, notably:
 - Formulating a strategic plan to support and enhance research centers and study institutes, thereby strengthening their scientific disciplines within universities.
 - Establishing a department of health physics and radiotherapy technologies within the technical engineering faculty at al-Furāt al-Awsat Technical University.
 - Initiating evening study programs in the translation department at the Faculty of Arts and the artificial intelligence department at the Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology at the University of al-Anbār.

- The Ministry organized an international conference on the future of vocational and technical education and training in collaboration with UNESCO and the European Union from May 15 to 16, 2024. The conference spotlighted international trends and their alignment with Iraq's National Strategy for Education (2022–2031), emphasizing the modernization of educational curricula and training programs, enhancement of student skills, and sustained cooperation with international organizations to meet global standards. The initiative aims to keep pace with evolving knowledge and technical skills by cultivating and developing educational policies and strategies that address national needs while aligning with international trends. The ministry reaffirmed that Iraqi universities specializing in technical fields have consistently concentrated efforts on advancing the technical and vocational education sector, which serves as the fundamental infrastructure for developing human resources and capacities pivotal to supporting the national economy. Consequently, the National Strategy for Education in Iraq had to incorporate a key objective: the integration of theory and practice and the promotion of innovation and creativity through applied education, which acts as a catalyst for sustainable development.
- The orientation toward partnership and collaboration with leading global institutions to deliver high-quality, technology-enhanced higher education was exemplified by the “Smart Education” event, conducted in cooperation with Huawei. This collaboration aims to enhance smart education platforms within academic institutions and initiate substantial steps toward developing a comprehensive and integrated ecosystem for nurturing talent in the information and communications technology sector. The event featured the signing of a memorandum of cooperation between the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and Huawei's ICT Academy and Talent Ecosystem programs. It also included addresses by representatives from the Chinese Embassy, UNESCO, the Director General of the Department of Studies, Planning, and Follow-up at the Ministry, and the Director of Smart Education at Huawei, alongside a speech by Huawei's CEO announcing the Huawei ICT Competition 2024/2025. This event reflects the Ministry's specialized departments' commitment to information and communications technology, aiming to foster the necessary cooperation to identify and fulfill the needs of Iraqi students and youth within the framework of smart education and digital transformation.

B. Initiative: Study in Iraq

The “Study in Iraq” program represents an initiative by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research to attract international students to Iraqi public and private universities. Scholarships are offered through an electronic platform and include fully funded, partially funded, and self-funded options covering tuition fees, accommodation, and health insurance. Applicants may apply to

multiple universities via the electronic form to select scholarships that best suit their needs. The program's objective is to increase the enrollment of international students in Iraqi universities, encompassing 67 public and private institutions.

The program covers undergraduate (Bachelor's) and postgraduate studies (Higher Diploma, Master's, Doctorate) across diverse specializations. Applications are processed through an integrated electronic platform enabling students to select appropriate universities and programs.

The inaugural edition of the "Study in Iraq" program for the academic year (2023-2024) attracted 1,015 international students who enrolled in various specializations at the Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral levels across Iraqi universities. On April 1, 2024, the ministry announced the launch of the program's second edition for the academic year (2024-2025). Over 2,000 students from seventy countries registered for this edition, which offered 14,322 study seats across 59 public and private Iraqi universities. Of these, 57% were fully funded (free) scholarships, and 43% were partially funded (half-free) scholarships in fields including medicine, health, engineering, pure sciences, agriculture, veterinary medicine, administration, law, politics, education, and humanitarian studies at the Bachelor's, Higher Diploma, Master's, and Doctoral levels. Applications commenced on April 1, 2024, via the dedicated electronic platform for the "Study in Iraq" program.

7. International Cooperation

The year 2024 witnessed significant international cooperation through collaboration with international organizations and participation in global scientific programs and competitions. The most notable activities are summarized below:

A. Academic Cooperation with Specialized Iranian Universities

Iraqi universities finalized memoranda of understanding (MoUs) for academic cooperation with specialized Iranian universities during Science Week held between the two countries. These MoUs outlined joint efforts concerning the technological and environmental ecosystem, expertise transfer, support for development and growth centers, and the creation of employment and innovation opportunities via university technological incubators. Additionally, the MoUs included establishing joint research centers to advance industry, agriculture, environmental studies at technical and vocational universities, and skills development.

B. Participation in the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) in Doha

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research participated in the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) in Doha from November 28 to 29, 2023. Discussions included the joint Iraqi-Qatari university project. The eleventh edition of the summit focused on creativity and enhancing human potential in the era of artificial intelligence, representing a pivotal shift in education that necessitates a comprehensive review of educational mechanisms and future. The summit featured over 150 international speakers across twenty sessions, addressing themes such as computer literacy, inclusive learning, and innovative methods leveraging artificial intelligence to foster creativity in education.

C. Signing an Agreement with the United Nations World Food Programme in Training and Development

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research facilitated the signing of an executive agreement with the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) to collaborate on training and graduate skill development. The agreement entails implementing a program to enhance English language proficiency, digital and technical skills, and entrepreneurship in partnership with rehabilitation, employment, and continuous education centers at the universities of al-Mawşil, al-Başrah, Technology, al-Anbār, Dhī-Qār, and Maysān. This initiative aims to strengthen graduates' capacities, promote knowledge exchange, and develop expertise. The agreement serves as a foundational framework for cooperation and creating conducive environments for projects empowering university graduates with contemporary skills.

D. Accession to the International Nuclear Security Support Centres (NSSC) Network

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) approved Iraq's membership in the International Network for Nuclear Security Training and Support Centres (NSSC Network). The agency expressed confidence that Iraq's inclusion will positively impact training, human resource development, technical and scientific support, and adherence to safety and quality standards in nuclear energy, aligning with sustainable development goals. This development also supports the zero-power nuclear reactor project dedicated to university scientific research and facilitates the establishment of the National Center for Nuclear Security.

E. Hosting the Regular Meeting of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Coordination Group in Iraq

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research hosted the regular meeting of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Coordination Group (TVET CG), with participation from UNESCO representatives and various ministries. The meeting aimed to strengthen partnerships with international organizations, institutions, and the European Union to enhance infrastructure and meet sustainable development requirements. The ministry highlighted the completion of numerous projects directly impacting the educational process, notably the Bologna Process, and achieving high academic quality standards.

F. Participation in the National Conference for Green Education

Under the ministry's sponsorship, the National Conference for Green Education convened on Monday, February 19, 2024. The conference emphasized the importance of environmental preservation, improvement, and participation in awareness campaigns to promote sustainable practices.

G. Participation in the Meetings of the General Assembly of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)

The ministry participated in the General Assembly meeting of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) held in the United Arab Emirates under the theme "Outcome of COP28: Infrastructure, Policies and Skills for Tripling

Renewables and Accelerating the Energy Transition.” The event included over 1,300 participants from 144 countries, including ministers and executive officials. Discussions focused on strategic pathways for countries and regions based on COP28 outcomes and the first global assessment of the Paris Agreement implementation. Attendees reviewed energy transition priorities and necessary steps to accelerate the increase of renewable energy production capacity by 2030.

H. The Academic Bridge Initiative Between Iraq and the UK

The ministry launched the Academic Bridge Program Initiative between Iraq and the United Kingdom, presenting an official copy to the British Council in London during the Iraqi-British universities forum titled “Iraq-UK Higher Education Dialogue.” The minister highlighted the extensive potential for cooperation between universities in both countries through joint research initiatives and academic exchanges. This collaboration aims to develop educational programs, particularly in medical and engineering fields, enhance capacity building, and align with global academic trends. He advocated for a cooperation framework based on mutual respect, equality, and sustainability and proposed forming a bilateral working group comprising academic and governmental representatives from both countries to facilitate knowledge exchange and ensure smooth implementation of joint initiatives. The minister concluded by emphasizing the initiative as a foundation for positive partnerships fostering global academic excellence and cooperation.

8. Challenges of Higher Education in Iraq

The higher education institution in Iraq suffers from a group of challenges that can be summarized as follows (FCDRS, 2025):

A. Continuous Pressure on the Labor Market in Light of Quantitative Expansion

- The quantitative expansion resulting from the ongoing establishment of more public and private universities, university faculties, and institutes (juxtaposed with the weak flexibility of the productive apparatus and the inability of the public and private labor market to respond appropriately to graduates) has transformed university education in Iraq into a source that feeds the unemployment market.
- The dominance of the quantitative criterion over the qualitative one in defining the features of our educational policy has led to the continuous opening of scientific specializations that are not needed in the labor market, or to exaggeration in determining the numbers of students studying in them beyond the absorption capacity of university institutions and above their actual need in the labor market. This is not restricted to humanitarian specializations only, but even encompasses scientific specializations, including the medical group. The absence of sound planning and fruitful cooperation between the Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has driven public university institutions and investors to create many scientific faculties

and departments within a single specialization. The result was a large surplus in the number of graduates from these specializations whom the public and private labor markets are unable to absorb, as is the case with the specialization of law, pharmacy, and other specializations that were once demanded in the labor market and subsequently became a burden upon it.

B. Instability of the Educational Policy

There is an absence of a clear, stable, and long-term policy in managing educational institutions, organizing them, and defining their near and distant goals. This is due to the continuous change in the orientations of the ministry and its other formations from one minister and university leadership to another, as there is no integration between the work of predecessor and successor ministers and university leaders in defining the ministry's strategy, its management method, the organization of its work, and how to achieve its vision and goals. This divergence has even reached teaching and examination systems, the selection of leaderships, and the performance evaluation of personnel in university institutions. This matter has resulted in a clear disruption in the ministry's work, leaving major damages on university administrations and their staff, which in turn has reflected negatively on their performance and the execution method of their tasks.

C. Malfunction of the Employment System in University Institutions

During the past two years, university institutions in Iraq witnessed a trend toward increasing the number of employees and contractors who are unqualified to work in them. This flaw in employment led to disrupting the work of these institutions and caused their administrative leaderships to spend the bulk of their time on how to provide the teaching quorum for these large numbers, rather than focusing on developing them, training them, and monitoring the extent of their eligibility to work. This system of employment does not align with the goal of advancing the role of higher education and causes weakness in the performance of university institutions; at the same time, it makes them bloated and immersed in disguised unemployment, inflicting apathy and irresponsibility among their personnel in determining the role required of them.

D. Malfunction of the Student Admission System

The student admission system in Iraqi university institutions relies solely on the student's high school average and does not take into account their scientific interests or their eligibility for the scientific specialization they choose. The interviews conducted with the student are merely a formal routine that cannot be relied upon.

This system has caused the misleading of students and has exhausted them and their families, particularly with their keenness to choose scientific specializations they believe guarantee appointment in state institutions, such as the medical group, or guarantee employment at a minimum in private life, such as the law specialization. However, the result was the graduation of immense cohorts of students who are mostly unqualified, and sometimes unwilling, in these specializations until they overflowed beyond the need in the public and private employ-

ment market. This reflected negatively through the weak services they provide to the state and society; for with high numbers and a lack of desire, performance weakens and efficiency decreases, unlike the case when there is scarcity, desire, and need in the labor market.

E. The Impact of the Political Factor

Preserving the independence of university institutions and their professionalism requires distancing them from political influences, conflicts, and whims, and preventing interference in their administrations and scientific trajectories.

F. Weakness of the Education Budget within the State's Budget

The extent of interest in education in Iraq can be sensed through the resources allocated to the ministries of Education and Higher Education and Scientific Research in the state's general budget, as it is said: "Priorities reveal their true nature through budgets." Consequently, if we refer to the arrangement of the priority sequence of education in the Iraqi annual general budget contained in the Triennial Budget Law (2023–2025) No. 13 of 2023, we find that the Ministry of Higher Education occupies the 12th rank with a budget estimated at 3,160,212,068 Iraqi Dinars, which is equivalent to 1.58% of the state's total budget.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education occupies the 5th rank with a budget estimated at 11,896,363,654 Iraqi Dinars, which is equivalent to 5.98% of the general budget. This means that the total allocation for the ministries of Education and Higher Education in the budget is equivalent to 7.56%, which is a very small percentage when compared with its counterparts in some Arab countries. According to the general budget estimates for the year 2024, you find that this percentage is 14.5% in Saudi Arabia, 9.3% in Qatar, 15.3% in the United Arab Emirates, 16.8% in Oman, 13.8% in Kuwait, 14.8% in Egypt, 11.6% in Morocco, and 10.18% in Algeria. This is despite the fact that the lag of the education sector in Iraq is much greater than in the rest of these countries, and it requires massive expenditures to advance it and place it on the correct path toward development and elevation, while recognizing a reality denied by none: the success of development programs in any country in the world cannot be achieved without the advancement of its education sector.

Therefore, it is no surprise to see that the advancement of universities in global rankings harmonizes with the high volume of budgets allocated to the education sector in their respective countries. For this reason, you find that the leading positions in the global QS ranking for Arab universities are secured by universities from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt.

9. Agendas for the Year 2024

The advancement of the educational sector in Iraq necessitates the implementation of decisive measures by influential governmental and non-governmental leadership. These measures include the following:

A. Fostering Political Conviction and Will

It is imperative that education be prioritized by leadership, as the construction of the Iraqi state and society depends on it. This priority should be reflected by

increasing the proportion of the annual general budget allocated to education to levels comparable to or exceeding those of neighboring countries. Without such conviction and will, the educational sector will remain stagnant, weak, and unable to compete regionally or internationally.

B. Aligning Education with the Labor Market

To achieve equilibrium between educational outcomes and labor market demands, it is essential to discontinue the maintenance of academic specializations that lack market demand. This objective requires an immediate cessation of establishing new university institutions (both public and private) and a focus on restructuring existing institutions to meet labor market needs, ensuring high quality and efficiency in both material and human resources.

C. Reviewing Admission and Employment Systems

To realize the aforementioned alignment, it is necessary to reevaluate admission and employment systems within universities to ensure appropriate student-specialization matching and the appointment of competent instructors and administrators. Failure to do so risks producing an inefficient workforce detrimental to the state and society.

D. Establishing a Regional Institutional Framework

The Iraqi government, through the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Higher Education, should engage with neighboring countries to develop a regional institutional framework that facilitates the mutual recognition and employment of higher education outputs without barriers. This framework would significantly aid in reducing unemployment among Iraqi university graduates and generate financial resources through remittances from those employed abroad.

E. Stabilizing Educational Policy

Long-term stability in educational policy, including clear laws, regulations, instructions, and administrative controls, is crucial for the advancement of universities and their personnel. This stability would mitigate the disruptions caused by frequent changes in ministerial and university leadership. A collaborative, integrated, and unified approach among leadership is essential to stabilize university customs and traditions and to foster progress.

F. Independence of Universities and Higher Education in General

It is essential to maintain the independence of universities and higher education institutions by ensuring they remain free from political conflicts and disputes. This autonomy allows these institutions to concentrate on their academic and professional responsibilities, thereby fulfilling their anticipated roles without being influenced by political polarization.

G. University Twinning and Networking

Establishing partnerships and networks between Iraqi universities and their counterparts in developed countries is vital. Such collaborations should extend beyond scholarships and joint scientific events to include the exchange of students, lecturers, and researchers. The absence of foreign teaching and research staff and limited educational program exchanges have hindered Iraqi

universities from engaging competitively and benefiting from international knowledge and experience.

H. Executing the National Strategy for Education in Iraq (2022-2031)

The execution of this strategy requires:

- Allocating the necessary financial resources effectively while ensuring transparency and efficiency.
- The strategy estimates a cost of 140 trillion dinars over ten years, necessitating increased budgetary allocations and GDP spending on education. Key funding criteria include:
 - Raising the education sector's share of government expenditures from 10% in 2021 to 16% in 2031.
 - Increasing education spending from 11 trillion dinars in 2019 to 29 trillion dinars in 2031, equivalent to 5.6% of GDP.
 - Establishing a dedicated budget line for the "Education Transformation Development and Rehabilitation Projects" program, encompassing infrastructure development such as schools, universities, laboratories, libraries, workshops, and recreational facilities.
- Providing qualified and committed human resources at both centralized and decentralized levels for educational administration and school management.
- Ensuring staff capability to participate in reforms required by the National Strategy, which may involve changing entrenched work habits.
- Coordinating efforts among the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, other relevant ministries, external partners, and the private sector.
- Maintaining political commitment to the National Strategy's vision and long-term objectives.
- Implementing regular monitoring and evaluation, with decision-makers and implementers prepared to learn from these processes.

I. Proposals for Developing Private Faculties in Iraq

- Encouraging and supporting private faculties to expand their activities under ministry supervision, aligned with the centralized higher education plan.
- Promoting scientific cooperation between private universities and faculties and relevant institutions domestically and internationally, including staff exchanges and expertise sharing.
- Recognizing service in private universities and faculties as equivalent to university service for allowances, promotion, and retirement upon appointment in state departments, and public sector and universities.
- Supporting private universities and faculties through:

- Assuming half of their financial burdens according to admission plans and financial regulations, particularly covering escalating costs such as salaries.
- Permitting expansion of fund investment fields under ministry supervision.
- Amending Article 34, Paragraph 3 of the Private Universities and Faculties Law No. 13 of 1996 to include ministry commitment to appointing private university staff in public universities or state departments if the founding license is revoked.
- Including private university staff under the Retirement Law instead of the Social Security Law.
- Granting private universities authority to approve scientific promotions for academic staff.
- Allowing private universities to obtain soft, interest-free loans.
- Including private universities in public university mechanisms regarding scholarships, research fellowships, official assignments, and development courses.
- Establishing mechanisms to regulate student admissions and qualifications in public universities (evening studies) to align with higher education philosophy and improve private education.
- Providing health insurance for private university professors equivalent to that of public university professors.
- Employing top-ranking students from private faculties and universities on par with their counterparts in public universities.

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10.

International Relations

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The year 2024 constitutes a significant period characterized by notable events and developments for Iraq on both regional and international stages. Throughout this year, Iraq confronted numerous challenges, demands, and opportunities that necessitated management despite incomplete preparedness. Entering 2024, Iraq faced a regional environment marked by heightened instability; the consequences of the “Operation al-Aqṣá Flood” reached their peak during this period. The “Israeli” occupation entity initiated multiple fronts and launched assaults against several countries within the region, supported by the United States under the administration of President Joe Biden. Iraq’s response to this volatile regional context was measured and responsible, particularly regarding its stance on the Palestinian cause and its associated developments.

Within the framework of 2024’s developments, Iraq’s decision to terminate the mission of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) represented a significant shift in its relationship with the United Nations. This decision aimed to reinforce Iraq’s sovereignty, facilitate autonomous management of its affairs, and restrict the UN’s role in Iraq to technical and developmental domains. Prime Minister Muḥammad Shiyā’ al-Sūdānī’s visit to the United States emerged as his most prominent foreign engagement in 2024. During this visit, key bilateral issues were addressed, notably the scheduling of the withdrawal of American forces from Iraq and the enhancement of economic and investment cooperation. Furthermore, Iraq’s management of its international relations at both regional and global levels remains an ongoing responsibility that requires navigating the complexities imposed by its geographical location within a volatile region. This necessitates careful attention to its relations with global powers to mitigate challenges while pursuing opportunities.

This chapter will examine these topics alongside other developments that characterized 2024. Additionally, it will delineate the agenda for 2025, emphasizing the challenges, issues, and demands that Iraq must prepare for and address.

I. Iraq and the Arab-“Israeli” Conflict: The Official and Popular Stance

The aggressive military campaign initiated by the “Israeli” occupation entity against the Gaza Strip elicited a pronounced response from Iraq at both official and popular levels. This response reaffirmed Iraq’s longstanding support for the Palestinian cause, a position maintained since the establishment of the occupation entity on Palestinian land and the ongoing occupation of its territories. Iraq’s reaction to the “Israeli” offensive in Gaza underscored the country’s consistent and traditional stance in favor of Palestine. Representatives across the Iraqi government spectrum not only refrained from condemning the operation carried out by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Ḥamās) on October 7, 2023 (known as the “Operation al-Aqṣá Flood”) but also expressed unequivocal support for it while condemning the subsequent “Israeli” military actions in Gaza. For Iraq, the events following October 7 did not signify the onset of a new conflict but rather the continuation of a 75-year struggle rooted in the “Israeli” occupation of Palestinian territories. Throughout its history, from the royal era to the present, Iraq has maintained a steadfast position on Palestine, exemplified by its participation in the Arab-“Israeli” wars of 1948, 1967, and 1973. Notably, Iraq was the only country emerging from the 1948 war without signing an armistice agreement with the occupation entity. Consequently, Iraq’s policy is characterized by non-recognition of the entity and a sustained governmental and popular commitment to supporting the Palestinian cause through various means (Iraq’s response to the conflict in Gaza, 2024).

The support extended by Iraqi political groups and factions to the Palestinian resistance aligns with their ideological opposition to the occupation entity. This issue represents one of the rare instances where Iraq’s diverse political forces converge on a unified stance at both popular and official levels. Official sources have described the “Israeli” bombardment and blockade of Gaza as “barbaric,” emphasizing the necessity for the international community to oppose the “brutal Israeli occupation.” They assert that the conflict cannot be resolved until Palestinians secure their legitimate rights and the occupation is eradicated from their land, advocating for a “firm stance to deter the entity... and its militias.” Similarly, the Iraqi people have played a significant role in supporting the Palestinian people, often criticizing the ruling class for insufficiently confronting the “Israeli” occupation and its principal supporter, the United States. This dynamic was evident following the Iraqi delegation’s abstention from voting on a United Nations resolution calling for a “durable and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities in Gaza” during the General Assembly’s emergency session on October 27, 2024. The abstention provoked widespread public disapproval, compelling the delegation to subsequently vote in favor of the resolution. The Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs justified the initial abstention by highlighting that the resolution equated Palestinian and “Israeli” civilians and endorsed a two-state solution, which conflicted with Iraq’s national legislation (Hasan, 2024, p. 2).

The Iraqi response to the Gaza conflict reflects the principle that the Palestinian cause transcends sectarian divisions, mobilizing both political and popular entities in solidarity. The Iraqi government officially reaffirmed its support for Palestine, urged the United States to intensify efforts to halt the “Israeli” offensive, and convened multiple summits to address the atrocities committed against Palestinians. The Iraqi President and Prime Minister participated in regional summits in Cairo and Riyadh (al-Shamary & Huggard, 2023, pp. 1-3). Collectively, Iraq’s official and popular positions demonstrate a close engagement with the Gaza conflict, consistent with the Palestinian people’s right to liberate their lands from occupation since the 1940s.

Official Iraqi statements consistently reaffirm support for the Palestinian cause, call for an end to hostile actions by the occupation, and advocate for the opening of crossings to facilitate humanitarian aid. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has repeatedly condemned displacement policies and military operations resulting in civilian casualties, urging international intervention to de-escalate the situation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024, September 3).

Throughout 2024, Iraq’s clear stance in support of Palestine and condemnation of the “Israeli” offensive encompassed expressions of solidarity, assistance, and denunciation of the occupation. On January 11, Iraq endorsed South Africa’s decision to file a lawsuit against the occupation entity at the International Court of Justice for acts of killing and destruction against Palestinians. On January 26, Iraq welcomed the Court’s preliminary ruling aimed at preventing genocide against Palestinians. On May 24, Iraq supported a ruling imposing additional measures on the occupation authority, ordering an immediate halt to assaults on Rafah in Gaza under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. On May 30, Iraq voted in favor of a resolution at the World Health Assembly in Geneva to strengthen health response capacities, provide medical treatment, and ensure medical workers’ access to Palestine. The Iraqi Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office in Geneva condemned the indiscriminate bombardment of Palestinians.

On September 18, the Acting Charge d’Affaires of Iraq’s Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York presented the International Court of Justice’s advisory opinion condemning the occupation entity and delivered the United Nations General Assembly’s emergency session statement on the Palestinian cause, calling for solutions to violations against Palestinians. On September 25, Iraq engaged with Jordanian and Egyptian foreign ministers to discuss trilateral cooperation in preparation for a summit in Cairo, urging the Security Council to act to end the wars in Gaza and Lebanon. On October 4, during an emergency United Nations Security Council session, Iraq called for binding resolutions to enforce a ceasefire by the occupation entity in Palestine and Lebanon. These actions collectively represent Iraq’s official commitment to supporting Palestine and condemning the occupation’s military aggression.

At the social level, Baghdad and other Iraqi cities witnessed demonstrations and marches in solidarity with Gaza during early 2024. Some protests escalated

into symbolic attacks on institutions and companies associated with the United States and Western allies, reflecting growing popular anger toward Washington's support for the occupation. Incidents such as the targeting of American-Western businesses in June 2024 indicate increasing domestic political pressure (al-Jazīrah, 2024, June 7).

Most resistance factions and armed groups issued strong statements supporting the Palestinian cause and its resistance movements, declaring readiness to counter "Israeli" or American support. Military actions originating from Iraqi territories in 2024 varied, including statements, media escalations, and intermittent attacks, with fluctuations influenced by regional agreements and tactical considerations (al-Kaabi et al., 2024, p. 2).

Humanitarian aid efforts from Baghdād included shipments of fuel, medical supplies, and food via land and sea routes through Jordan and Egypt to Gaza. Iraq also received wounded Palestinians for treatment in Iraqi hospitals (Reuters, 2024, April 7). In April 2024, the Prime Minister announced the dispatch of 10 million liters of fuel to Gaza and the hosting of injured Palestinians for medical care. According to the Iraqi Red Crescent, aid shipments to Palestine totaled approximately 750,000 tons, delivered across the Egyptian border (INA, 2024, November 24). These initiatives reflect Baghdād's policy of providing humanitarian support while avoiding direct military involvement.

In summary, Iraq's stance toward the Palestinian cause in 2024 combined diplomatic and humanitarian support with efforts to avoid direct military confrontation, despite heightened popular resistance and public anger. Iraq's contributions included denunciations, condemnation resolutions, humanitarian aid, fuel shipments, and medical assistance, underscoring its commitment to supporting Palestine during this critical period.

II. The Iraqi Position on the "Israeli" Aggression Against Lebanon

The "Israeli" aggression against Lebanon represents a continuation of its military strategy aimed at neutralizing its regional adversaries, following a series of massacres perpetrated against the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip. This aggression was met with condemnation by the Secretary-General of Hezbollah (Ḥizb Allāh), Sayyid Ḥasan Naṣr-Allāh, who maintained steadfast support for the Palestinian resistance through various forms of assistance. Hezbollah's alignment with the Palestinian resistance was grounded in Naṣr-Allāh's conviction that the war initiated by the "Israeli" occupation entity against Lebanon was a component of a broader American-"Israeli" strategy to isolate the northern front from the Gaza Strip. Naṣr-Allāh's enduring commitment to the Palestinian cause was characterized by his assertion that sacrifices, regardless of their magnitude, would not deter the Lebanese resistance from supporting Palestine; he reiterated on multiple occasions his unwavering dedication to this cause until his martyrdom in September 2024.

The conflict in Lebanon elicited widespread denunciations from the international community, with Iraq prominently condemning the “Israeli” military campaign and expressing substantial support for the Lebanese people. The Iraqi government’s position reflected a clear political stance aimed at avoiding direct involvement in the conflict and refraining from engaging in open warfare with the “Israeli” occupation entity, which receives extensive backing from the United States. The hostilities compelled thousands of Lebanese civilians to seek refuge, with Iraq serving as a primary sanctuary. Both official and popular responses in Iraq were marked by a welcoming attitude toward Lebanese migrants fleeing the conflict. This humanitarian stance was further reinforced following a directive from the Supreme Religious Authority in al-Najaf al-Ashraf on September 23, 2024, which called for maximal efforts to halt the ongoing aggression against Lebanon, protect its people, alleviate their suffering, and address their humanitarian needs; consequently, Iraqis opened their doors to the displaced Lebanese population (al-Jazīrah, 2024, October 30).

In this context, Prime Minister al-Sūdānī communicated with the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, Nabīh Birrī, to express condemnation of the “Israeli” strikes on Lebanon, which resulted in the martyrdom of numerous senior Hezbollah leaders, including Naṣr-Allāh, and exacerbated the humanitarian crisis characterized by widespread killing, displacement, and acts of genocide. al-Sūdānī reaffirmed Iraq’s commitment to supporting efforts aimed at ending the conflict and establishing regional security and stability. He emphasized Iraq’s ongoing support for the Lebanese people through all available humanitarian and service channels to mitigate the effects of war and destruction (S. al-Rubayṭ, 2024, p. 1).

Further demonstrating Iraq’s support, Qaḥṭān al-Janābī, the Iraqi Ambassador to Egypt and Permanent Representative to the League of Arab States, called for an emergency meeting of the League’s Council on October 3, 2024, to discuss urgent humanitarian aid for Lebanon, who was being affected severely by the continuous “Israeli” aggression, and support for displaced persons and refugees. In his address, the Ambassador underscored Iraq’s full commitment to assisting the Lebanese people during these challenging times and stressed the importance of Arab solidarity in addressing Lebanon’s humanitarian challenges. He also urged the international community to take immediate action to halt military escalation and provide necessary assistance.

Complementing these efforts, Prime Minister al-Sūdānī ordered the initiation of an airlift delivering over 40 tons of urgent aid to Lebanon, including medical and food supplies. An Iraqi medical team comprising 22 doctors was dispatched to provide medical support. Additionally, two aircraft carrying aid from the Holy Shrines of Karbalā’ arrived, with Iraq prepared to offer further assistance, including additional medical teams and humanitarian aid. al-Sūdānī highlighted the significance of coordinated Arab action within the Arab League framework to ensure adequate support and reinforce international efforts to cease the aggression (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024, October 3).

At the popular and unofficial level, Islamic Resistance factions in Iraq announced attacks against the “Israeli” occupation entity, with some factions claiming responsibility for drone strikes. Threats were also issued to target American bases in Iraq and Syria as retaliation for US support of the “Israeli” entity and as a means to deter Israeli strikes within Iraq. These factions expressed willingness to send fighters to support Hezbollah in Lebanon (Ibrahim, 2025).

Iraq’s stance on the conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon oscillates between traditional political support and popular expressions of solidarity, alongside pressures that may prompt some resistance factions to engage directly or indirectly. Nonetheless, Iraq’s general position remains cautious, avoiding direct involvement in the conflict. External influences, particularly from states hostile to the “Israeli” occupation, may impact this stance. Ultimately, Iraq seeks to balance national interests with regional pressures, prioritizing internal stability and avoiding escalation that could undermine it (M. al-Rubayṭ, 2024, p. 3).

III. The Visit of the Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General

On July 15, 2024, the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, appointed Muḥammad al-Ḥassān, an Omani national, as his new Special Representative for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), succeeding the Dutch official Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert. al-Ḥassān arrived in Baghdād on October 10, 2024, to commence his duties. Throughout his tenure, Iraq demonstrated full cooperation, and he conducted significant official visits and meetings with key political and religious figures in Baghdād, Kurdistan, and al-Najaf al-Ashraf. Notably, he met with the Supreme Religious Authority in al-Najaf al-Ashraf. Al-Ḥassān provided official briefings to the Security Council, conveying information regarding Iraq’s security, political, humanitarian, and developmental conditions. He also addressed issues such as the population census and electoral preparations. His mission appeared to include overseeing the gradual transition of UNAMI’s operations to Iraqi authorities, reflecting Iraq’s desire to conclude the mission’s activities, transfer responsibilities to sovereign Iraqi institutions, and limit UNAMI’s role to specific areas, particularly development and investigations into the terrorist organization ISIS (UN, 2024, October 10).

al-Ḥassān’s visits held considerable significance; during four visits to Erbil, he engaged with regional leaders to discuss their relations with the federal government, aiming to promote political stability and dialogue. In a meeting with Nechirvan Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Region, the UN Secretary-General’s Representative emphasized the importance of cooperation and dialogue to resolve outstanding issues between the federal government and the Kurdistan Region, including financial allocations and their disbursement according to agreements with the federal government. He underscored the necessity of respecting the Iraqi constitution and resolving disputes within its framework without infringing upon the rights of local and federal governments (UN, 2024, October 17).

On December 6, 2024, al-Ḥassān briefed the UN Security Council on Iraq's cooperation with UNAMI and the mission's positive role in fulfilling its duties. He assessed Iraq's security and political situation as favorable and highlighted Iraq's efforts to act as a constructive regional actor and peacemaker (al-Ḥassan, 2024, p. 2). Regarding his visits to the Supreme Religious Authority in al-Najaf al-Ashraf on December 4 and 12, al-Ḥassān conveyed the Authority's position on domestic and regional matters, emphasizing the need for competence and integrity in public office, adherence to the rule of law, state monopoly on weapons, anti-corruption measures, and good neighborly relations while preventing foreign interference. In evaluating developments in Iraq, al-Ḥassān commended the national efforts to complete the population census in November 2024, recognizing it as a significant step for effective developmental planning and governance.

al-Ḥassān expressed considerable satisfaction with his mission in Iraq and the widespread approval he received. His appointment was regarded as establishing a new and positive "road map" for Iraq's relations with the United Nations, wherein UNAMI played a crucial role in enabling Iraq to build security, prosperity, and sustainable development (al-Ḥassan, 2024, pp. 3-4).

The arrival of al-Ḥassān as an Omani-Arab representative of the United Nations Secretary-General signals the UN's intent to manage dialogue with Baghdad in a balanced manner that accommodates sensitive outstanding issues requiring capable political management. This is facilitated by al-Ḥassān's understanding of the Iraqi government's demands to establish an institutional framework for the transition and partial termination of UNAMI by 2025. Consequently, the mission, particularly al-Ḥassān, was tasked with managing this transition and addressing sensitive matters such as elections and the population census. His duties evidently included organizing an orderly withdrawal or redirection of UN activities in accordance with the host state's preferences. Accordingly, al-Ḥassān's visits reflect the adept role of Iraqi foreign policy in redefining the relationship between UNAMI, and the United Nations more broadly, and Iraq, within the context of Baghdad's request to scale down the mission's political mandate.

IV. Termination of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)

Since 2003, Iraq has been a primary focus of United Nations engagement through UNAMI, sustainable development programs, and humanitarian and social initiatives. Cooperation across various sectors has characterized this close relationship, governed by UN resolutions and accompanied by humanitarian and developmental efforts with political and social implications amid Iraq's transformations over more than two decades.⁽¹⁾

In 2024, this relationship underwent fundamental changes as cooperation entered a phase of reassessment regarding the future of the UN presence

(1) For further information regarding the relationship between the United Nations and Iraq through UNAMI and the Security Council resolutions pertaining to Iraq, see: Ḥamid, 2023, pp. 17-18.

represented by UNAMI. This shift followed the Iraqi government's request for the gradual termination of the mission to reinforce national sovereignty. Prime Minister al-Sūdānī formally communicated this request to the United Nations Secretary-General in May 2024, advocating for the conclusion of UNAMI's political missions by the end of 2025. The justification cited the state's advancements in political and security capacities and the imperative to restore full sovereignty (AP, 2024, May 11).

In response, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution S/RES/2723 on May 31, 2024, extending UNAMI's mandate for a final period of 19 months until December 31, 2025, and mandating the preparation of a detailed plan for gradual withdrawal in coordination with the Iraqi government. The Secretary-General was instructed to submit periodic implementation reports to the Security Council. Subsequent reports, including S/2024/857 issued on November 26, 2024, outlined the executive agenda and steps for transferring responsibilities, ensuring continued cooperation with technical UN agencies to maintain the stability of UN-Iraq relations (UN, 2024, December 6, p. 2).

Resolution S/RES/2723, issued in response to Iraq's official request, acknowledges Iraq's capacity to manage its internal affairs without an extensive UN mandate. It signifies a shift in the international community's perception of Iraq from a "state in need of assistance" to a "sovereign partner" (UN Security Council, 2024, May 31, p. 3). Legally, the resolution reflects the Iraqi political leadership's view that sovereignty necessitates transitioning to the conclusion of the mission's work. This exceptional decision underscores Iraq's insistence on reshaping its relationship with the United Nations in accordance with its sovereignty. The government justified this request politically by emphasizing the internal stability achieved, largely due to the security institutions' role. Therefore, the government sought to redirect the partnership with the United Nations toward technical and developmental support rather than a broad political presence (Reuters, 2024, May 31). Technical support includes assisting Iraq in managing evidence related to ISIS's crimes and facilitating international investigative missions in cooperation with national courts to ensure proper documentation and archiving (UN Security Council, 2024, November 26).

Regarding developmental and humanitarian efforts, technical UN agencies such as UNDP and UNMAS continue to implement projects supporting livelihoods, mine clearance, and social protection under agreed technical arrangements (UN, 2024, December 6, p. 2). Politically, the withdrawal request signals the government's confidence in its institutions to address remaining ISIS threats and manage crises across multiple fronts. Accordingly, the Iraqi government deemed it necessary to execute a clear transition plan, transferring political responsibilities and security functions to Iraqi institutions. This transition redefines the UN's role from crisis management to supporting sustainable development through ongoing technical assistance, thereby reinforcing Iraqi national sovereignty.

V. al-Sūdānī's Important Visit to the US

The visit of Iraqi Prime Minister Muḥammad Shiyā' al-Sūdānī to Washington from April 14 to 15, 2024, represents a significant diplomatic engagement during his tenure as head of government. The visit encompassed a comprehensive schedule of meetings with senior officials within the US administration. al-Sūdānī initiated his discussions at the White House with President Joe Biden, followed by engagements at the Departments of State and Defense, as well as with various think tanks. The primary objectives of the visit included recalibrating bilateral relations, deliberating the future of the US military presence and the evolution of the coalition's mission against ISIS, coordinating on regional affairs and the ongoing conflict, and enhancing economic and financial cooperation to support reforms in Baghdād (White House, 2024b). Notably, the latter objective occupied a substantial portion of the visit's agenda.

al-Sūdānī's visit to the United States constituted a pivotal diplomatic effort to navigate the complex balance of Iraq's domestic and regional pressures (Stroul & Wahab, 2024, p. 3). During his meeting with Secretary of State Antony Blinken, al-Sūdānī addressed ceasefire proposals, mediation initiatives, and humanitarian concerns in Gaza and the broader region. In discussions with officials from the Department of Defense (the Pentagon) and the leadership of the International Coalition combating the terrorist ISIS organization, al-Sūdānī explored the future trajectory of the coalition's mission in Iraq and the potential reduction of US military forces on Iraqi soil. Complementing these engagements with US officials, al-Sūdānī actively participated at the Atlantic Council, an American research institution, and conducted meetings with the Iraqi-Arab community in Michigan as part of an outreach initiative with the Iraqi diaspora in the United States.

The significance of al-Sūdānī's visit to the United States is underscored by the following key points:

- **Discussion of the American Presence in Iraq:** al-Sūdānī engaged in a reassessment of the US and foreign military presence in Iraq, focusing on redefining the coalition's mission against ISIS and transitioning US forces toward advisory and training roles. Both parties concurred on the necessity of ensuring the permanent defeat of ISIS while respecting Iraq's sovereignty. It was agreed to maintain ongoing dialogue concerning a future framework for military presence and missions, emphasizing the transition from combat operations to support and training under mutually agreed Iraqi-American terms (AP, 2024, March 23).
- **Regional Stability and De-escalation:** In his meeting with President Biden, al-Sūdānī advocated for restraint and the avoidance of regional conflict escalation. President Biden reaffirmed the US commitment to the security of its allies and expressed a concurrent desire to prevent escalation that could adversely affect Iraq. A joint statement reaffirmed the strategic partnership between the two nations and their intention to expand cooperation in security and economic domains (Reuters, 2024, April 16).

- **Economic and Financial Reform Understanding:** al-Sūdānī sought American support for financial reform programs, facilitation of investment channels, and reintegration of Iraq into the international banking system to enable access to dollar financial transfers. Cooperation with international institutions in this regard necessitates American influence within these organizations. The United States committed to supporting economic reform contingent upon Baghdād's implementation of transparency measures and resolution of domestic political issues (Hama-saeed, 2024, p. 2).
- **Support for Iraq's Role as an International Balancer:** al-Sūdānī positioned Iraq as a mediator capable of managing balanced relations between Washington and Tehran, while requesting enhanced economic and political support from the United States to fulfill this role.

Additional discussions during al-Sūdānī's visit encompassed issues such as Iraqi human rights in the United States, domestic civil and political matters including political blackmail, concerns raised by the Iraqi community in the United States, and security issues such as kidnapping highlighted by media coverage (AP, 2024, March 23).

Effectively managing the relationship with the United States necessitates both strategic acumen and adaptability, given the complexity of the issues involved. Iraq's domestic political dynamics significantly influence the trajectory of this bilateral relationship, with decision-makers often lacking a unified perspective on its direction. Regardless, engagement with this superpower must prioritize Iraq's national interests, particularly in security and economic matters, serving as the foundational principle for all interactions.

VI. Relations with Neighboring Countries

1. Iran

Since 2003, Iraqi-Iranian relations have been regarded as the most developed due to the issues and agreements linking the two countries. Following the regime change in Iraq in 2003, Iraq has become a primary destination for visits by Iranian presidents. Accordingly, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian selected Iraq for his inaugural foreign tour after assuming office. The visit, which lasted from September 11 to 13, 2024, aimed to strengthen political, economic, and cultural ties between the two nations. It included the signing of several memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and agreements, as well as the exchange of symbolic messages. The visit held significant implications, notably maintaining and deepening communication and coordination between Tehran and Baghdād, enhancing economic cooperation, demonstrating the depth of religious and confessional ties between the two countries, and testing the balance between Iraq's relations with the United States and Baghdād's efforts to sustain equilibrium among regional powers (al-Jazīrah, 2024, September 11).

In addition to Iraq's importance to Iran and the preference of Iranian presidents to select Iraq as their first foreign destination, the visit was also prompted by an invitation from Prime Minister al-Sūdānī, whom Pezeshkian met in Baghdād. Subsequently, he met with President 'Abd-al-Laṭīf Rashīd and conducted domestic visits to several governorates, including Erbil, al-Sulaymānīyah, Najaf, Karbalā', and al-Baṣrah. Approximately 14 MoUs were signed across multiple sectors, aiming to deepen economic and commercial cooperation, with prospects for further agreements in agriculture, trade, and communications (Iraqi Presidency, 2024, September 11).

It is likely that Pezeshkian's new approach toward Iraq will alter the trajectory of bilateral relations in several significant ways; his choice of Iraq as the first destination among his official foreign visits underscores Iraq's centrality in Iranian foreign policy and regional strategy. Since the fall of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn in 2003, Iraq has remained a primary political and economic partner for Tehran, maintaining relative stability amid the region's complex and evolving dynamics. Furthermore, Pezeshkian's visit occurred at a critical juncture, as the Middle East experiences its most significant conflict in decades, with potential for further escalation. Given their shared borders and deep religious, cultural, and economic ties, Iran's stability is closely linked to Iraq. Prioritizing Iraq on Pezeshkian's agenda reflects his administration's commitment to strengthening relations with Baghdād and addressing shared challenges amid regional fluctuations. During his visit to Baghdād, Pezeshkian described Iraq as a "friendly and brotherly country" and emphasized the importance of implementing security cooperation agreements between Iran and Iraq. In a joint press conference with Iraqi Prime Minister al-Sūdānī, he underscored the necessity of these agreements to confront terrorist organizations and adversaries threatening regional stability and security. He reaffirmed that such measures are essential to maintaining peace and countering those who have previously targeted the region's security (Shokri, 2024, pp.1-2).

This visit carried several important implications:

- **Demonstrating the Effectiveness of Iraqi Diplomacy:** During the visit, Baghdād articulated a balanced approach to managing foreign relations, emphasizing the importance of partnership with Iran while striving to maintain positive relations with the United States and Arab countries. This stance carries political and security implications that reinforce official channels between Tehran and Baghdād, distancing cooperation from accusations by Arab and Western actors that both countries support Islamist groups at the expense of state strength. This approach may contribute to reducing disputes and enhancing coordination (Shokri, 2024, pp.1-2).
- **Symbolic and Protocol Significance:** Pezeshkian's visits to Shi'i shrines (Najaf and Karbalā') and his presence at the monument of General Qasem Soleimani conveyed important symbolic messages to Tehran and its supporters in Iraq, signifying the continuation of denominational bonds and shared memory. Additionally, his visit to Iraqi Kurdistan highlighted

the significant commercial and economic links between the region and Iran (al-Jazīrah, 2024, September 11).

- **Tehran's Perspective on the Visit:** Tehran regarded the visit as a diplomatic and economic boost aimed at enhancing trade exchanges, signing MoUs, and reaffirming Iraq as a strategic partner in confronting external pressures such as sanctions. Official Iranian media described the visit as successful and productive (IRNA, 2024, September 3).
- **Regional Implications:** The Iranian President's visit carried substantial regional significance; selecting Iraq as Pezeshkian's first foreign destination after his election conveyed a regional message reflecting Tehran's intent to deepen relations with Iraq and leverage economic ties with Baghdād to mitigate international pressure. The visit served to mobilize regional interests and advance economic initiatives in trade, energy, and investment (Frantzman, 2024, p. 2). Consequently, Iran conveyed its capacity for regional engagement and the formation of economic alliances (Reuters, 2024, September 29).

President Pezeshkian's visit to Iraq encompassed two dimensions: a symbolic one aimed at reinforcing religious bonds and historical legacies linking the two countries ideologically, and a practical one focused on activating and implementing MoUs to benefit both parties and re-establish Tehran's traditional ties with Baghdād across various sectors. Therefore, this visit represents a pivotal moment in the evolution of bilateral relations, reflecting Iraq's central role and strategic importance in Iranian foreign policy. This was evident in Pezeshkian's emphasis on enhancing Tehran's regional partnerships, providing an opportunity to advance diplomatic cooperation, economic projects, and security collaboration between Iraq and Iran, while addressing challenges arising from regional dynamics and international sanctions imposed on Iran.

2. Turkey

The visit of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Iraq from April 22 to 24, 2024, constituted a significant diplomatic milestone, marking the first official visit by a Turkish president in nearly thirteen years. This visit culminated in the signing of over twenty memoranda of understanding (MoUs) across various sectors, including security, defense, water management, transportation, and trade. These agreements were reached despite operational challenges, such as the sensitivity surrounding Iraq's sovereignty, the complex relationship between Baghdād and Erbil, and the intricacies of transboundary water issues that necessitate long-term legal and technical frameworks (Reuters, 2024, April 22).

This visit occurred within the broader context of Turkey's efforts to recalibrate its relations with Baghdād and to leverage Iraq's strategic position as a trade corridor to the Gulf. Turkey also sought to formally engage Baghdād in addressing the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) threat and to secure enhanced security cooperation. Additionally, the visit aimed to resolve political disputes that have delayed progress on multiple issues, prioritize investment attraction,

address oil and export matters involving Kurdistan, and mitigate the water crisis exacerbated by drought, dam projects on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, and Turkey's military presence in northern Iraq (Yadav, 2024, p. 2).

Regarding security cooperation, particularly efforts to neutralize PKK activities through intelligence and operational collaboration, the visit followed a pivotal development: the Iraqi National Security Council's March 2024 decision condemning PKK activities within Iraq. This decision facilitated security cooperation with Turkey and initiated negotiations on mechanisms for information exchange and joint technical operations centers to secure borders, contingent upon approval from the central Iraqi government and respect for Iraq's sovereignty and sensitivities regarding foreign forces and cross-border operations (Reuters, 2024, April 25).

Security cooperation between Turkey and Iraq was not solely a product of Erdoğan's visit; it was preceded by a Turkish security delegation's visit to Iraq on March 14, 2024. Subsequently, Baghdad and Ankara issued a joint statement outlining the security mechanism, and the Iraqi National Security Council designated the PKK as a banned organization, thereby addressing Turkey's concerns about transboundary threats.

This decision and joint statement established a foundational security understanding prior to Erdoğan's April 2024 visit. Reports indicate that a key practical proposal involved establishing a joint operations center to coordinate intelligence efforts targeting PKK elements in northern Iraq. Baghdad accepted this proposal in principle; however, operational details and sovereignty concerns remained sensitive and subject to ongoing debate (Reuters, 2024, March 21). Iraq consistently objected to Turkish cross-border strikes and ground military operations, which have strained bilateral relations. Consequently, balancing security cooperation with respect for Iraqi sovereignty was a central theme in discussions (AP, 2024, May 6).

Economically, the visit included signing MoUs related to major projects, notably the Development Road, and initiatives for significant transportation corridors between Iraq and Turkey in partnership with Gulf states. These projects, potentially worth billions of dollars, aim to transform MoUs into executable contracts. The Development Road is a critical infrastructure project spanning approximately 1,200 kilometers, connecting the Turkish border in the north to the Port of al-Fāw on the Gulf in the south (al-Monitor, 2024, April 22). Additionally, the two countries signed numerous MoUs to stimulate trade and increase bilateral exchange, with ambitions to raise trade volume to 24 billion dollars, an increase of 5 billion dollars from 2023, when trade reached approximately 19.9 billion dollars (Rudaw, 2024, April 23).

In addition, the visit addressed the most contentious issue in Iraqi-Turkish relations, the management of water resources in the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Discussions focused on Turkey's dam projects, which enable Ankara to control water flow and storage, adversely affecting Iraq's water shares. This situation has

negatively impacted irrigation, agriculture, and has posed environmental and health risks. Both parties agreed to establish technical channels for data exchange and water flow management to prevent future crises. A ten-year agreement was signed for joint water management, emphasizing consideration of Iraq's needs. The agreement also includes joint projects to improve irrigation and agricultural systems and technical cooperation in this domain (Rudaw, 2024, April 23).

Iraq's political and diplomatic efforts were instrumental in facilitating the visit's success, particularly in easing tensions between Baghdad and Erbil. Erdoğan's visit to the Kurdistan Regional Government underscored the importance of balancing relations with the federal government in Baghdad, which positively influences Iraq-Turkey relations. Sustainable security and commercial arrangements require official and balanced participation from both federal and regional Iraqi governments to avoid exacerbating bilateral tensions.

The visit is anticipated to strengthen bilateral relations, contingent upon several factors: converting MoUs into binding agreements with follow-up mechanisms, including timelines and performance evaluations; establishing a technical bilateral committee to manage water resources with international oversight to safeguard the rights of upstream and transit states; implementing a security framework centered on information exchange and joint intelligence operations while respecting Iraq's sovereignty and clarifying operational scopes; and linking infrastructure funding to local employment and contracting quotas to ensure tangible economic benefits for Iraq.

VII. Relations with the Gulf States

1. Saudi Arabia

Despite the significant domestic, regional, and international challenges that have historically influenced Iraqi-Saudi relations, the year 2024 marked a tangible and noteworthy advancement in these bilateral ties. This progress spanned diplomatic, security, and economic domains, including the signing of defense and development memoranda of understanding (MoUs), an increase in trade volume, and collaborative initiatives in energy and infrastructure (Bernacchi, 2024). This shift represents a critical transformation in the relationship between the two neighboring states. Since the regime change in 2003, Saudi-Iraqi relations were characterized by volatility, tension, and distance until Saudi Arabia began to revise its stance toward Iraq's political process post-2017. Riyadh exhibited a strategic reorientation toward Iraq after prolonged estrangement. Consequently, the Iraqi-Saudi Coordination Council was established, marking a pivotal moment in diplomatic relations after decades of discord. The council comprises seven specialized technical committees aimed at advancing bilateral relations across sectors such as health, education, banking, trade, energy, and electricity. In this context, Iraq extended an invitation to the Saudi company Aramco to invest in the Akkashat gas field in al-Anbar Governorate (Akram, 2024, p. 3).

On November 19, 2024, the Political-Security Coordination Council convened a meeting through its Political and Security Committee, which is a part of the Iraqi-Saudi Coordination Council. Chaired by the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fu'ād Ḥusayn, the meeting addressed numerous topics aimed at enhancing political and security cooperation between the two nations, as well as mechanisms for activating bilateral relations at regional and international levels. Discussions included coordination on security, counter-terrorism, and regional stability. The meeting culminated in an agreement to sustain cooperation and develop implementation mechanisms for prior agreements, emphasizing the distinctive nature of the bilateral relationship and its contribution to regional stability. This rapprochement forms part of broader efforts to support Iraq's stability within the region and the Arab world.

On November 4, 2024, the Saudi Minister of Defense, Prince Khālid bin Salmān, met with his Iraqi counterpart, Thābit al-'Abbāsī, in Riyadh, where a Military Memorandum of Understanding was signed. This MoU encompasses joint armed forces training, cross-border security coordination, and the potential treatment of injured Iraqi military personnel in Saudi health facilities linked to defense cooperation. This agreement signifies a substantial step toward security solidarity between the two states amid regional tensions, reflecting a shared commitment to stability and combating threats affecting borders and mutual interests (Bernacchi, 2024). In essence, this memorandum marks a pivotal development in military cooperation.

In economic, energy, and infrastructure sectors, local reports from 2024 indicate a 12% annual growth in trade between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, with trade volume reaching 1.3 billion dollars. Riyadh expressed willingness to assist Iraq with energy and electricity transmission projects (EIA, 2024, p. 7). Saudi interest in investing in reconstruction, infrastructure, and energy sectors is contingent upon political and security stability in Iraq. Accordingly, the Iraqi government proposed legislation to protect Saudi investments within Iraq, aiming to address challenges faced by Saudi investors and provide legal guarantees.

In trade, cooperation in digital transformation and e-commerce was agreed upon. On August 4, 2024, a delegation from the Iraqi Ministry of Trade visited Saudi Arabia to study the Kingdom's digital transformation experience. Workshops spanning two days covered company operation regulations, registration procedures, and commercial register renewal. Both parties agreed to exchange expertise in legislation and regulations related to company registration and commercial registers, with the Saudi side expressing readiness to continue workshops and collaborative efforts to enhance domestic and foreign trade and improve the business environment in both countries (Szalai, 2025, p. 10-11).

The aforementioned developments confirm that the two countries are progressing within a new framework across multiple sectors; bilateral relations have entered an upward trajectory characterized by increased official visits. This progression signifies that Iraq's strengthening of regional relations, particularly

with Saudi Arabia, constitutes a crucial step toward mitigating challenges and advancing toward a more stable, secure, interconnected, and prosperous state.

2. Kuwait

The deeply rooted contentious issues related to political and legal border and maritime matters (such as Khawr 'Abd-Allāh, territorial water demarcation, missing persons, and property from 1990) remain obstacles to the continuous advancement of Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations. Nevertheless, 2024 witnessed practical steps to enhance diplomatic cooperation through official visits and ministerial meetings, representing initial efforts to improve bilateral relations across various fields (Kawach, 2024, p. 1).

Politically and diplomatically, Iraqi diplomacy successfully persuaded Kuwait to hold high-level ministerial meetings in 2024. This was exemplified by meetings between the Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs and Kuwaiti representatives, affirming ongoing dialogue and coordination of bilateral cooperation channels. During the final quarter of 2024, communication persisted between foreign ministries and Iraqi-Kuwaiti technical/legal committees to address practical issues such as missing persons, property, and border/technical concerns. This development indicated Kuwait's reluctance to continue boycotting Iraq or freezing relations entirely (Reuters, 2024, May 12).

Both countries share interests in economic, energy, and infrastructure cooperation, including the project to connect Iraq's electricity grids to the Gulf states via Kuwait. Tangible progress was made in 2024 on electricity interconnection projects, including linking the Kuwaiti network with Iraq and connecting Iraq to the Gulf Cooperation Council Interconnection Authority (GCCIA) network. Infrastructure preparations were completed by the end of 2024 to enhance energy integration and mutual dependence. Interest in technical and energy matters, such as electricity interconnection and infrastructure projects, offers potential to expand dialogue and overcome political challenges. Additionally, positive steps were taken in trade and investment, with official discussions regarding potential investments and MoUs in energy, transportation, and services sectors. Despite procedural obstacles hindering progress, cooperation in these fields appears earnest (US Department of State, 2024, p. 5). Consequently, cooperation requires transitioning from memoranda of understanding to executable contracts with defined timelines and legal and financial guarantees benefiting both countries.

Regarding missing persons and property, joint technical committees comprising Iraq, Kuwait, and the International Committee of the Red Cross continue efforts to locate remains and return property and archives requested by Kuwait. In 2024, technical procedures such as excavation, DNA testing, and sample delivery persisted; however, the issue remains unresolved for Kuwait due to its political and social sensitivity, impacting the climate and future development of bilateral relations (Red Cross, 2024).

Security and border issues remain sensitive in Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations, particularly border demarcation, particularly Khawr 'Abd-Allāh, and defining invest-

ment/resource zones in waterways. These matters attracted diplomatic concern and international attention in late 2024, with regional and international actors urging adherence to international law frameworks to prevent escalation. Despite ongoing efforts, border demarcation and Khawr 'Abd-Allāh issues were not permanently resolved in 2024, remaining potential sources of friction (International Crisis Group, 2025).

The future of Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations depends on accelerating joint technical committees' work on maritime border issues with clear timelines, engaging experts in maritime law, converting energy MoUs into executable contracts with joint financial and technical guarantees and risk assessments, and continuing cooperation with the United Nations and specialized agencies, particularly regarding missing persons. Transparent evidence is necessary to convince Kuwaiti public opinion of Iraq's objective measures. In return, Kuwait must demonstrate goodwill toward Iraq's efforts to establish political relations based on good neighborliness, expand economic cooperation initiated in 2024, and sign memoranda of understanding at ministerial and agency levels as gestures toward resolving issues, foremost among them maritime border demarcation.

3. United Arab Emirates

In 2024, Iraqi-Emirati relations experienced notable advancements. Diplomatically, Iraqi President 'Abd-al-Laṭīf Rashīd met with UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi to discuss enhancing bilateral relations, focusing on cooperation in economic, investment, developmental, and renewable energy sectors (Gulf Today, 2025, February 12). Economically, trade between Iraq and the UAE increased significantly, with trade volume rising from 28.3 billion dollars in 2023 to 39.3 billion dollars in 2024, marking a 38.6% growth (al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ, 2024, May 3).

In infrastructure and transportation, Iraq signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in April 2024 with the Abu Dhabi Ports Group to collaborate on maritime transport, ports, and shipping. Additionally, the UAE entered an initial agreement with Iraq, Turkey, and Qatar to cooperate on the Development Road Project, a strategic initiative valued at 17 billion dollars that connects the Grand al-Fāw Port in southern Iraq to Turkey through a network of highways and railways. In education and scientific research, Iraq and the UAE established an executive program on November 28, 2024, for cooperation in higher education and scientific research for the period 2025–2027. This agreement encompasses the exchange of academic information, mutual recognition of university and post-graduate degrees, cooperation in institutional accreditation, and the development of educational programs (Anadolu Agency, 2024, October 31).

These cooperative efforts demonstrate that Iraqi-Emirati relations in 2024 extended beyond trade to include education, infrastructure, investment, and energy sectors. This suggests the UAE's intention to be a key partner in Iraq's reconstruction and development projects, while Iraq benefits from the UAE's expertise and investments to advance its economy and educational institutions.

4. Qatar

In 2024, Iraqi-Qatari relations progressed toward more advanced political engagement. In December 2024, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Fu'ād Ḥusayn visited Doha to participate in the 2024 Doha Forum, where he held meetings to discuss bilateral relations and regional security. He expressed a commitment to enhancing relations and fostering partnership, good neighborliness, investment, and cooperation in developmental fields. Qatar reciprocated by opening a consulate in Erbil, a move regarded by Aḥmad ibn Ḥasan al-Ḥammādī, Secretary-General of the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as part of Qatar's strategy to increase investment in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. On May 26, 2024, a Qatari delegation met with the President of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region in Erbil to discuss investment opportunities in several sectors, including energy, agriculture, education, and health (kurdistan24, 2024, May 26).

Economically, the Joint Economic, Commercial, and Technical Committee convened its seventh session in Baghdād on July 7–8, 2024, after nearly six years of interruption. Representatives from both countries signed the committee's report and discussed strengthening economic and investment relations and improving the investment environment (Lee, 2024). Regarding the Development Road project and al-Fāw Port, Iraq signed an MoU on April 22, 2024, with Qatar, the UAE, and Turkey to cooperate on these initiatives (Qatar Tribune, 2024, April 23).

Culturally and in media, the Qatari Ministry of Culture was invited to participate in the fourth edition of the Iraq International Book Fair in February 2024, in order to showcase Qatari cultural production and enhance cultural cooperation. Qatar also hosted Iraqi cultural events such as "Iraqi Culture Week in Qatar" and a book fair to promote cultural exchange, alongside artistic events. Media cooperation was fostered through the Iraqi Media Network's collaboration with Qatari media institutions, including the al-Jazīrah Network, focusing on expertise exchange and media training (INA, 2025, March 1).

Despite its small geographic size, Qatar wields significant regional and global influence, notably through "surrogate diplomacy." Strengthening relations with Qatar is a strategic move for Iraq, enhancing its regional position and leveraging Qatar's extensive network with influential global powers to establish balanced connections with key regional and international states.

5. Oman

In 2024, relations between Iraq and the Sultanate of Oman developed significantly across political, economic, and cultural domains, reflecting mutual commitment to bilateral cooperation. Politically, the ninth session of the Joint Omani-Iraqi Committee convened in Baghdād in December 2024, chaired by Iraqi Foreign Minister Fu'ād Ḥusayn and Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Būsa'īdī. During this session, two MoUs were signed: one on political consultations and another between the Iraqi Foreign Service Institute and its Omani counterpart, underscoring efforts to deepen diplomatic cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024, December 22).

The Omani Foreign Minister highlighted fruitful cooperation, emphasizing collaboration in tourism, energy, and finance, and expressed aspirations to conclude additional MoUs and participate actively in the Baghdād International Fair. Both countries agreed to strengthen cooperation in economic, commercial, and cultural fields, facilitate academic and scientific exchange, and prioritize cooperation in vital sectors such as energy and the environment, supporting sustainable development (al-Khalīj Online, 2024, April 20). Cultural and sports cooperation also flourished; in October 2024, Oman granted visa exemptions to members of the Iraqi national team delegation and Iraqi fans attending a sports match, reflecting the depth of bilateral cultural and sports relations (al-Khalīj Online, 2024, April 20).

These developments indicate a trajectory of continuous growth in Iraq-Oman relations through mutual visits, new agreements, and expanded cooperation across multiple sectors. Such measures affirm both countries' commitment to developing a strategic partnership that advances their mutual interests and promotes regional stability and development.

VIII. Relations with Syria

Despite the establishment of diplomatic relations through ambassadorial exchanges in 2006 and Syria's recognition of the Iraqi government following the American occupation in 2003, the bilateral relationship between Iraq and Syria remained tenuous and limited. This was particularly evident as the Iraqi government frequently accused Syria of facilitating the transit of foreign fighters into Iraq (Mansour & Thompson, 2020, p. 19). Nonetheless, Iraq maintained a balanced official stance toward the Baathist regime under Bashshār al-Asad, even during the Syrian civil war. In 2011, Iraq refrained from supporting the Syrian opposition, preserving diplomatic ties and limited trade exchanges. Furthermore, the two countries engaged in security cooperation, particularly in counter-terrorism efforts (Dhabian, 2025, p. 2).

On December 8, 2024, the al-Asad regime collapsed following a significant offensive by opposition forces led by Hay'at taḥrīr al-Shām, supported by the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army. This offensive culminated in the opposition's control of Damascus, ending the al-Asad family's decades-long rule. Consequently, this transformative event ushered in a new phase in Iraqi-Syrian relations, necessitating Iraq's strategic management.

Iraq approached the altered situation in Syria as a *fait accompli*, aiming to contain its adverse effects on Iraq's security and stability. In late December 2024, Ḥamīd al-Shaṭṭī, head of the Iraqi Intelligence Service, visited Damascus and met with Syrian President Aḥmad al-shar'. Their discussions prioritized shared concerns, including border security, preventing terrorist infiltration, and safeguarding Syria's holy shrines, particularly Shi'i sites (al-Jazīrah, 2024, December 8). Although this diplomatic initiative sparked debate within political and public spheres, Iraq prioritized mitigating security threats arising from Syria's ongoing transformation.

This significant political maneuver aligns with Iraq's broader efforts to reconstruct relations with Syria and pursue a renewed diplomatic trajectory, despite longstanding challenges that have strained bilateral ties, especially post-2003 (Fadel, 2025). The initiative yielded tangible outcomes: border crossings reopened, and security cooperation was reestablished. In March 2025, Syrian Foreign Minister As'ad al-Shaybānī visited Iraq, endorsing the commencement of a new chapter in bilateral relations and enhanced cooperation on key issues, notably trade and counterterrorism against ISIS. al-Shaybānī also expressed a mutual commitment to strengthening security collaboration. In June 2025, Iraq reopened the al-Qā'im (Abū-Kamāl) border crossing with Syria after years of closure due to security concerns in both countries, symbolizing a mutual desire to deepen cooperation (Reuters, 2025, March 14).

In summary, post-al-Asad Iraqi-Syrian relations are characterized by cautious and selective cooperation amid efforts to expand collaboration across multiple domains. Nevertheless, political, humanitarian, and border-related challenges continue to impede the achievement of long-term stability. The future trajectory of these relations will depend on the capacity of both governments to overcome historical differences and foster a genuine partnership grounded in mutual interests.

IX. Relations with the United States of America

1. The American Presence in Iraq

Security studies identify three primary factors that have shaped the perspective on the necessity of ending the US military presence in Iraq (Blanchard, 2024a, p. 2):

- a. Domestic political and popular pressures within Iraq: Various political factions and groups, both within and outside the Iraqi Parliament, have persistently called for the cessation of foreign military presence, particularly that of the United States. These demands intensified notably following the 2020 Baghdād International Airport incident, during which Qasem Soleimani, Commander of the Quds Force in the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and Abū-Mahdī al-Muhandis, Deputy Head of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), were assassinated. This event, alongside a series of targeted assassinations against leaders within resistance factions and the PMF, generated significant public resentment, especially among political groups opposing the US presence. Consequently, parliamentary factions spearheaded efforts to expel US and other foreign forces, advocating for the termination of their military and non-military roles. These pressures influenced the governments of al-Kādhīmī and al-Sūdānī to engage in negotiations with the United States aimed at establishing a framework for the permanent withdrawal of these forces.
- b. Escalating security threats directed at American personnel: Resistance factions adopted a strategy of sustained military attacks targeting locations housing US forces, particularly after the Baghdād International

Airport incident and subsequent US strikes against PMF sites across Iraq. These attacks increased the operational costs for US forces, including protection, facilities, and response measures, prompting both Washington and Baghdad to seek an agreement that would reduce direct military confrontations and facilitate the withdrawal of US troops.

- c. The United States' intention to establish a long-term partnership model: Both the Trump and Biden administrations have expressed a preference for maintaining a security partnership focused on training and capacity building rather than traditional combat operations. This approach, agreed upon during negotiations, indicates a US desire to scale down its military presence without complete abandonment, thereby fostering a robust bilateral relationship that prevents Iraq's isolation from US strategic interests in the Middle East. This is particularly pertinent given the rapid security and political changes Iraq experienced following the defeat of ISIS. Accordingly, the Biden administration prioritized managing the US military presence in Iraq and its diplomatic relations after decades of direct intervention in Iraq's internal and external affairs.

Between 2023 and 2024, Iraqi diplomacy was notably active in efforts to end the US military presence. Multiple rounds of dialogue, termed the "Strategic Dialogue," were conducted between Baghdad and Washington. These discussions culminated in an agreement to develop a memorandum of understanding and establish a "Higher Military Commission" tasked with evaluating the transition of the International Coalition's mission into a permanent bilateral relationship. The bilateral plan stipulates the conclusion of the coalition's military mission in Iraq by September 2025, with an initial withdrawal of hundreds of troops. A limited contingent will remain to provide advisory and logistical support for military operations in Iraq and Syria until the end of 2026 (Garamone, 2024, p. 5). This framework outlines the agreed-upon strategy for the withdrawal of the majority of US forces from Iraq, where approximately 2,500 personnel currently remain in backup and support roles (Youssef, 2024).

2. Economic Cooperation

In recent years, Iraqi-American relations have increasingly emphasized economic cooperation over military and security concerns. This collaboration has manifested across various sectors, including energy, reconstruction, investment, technology, and institutional reform. Each sector holds strategic significance for both Baghdad and Washington, directly influencing Iraq's political and economic stability (Gunter, 2023, p. 15). Consequently, economic cooperation has become a central pillar of bilateral relations between the two nations, particularly in 2024. This partnership is closely linked to reconstruction efforts, economic sector development, and diversification of income sources beyond oil, alongside direct trade and investment activities. The importance of this cooperation is underscored by the persistent structural challenges facing the Iraqi economy, such as its reliance on oil revenues and the fragility of its productive infrastructure.

In 2024, the trade volume between the United States and Iraq reached approximately 9.2 billion US dollars. The United States exported goods valued at nearly 1.7 billion dollars to Iraq while importing approximately 7.5 billion dollars, predominantly crude oil. As a result, the United States experienced a trade deficit of nearly 5.9 billion dollars with Iraq (USTR, 2024). Moreover, the United States remains one of Iraq's largest donors; in 2023, it pledged approximately 426 million dollars in developmental, humanitarian, and stabilization assistance. This support continued into 2024 through programs administered by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the US Department of State, targeting sectors such as education, healthcare, and reconstruction. Additionally, direct security assistance was provided; for example, the Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund allocated nearly 242 million dollars in 2024 to support Iraqi partners, out of a total 398 million dollars designated for the region (Operation Inherent Resolve, 2024, p. 13).

The United States, through its financial institutions, has expanded support for the Iraqi economy by bolstering the private sector. In April 2024, the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) announced a 50 million dollar loan to the National Bank of Iraq, aimed at increasing financing for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and fostering entrepreneurship. This financial initiative reflects a US strategy to enhance non-oil investments in Iraq (US International Development Finance Corporation, 2024b, p. 20). Furthermore, American corporations have played a significant role in reconstruction and energy sector development. Companies such as Bechtel and Halliburton secured contracts to implement projects in oil, gas, and infrastructure, including the development of electricity grids and power plants. These contracts demonstrate that economic cooperation extends beyond governmental efforts to include private sector partnerships that contribute to strengthening Iraq's economic capacities (al-Ansary & Ratcliffe, 2025).

In addition to the aforementioned initiatives, several programs exemplify US-Iraqi economic cooperation through 2025, particularly developmental programs. USAID has contributed to the Iraqi economy via long-term development initiatives, notably the "Durable Communities and Economic Opportunities" program launched in 2020. This program aims to enhance business competitiveness and generate employment, with plans to attract investments totaling 25 million dollars and create over 3,000 jobs. However, a report by the USAID Office of Inspector General highlighted that while the mission in Iraq addressed certain procedural compliance issues, it failed to adequately monitor progress toward its objectives, thereby impeding the evaluation of developmental outcomes. The report recommended corrective measures to improve oversight, and the mission subsequently submitted plans to address these deficiencies (Tonsi, 2025, pp. 15-17). Other programs involve American financing and investments, with the DFC supporting critical projects within Iraq. A prominent example is a loan of up to 250 million dollars to Pearl Petroleum to expand natural gas processing capacity in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

This project seeks to increase gas supplies to electric power plants, thereby enhancing Iraq's energy security through 2025. This investment reflects a US commitment to diversifying Iraq's energy sources and reducing reliance on gas imports (US International Development Finance Corporation, 2024a). The multifaceted economic interconnection between the two countries is evident, encompassing substantial oil-dominated trade, ongoing developmental and humanitarian assistance, investment financing aimed at private sector support, and American corporate contracts in energy and infrastructure sectors. This cooperation is anticipated to persist in the coming years, driven by Iraq's reconstruction needs and economic diversification goals, alongside the United States' interest in consolidating a long-term strategic partnership.

3. Security Cooperation

The mechanisms of current post-occupation security cooperation between Iraq and the United States represent an important factor in the stability of relations between the two countries. This persists despite the complexity of the thorny files that have continuously restricted this relationship due to the variables and circumstances witnessed on the Iraqi arena from time to time, such as the popular and official rejection of the US military presence in Iraq, alongside an American desire to reduce direct military involvement in Iraq and focus on long-term partnerships. Consequently, the option of pressure from rejection combined with the option of the desire for reduction represented a political variable that reinforced the presence of Iraq's independent political and security orientation. This occurred after the American presence was scaled down from a direct combat role to advisory cooperation and training, while logistical and intelligence support remained. Therefore, the post-combat withdrawal phase (2021–2023) represented a profound security shift in favor of Iraq and its national sovereignty, as the US presence became governed by bilateral agreements focusing on counter-terrorism and institutional capacity building (Blanchard, 2024b, p. 2).

Iraqi-American security cooperation represents one of the constants of the relations between the two countries and is consistently at the forefront of priorities in meetings of government officials. Perhaps one of the most important of these is the "Joint Security Cooperation Dialogue," which held its second meeting in Washington DC, on July 22 and 23, 2024. Iraq was represented in this meeting by a delegation from the Iraqi Ministry of Defense headed by Minister of Defense Thābit al-'Abbāsī, while the US Department of Defense delegation was headed by US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, alongside representatives from the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, US Central Command, the Department of State, and National Security Council staff. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to security cooperation, mutual interest, and regional stability. Discussions in this meeting centered on when and how the mission of the US-led International Coalition in Iraq will conclude, and the transition to a permanent bilateral security partnership within the framework of the 2008 Strategic Framework Agreement between the United States and Iraq. This took place within the context of recognizing the comprehensive security partnership and the United States' commit-

ment to developing Iraq's security and defense capabilities and deepening military cooperation in a manner that ensures Iraq's security and sovereignty.

The value of the Joint Security Cooperation Dialogue lies in the acknowledgment of three factors: confronting the threat of ISIS, operational requirements, and raising the capability levels of the Iraqi security forces. These factors determine the future of the US-led International Coalition in Iraq. During the meeting, both countries committed to continuous consultation to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS, which was achieved thanks to the historic accomplishments of the various branches of the Iraqi military and security forces in cooperation with partner forces worldwide, including the United States. Furthermore, the two delegations reached an understanding regarding a new phase of the bilateral security relationship, which includes cooperation through liaison officers, training, and traditional security cooperation programs. The two delegations also discussed efforts aimed at building the operational capacities of the Iraqi security forces through US military assistance and security cooperation programs via Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and Foreign Military Financing (FMF), and they further emphasized the value of professional military education and technical training programs, deciding to enhance both. The success in completing the second Joint Security Cooperation Dialogue confirms the commitment of both countries to deepening bilateral security cooperation in all fields, including but not limited to the Iraqi-led enduring defeat of ISIS and security cooperation efforts. Bilateral relations between the United States and Iraq promote regional stability and represent the commitment of both nations to enhancing the comprehensive Strategic Framework Agreement (US Department of War, 2024). However, all of this must take place within the framework of preserving Iraq's sovereignty and without undermining its stability.

In addition to what has been presented, the diplomacy of both countries pays close attention to the mechanism for the continuation of security cooperation; Washington and Baghdād issued joint statements during the year 2024 reaffirming the continuation of consultation regarding the security partnership. This is conducted with a focus on border security, counter-terrorism, and building the capabilities of Iraqi forces, alongside the continuation of high-level visits and technical meetings between the ministries of defense and foreign affairs of both countries, which are held to define the future framework that determines the form of cooperation and areas for its sustainability through partnership as illustrated below (White House, 2024a):

- **Counter-Terrorism (Focusing on ISIS):** Intelligence and operational cooperation continued between the US-led International Coalition and the Iraqi security forces, including joint raid operations and targeting operations against the organization's fighters. The most prominent example of this was the joint operation in late August 2024, which resulted in the elimination of a number of the organization's elements; this type of operation reflected the continuation of American field coordination with Iraq.

- **Continuation of Training and Advisory Programs:** Iraq worked to assimilate the capabilities of its security institutions through training and advisory programs provided by the United States and other allies to gradually transfer reliance to the Iraqi forces. Security cooperation is vital, particularly in light of the transition of the International Coalition's missions toward training, advice, and logistical support rather than direct combat.
- **Training and Intelligence Capacity Building:** This is carried out by the Office of Security Cooperation - Iraq (OSC-I) at the US Embassy and teams from the International Coalition mission, which continue to provide training at the leadership level, counter-terrorism units, and support for military and military-civilian intelligence capabilities throughout the year 2024. This year witnessed an intelligence intensification in information sharing between Iraqi agencies and the Coalition, with the aim of disrupting the cells, funding lines, and logistics of ISIS. In general, intelligence cooperation was a primary fulcrum for coordinating strikes and taking precautions to protect civilians.
- **Scheduling the US Military Presence:** This scheduling points to the role of Iraqi diplomacy when it worked to establish a timeframe to withdraw or scale down the combat role of the Coalition while retaining advisory and technical elements concerned with training and consultation only.

According to what has been presented, the impact assessment of security cooperation between Iraq and the United States indicates great importance in its effectiveness regarding joint intelligence operations and training, both of which enhanced the capacity to contribute to preventing ISIS from returning to large-scale operations. This is in addition to its importance in building high-efficiency security capacities through the continuation of training and administrative programs that helped raise leadership levels and technical skills within the Iraqi forces. Nevertheless, the issue of the American presence remains a subject of political and popular debate; Iraq desired to schedule this presence as a prelude to a final withdrawal because it believes that this presence harms Iraqi sovereignty. In return, Iraq focuses on building trained domestic capabilities, considering them the sole guarantor of Iraq's security and safety.

Accordingly, we see that the year 2024 witnessed a manifest transformation in the Iraqi-American security relationship, facilitated primarily by a functional alignment (counter-terrorism and capacity building) that ran parallel to political variances and domestic sovereign concerns. Practical results demonstrated a continuation in technical and intelligence cooperation, but the future of the legal form of the American presence and cooperation remained under negotiation and tied to the domestic and regional calculations of both states. Achieving a practical and sustainable balance requires a transparent agreement, response mechanisms for emergency events, and a tangible focus on building Iraqi capabilities to reduce external dependence.

X. Relations with the United Kingdom

Iraqi diplomacy has played a significant role in fostering Iraqi-British cooperation to combat transnational crimes, which pose a multifaceted threat to both national and regional security. This threat is exacerbated by the operation of perpetrators through regional and international networks spanning from the Middle East to Europe, necessitating effective cross-border collaboration. Such collaboration entails intelligence sharing, border force training, and the enhancement of legal frameworks governing extradition and judicial cooperation. Consequently, the Iraqi-British relationship has recently experienced notable practical advancements in this domain, particularly in response to escalating transnational challenges such as human trafficking and smuggling networks, drug trafficking, and the financing of illicit activities. On November 28, 2024, the two countries formalized security agreements and understandings grounded in the principle of partnership. This development aligns with Iraq's comprehensive strategy to expand cooperation networks addressing transnational organized crime by leveraging specific funding mechanisms and programs provided by British law enforcement agencies and other international entities (UK Government, 2024). This partnership encompasses several areas of practical cooperation:

- **Combating Human Smuggling and Trafficking:** The two countries jointly announced the establishment of mechanisms to dismantle migrant smuggling networks, the initiation of deterrent awareness campaigns within Iraq and Kurdistan, and the implementation of reintegration programs for returnees. These initiatives rely on security-administrative collaboration among the ministries of interior, prison authorities, and British criminal investigation networks (UK Government, 2024).
- **Combating All Forms of Narcotics:** A segment of the bilateral efforts against transnational crimes has been directed toward funding specialized border units tasked with detecting and investigating drug shipments transiting through Syria and Iraq en route to Europe. The United Kingdom committed to facilitating Iraq's cooperation with international organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Europol, and INTERPOL in the preparation and execution of training programs and capacity-building projects designed to integrate Iraq into broader criminal intelligence networks (Reuters, 2024, November 28), in addition to intelligence sharing. The joint government declaration underscored the necessity of establishing official communication channels between British law enforcement agencies and their Iraqi counterparts to coordinate transnational intelligence and cyber operations. These efforts aim to monitor illicit financial flows and counter sophisticated criminal networks engaged in smuggling migrants or drugs through digital technologies and internationally managed operations centers. The partnership may further evolve to establish a regionally based joint intelligence exchange unit linking British agencies, such as the Border Security

Command (BSC), with Iraqi counterparts, endowed with specific technical capabilities for real-time information exchange (UK Government, 2024).

- **Expanding Domestic Capacity-Building Programs:** The United Kingdom pledged to enhance domestic capacity-building initiatives through the Integrated Security Fund, which supports specialized training for Iraqi border and police units. This includes intensive training, document screening and inspection equipment, digital forensic collection and investigative techniques, narcotics analysis laboratories, financial investigation capabilities, and efforts to combat human smuggling. Reintegration programs and agreements on return procedures adhere to human rights protection standards, ensuring the safety of returnees and the conditions of their detention, in accordance with states' commitments to international law (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2024, p. 9).

The security agreements signed by the Iraqi and British governments, first of their kind globally between the two nations, aim to target human smuggling networks and strengthen cooperation in border security. The agreement includes a British financial commitment of £300,000 to support law enforcement training in border security, organized migration control, and drug trafficking, alongside an additional £200,000 allocated to projects in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to support a border task force (UK Government, 2024).

This agreement signifies a diplomatic achievement for Iraq, having persuaded the United Kingdom to formalize security agreements focused on dismantling smuggling networks and combating drug trafficking and organized crime. It reflects a concrete, operational step rather than a mere statement of intent, evidenced by dedicated funding, specific programs, announced financial allocations, and programmatic commitments that lend credibility to the initiative. The agreement facilitates measurable plans to expand cooperation beyond information exchange to include practical training and capacity building aimed at ensuring its sustainability.

The Iraqi-British cooperation culminating in the 2024 security agreements represents a critical practical advancement in combating transnational crimes, characterized by dimensions of funding, training, and intelligence sharing. However, the success of this cooperation depends on the establishment of clear legal frameworks, the activation of effective intelligence channels, and the development of sustainable domestic capacities within Iraqi law enforcement agencies.

XI. Relations with the European Union Countries

Iraq's cooperation with the European Union in 2024 represents a continuation of collaborative efforts initiated in 2003. The European Union has emerged as a principal international donor in humanitarian aid, service assistance, security sector reform, and development initiatives. This commitment is viewed as foundational to establishing a partnership aimed at fostering a better future

for the Iraqi people. The cooperation intensified with the establishment of the European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM) in Iraq, which commenced operations in November 2017 following a request from the Iraqi government for guidance on non-traditional security sector reform. Initially, the EUAM operated under a one-year mandate until October 17, 2018. However, based on the Iraqi side's needs assessment and progress achieved, the Council of the European Union extended the mandate until April 30, 2022, with operations continuing to the present. The advisory mission's comprehensive mandate includes supporting the implementation of civilian components of the Iraqi National Security Strategy and security sector reform, providing advice and expertise to Iraqi authorities, and delineating requirements for the effective execution of civilian aspects within the security sector reform framework (Khamīs, 2024, pp. 26-27).

In 2024, Iraq's relationship with the European Union evolved within a multifaceted partnership framework, as outlined below (European Parliament, 2024, p. 39):

- **Institutional and Political Framework:** This framework encompasses the legal and regulatory basis governing EU-Iraq relations, primarily the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), which entered into force in August 2018. The PCA underpins cooperation in democracy, human rights, economic development, migration, and security. Diplomatic engagement remained active in 2024, exemplified by high-level bilateral meetings between the Iraqi government head and European leaders during the Davos Forum in January 2024, focusing on enhancing economic and military cooperation and contracts with European enterprises across various sectors (Reuters, 2024, January 17).
- **Continuation of Military and Security Cooperation:** The EUAM's efforts to provide strategic advice on civilian security sector reform in Iraq were sustained as part of a broader European support package aimed at stabilizing Iraq post-ISIS defeat. This mission constitutes a primary conduit for ongoing security cooperation between the EU and Iraq (The European External Action Service, 2025). Additionally, bilateral agreements between Baghdad and several EU member states addressed training, capacity building, maintenance and contracts for military equipment, and energy partnerships (Reuters, 2024, January 17).
- **Cooperation in Trade and Economy:** Trade relations experienced significant growth in 2024, with total trade in goods between the EU and Iraq reaching 22.295 billion euros. EU imports from Iraq, predominantly petroleum products and minerals, amounted to 16.673 billion euros, while EU exports to Iraq totaled 5.622 billion euros, mainly machinery, transportation equipment, chemicals, and basic foodstuffs. Foreign direct investment (FDI) from European entities in Iraq reached substantial levels, reflecting private sector engagement in oil, energy, and infrastructure projects. Notably, Italian, French, and German companies actively participated in contracts related to oil field production, energy, electricity, and infrastructure development. France's involvement includes defense and

commercial contracts, offering opportunities for French firms in energy and defense sectors. Italy serves as a major partner in importing Iraqi oil, with significant commercial exchanges. Similar cooperation exists with Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and other EU nations in reconstruction, energy projects, development programs, and institutional support (European Commission, 2024, p. 1-4).

- **Assistance, Reconstruction, and Development:** The EU remains a leading donor to Iraq, providing billions in humanitarian and developmental aid in response to crises. It funds specialized programs aimed at reform and stability and contributes to major infrastructure projects, including regional initiatives and support for displaced persons. These efforts are conducted in collaboration with international institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and various European commissions (United Nations Security Council, 2024, p. 5).
- **Cooperation in Migration, Asylum, and Humanitarian Policies:** This cooperation emerged in response to increased asylum applications from Iraq. In 2024, the EU issued unified directives on this matter, central to the Union's policy framework, as adopted by the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). In November 2024, the EUAA published a comprehensive analysis of Iraq's security and humanitarian conditions, profiling various groups including journalists, activists, and minorities. These profiles inform EU member states' examination of asylum applications (EUAA, 2024, pp. 5-10).

The developments in 2024 indicate a gradual strengthening of Iraq-EU relations, with Iraqi policymakers recognizing the EU's balanced role in providing developmental, political, and technical support, particularly in the energy sector. Iraq aims to leverage this cooperation to achieve sustainable and comprehensive growth through domestic reforms and an improved investment climate.

XII. Relations with Russia

Iraq continues to hold a significant position as a partner within the strategic considerations of Russian political decision-makers, who acknowledge the critical importance of enhancing commercial and investment relations with Iraq across multiple sectors, particularly in the energy domain. Historically, both the Russian Federation and its predecessor, the Soviet Union, have recognized Iraq as a pivotal economic partner within the Arab region. This perspective is underscored by Russian President Vladimir Putin, who advocates for the revitalization of bilateral relations. In 2008, this commitment was exemplified by the cancellation of a substantial portion of Iraq's debt accumulated during the Soviet era, thereby facilitating an oil agreement valued at approximately four billion US dollars. This initiative marked the commencement of intensified economic engagement, which was further consolidated in 2012 through significant partnerships involving Russian oil enterprises.

In recent years, the bilateral relationship has expanded beyond the energy sector, driven by shared geopolitical and economic interests, to encompass broader investment collaborations currently estimated to exceed nineteen billion US dollars. While the oil sector remains the primary focus, the gas sector has also garnered considerable attention within Russian-Iraqi cooperation. This emphasis aligns with Iraq's strategic interest in reducing gas flaring and leveraging Russia's extensive expertise in gas production and processing. Collaborative efforts include exploring technical assistance, joint ventures in gas processing facilities, and knowledge transfer initiatives beneficial to both nations. Consequently, the energy sector epitomizes the depth of bilateral relations and underscores the imperative of sustaining this cooperation (Barantschik, 2023, pp. 1-3).

The year 2024 represents a significant milestone in Russian-Iraqi relations, coinciding with the eightieth anniversary of diplomatic ties established in 1944. Since the regime change in Iraq in 2003, these relations have undergone gradual development; Russia reestablished its presence in Iraq primarily through the energy and oil sectors, subsequently expanding cooperation to encompass armament, education, and cultural domains. The key dimensions characterizing Iraqi-Russian relations in 2024 are summarized as follows:

- **Political and Diplomatic Dimension:** On September 12, 2024, the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs convened an official ceremony commemorating eighty years of diplomatic relations with Russia, attended by the Russian Ambassador and Iraqi officials. The event highlighted the historical and strategic nature of bilateral relations and reaffirmed Baghdad's commitment to expanding cooperation across diverse fields. Concurrently, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov conveyed in a telegram Moscow's recognition of Iraq as a vital partner in the Middle East and reiterated Russia's intention to support Iraq in international forums and strengthen bilateral cooperation. Throughout the year, Iraq and Russia engaged in discussions concerning regional issues, notably the Syrian conflict, the Gaza crisis, and the Russian-Ukrainian war. Iraq maintained a stance of "positive neutrality" regarding the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, advocating for peaceful resolutions through dialogue and eschewing alignment in the broader Russian-Western confrontation centered on Ukraine (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024, September 12).
- **Economic and Investment Cooperation:** Russian investments in Iraq's energy sector, particularly oil and gas, constitute the most prominent aspect of bilateral cooperation in 2024. According to a report by Iraq Business News dated September 12, 2024, Russian investments in Iraq surpassed nineteen billion US dollars, involving major corporations such as Lukoil, which is developing the West al-Qurnah-2 oil field in al-Basrah; Gazprom Neft, operating in the Badrah fields; and Rosneft, investing in oil infrastructure within the Kurdistan Region. Additionally, during its tenth session in 2024, the Joint Iraqi-Russian Committee deliberated on agreements scheduled for signing in early 2025, encompassing cooperation in

maritime transport, industrial and health sector expertise exchange, and the development of oil and gas infrastructure. This economic collaboration reflects Iraq's strategic objective to diversify its international partnerships beyond reliance on the United States and China in the energy sector, thereby fostering engagement with Russia as a global oil and gas actor (Interfax, 2025, February 26).

- **Security and Military Cooperation:** Security cooperation with Russia remains crucial for both nations, given the volatile regional and international context, including the Russian-Ukrainian war, US-Russia tensions, and regional security challenges stemming from the "Israeli" conflict and associated hostilities. Official statements from the Russian Ambassador to Iraq indicate that 2024 witnessed advancements in military-technical cooperation, including prospective arms agreements and training of Iraqi personnel on Russian weaponry. Iraqi officials, including National Security Advisor Qāsim al-A'rajī, affirmed Russia's role as a key partner in counter-terrorism and intelligence sharing, particularly concerning ISIS cells operating in Iraq and Syria. This military cooperation is characterized by balance, as Iraq maintains its official military alliance with the United States while simultaneously seeking to benefit from Russian expertise, especially in fighter jets and air defense systems (INA, 2024, April 20).
- **Cultural and Media Cooperation within the Framework of the Kazan Forum 2024:** Two memoranda of understanding were signed between the Iraqi News Agency (INA) and Russian media organizations Russia Today (RT) and Sputnik, aimed at exchanging news content and media expertise to enhance joint media presence. Discussions also addressed educational cooperation and scholarship programs, with Baghdad seeking to reactivate scholarships to Russian universities, particularly in engineering and medical fields, following a prolonged suspension. These cultural and media initiatives underscore Iraq's intent to engage with Russia not only economically and militarily but also through "soft power" channels (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024, September 12).

The year 2024 is regarded as a pivotal period in Russian-Iraqi relations, marked by both symbolic and practical developments. The symbolic dimension is reflected in the commemoration of eight decades of diplomatic relations, while the practical dimension encompasses substantial Russian investments in energy, enhanced security cooperation, and the formalization of media and cultural agreements. Iraq's diplomatic posture in 2024 was characterized by flexibility, adopting a policy of "positive neutrality" in international conflicts while pursuing diversified partnerships. Accordingly, 2024 established a new phase in bilateral relations, the trajectory of which is expected to become more evident in 2025 and subsequent years.

XIII. Agenda for 2025

1. Challenges and Problems

The geographical location of Iraq presents a highly complex geopolitical context that necessitates strategic maneuvering on multiple fronts, given its position in a volatile and challenging region. Historical evidence indicates that the issues, developments, and conflicts in this area have consistently influenced Iraq, which has never been insulated from such dynamics. Consequently, crises and wars have adversely affected its internal stability. Therefore, the rapid developments in the region constitute a series of challenges, problems, and obligations that Iraq must prepare for and address in the forthcoming year and beyond, thereby increasing the pressure on Iraq to demonstrate its resilience.

Since late 2023 and early 2024, Iraq has been situated amid swift regional and international developments stemming from the "Operation al-Aqṣá Flood" conducted on October 7, 2023, by the Islamic Resistance Movement Ḥamās. This event marked a significant and perilous shift in the Arab-"Israeli" conflict. The operation exposed the profound failure of the occupying "Israeli" entity and its purported myth of invincibility, encompassing its security and intelligence apparatuses. In response, the "Israeli" entity engaged in a violent campaign to obscure this failure. This response, characterized by a declaration of war on the entire Gaza Strip, compelled the resistance in Lebanon to open a support front and join the conflict alongside Ḥamās against the occupation entity and its actions against the Palestinian population in Gaza. The conflict extended beyond Gaza and southern Lebanon, encompassing the entire Axis of Resistance, including its leader, the Islamic Republic of Iran. Despite these developments, the full implications of this major regional shift remain unclear. However, prevailing forecasts and scenarios suggest an impending period of instability and violence, with the "stability" sought by certain internal and external actors being inherently fragile. While some perceive Iraq as peripheral to this ongoing regional conflict, it remains plausible that Iraq could become central or an active participant if it fails to manage its responses effectively.

The instability in Syria, resulting from regime change and the emergence of leadership with an extremist background, represents a persistent security challenge for Iraq. Despite efforts by Iraqi leadership to fortify the country against indirect effects of regional conflicts, particularly in Syria, concerns persist regarding the potential spillover of instability into Iraqi territory. This concern is evident at both governmental and social levels, given that the ascension of a former branch of the terrorist al-Qaeda organization to power in a neighboring state poses significant challenges not only to Iraq but to many countries globally. The new Syrian leader is characterized as a "militant jihadist" and was previously detained by American occupation forces at Camp Bucca in Iraq (Cafiero, 2025). Key challenges for Iraq in relation to the new Syrian context include border security, the potential infiltration of terrorist organizations (especially ISIS), the protec-

tion of Shi'i holy shrines, and the presence of armed groups in both Iraq and Syria with the capacity to operate beyond governmental control.

The fragility of Iraq's political situation and its impact on foreign policy decisions constitute a clear challenge. Iraq achieved a significant victory over ISIS, the most vicious terrorist organization, through the efforts of its security and military branches, demonstrating the capacity of Iraqis to defend their homeland against a brutal assault. Nevertheless, despite this victory, the political dynamics continue to undermine Iraq's ability to respond effectively to regional and international pressures and ongoing crises. Prominent challenges arising from the political situation include disagreements among decision-makers and ruling elites on issues such as the presence of foreign forces, approaches to the regional conflict, and domestic political disputes over governance, political positions, and sharing public funds. These challenges hinder the unity of Iraqi decision-making and obstruct the formulation of a coherent foreign policy concerning regional and global developments.

2. Obligations

The year 2025 presents significant obligations for Iraq at the regional, international, and United Nations levels, positioning the country before a critical test to demonstrate its capacity to manage challenges and opportunities effectively and to respond appropriately. The domestic and global circumstances and developments, alongside the flexibility of Iraqi decision-makers to adapt, will substantially influence this response. Rapid developments both domestically and internationally necessitate a comprehensive review of Iraq's national security priorities, a clear definition of its supreme interests, and preparation for the obligations anticipated at regional and international levels in 2025 and beyond.

Political stability plays a crucial role in unifying foreign policy decisions or, at minimum, preventing their fragmentation. Achieving consensus on the stance toward developments, challenges, and opportunities surrounding Iraq constitutes a vital obligation that strengthens Iraq's ability to respond appropriately. Key factors, notably political stability and consensus among decision-makers and ruling elites on foreign issues, facilitate suitable responses to foreign policy challenges. Political and international literature underscores that consensus or disagreement among decision-makers and controlling elites regarding foreign issues is the most immediate cause of a state's response or lack thereof to external threats (Schweller, 2006, p. 47).

Despite the fragility of the ceasefire resolution in Lebanon, the region remains highly volatile, with the potential for war to erupt between the "Israeli" occupation entity, supported by the United States, and one or all fronts of the Axis of Resistance, primarily Iran. Significantly affected by instability in this volatile region, Iraq must continue managing its regional and international relations with balance and avoid entanglement in a comprehensive war that could erupt at any moment. This is particularly critical given the ongoing provocations by the occupying entity, which could encroach on any state in the region regardless of

its importance or neutrality. Consequently, Iraq's foremost obligations in 2025 concerning foreign policy include preserving its security and sovereignty amid a volatile region and playing a constructive role in cooperation with the international community. Additionally, Iraq must fulfill its humanitarian role by providing aid to countries affected by the occupying entity's actions, notably Palestine and Lebanon (al-Waeli, 2025). In this context, Iraq should maintain its positive role through regional and international platforms, especially as it will host the Arab Summit in 2025. This platform, alongside others at regional and international levels, can be utilized to denounce the occupying entity's crimes and continuous provocations, highlight the suffering of the Palestinian people, and contribute to convening global summits aimed at halting the war on Gaza, condemning the usurping entity, and exerting pressure to cease hostilities.

Iraq's relations with the United States represent the most prominent aspect of its international relations. Iraq must adapt to the new American administration in a manner that preserves its sovereignty and shields it from policies considered distinct from most previous administrations and less committed to established rules of engagement with countries, including Iraq. The year 2024 witnessed Prime Minister al-Sūdānī's visit to the United States, characterized by investments across multiple sectors and efforts to avert Iraqi involvement in ongoing regional conflicts. This visit resulted in economic agreements and calls for a "strong Iraqi-American partnership" extending beyond security to encompass energy, education, and investment. The visit primarily focused on developing domestic infrastructure, economic growth, and security issues. Nevertheless, reliance on this visit is limited given the current administration led by Donald Trump, whose policies compel Iraq to demonstrate greater adaptability to avoid the administration's erratic decisions and improvisations.

The year 2025 will introduce new and recurring issues in Iraqi-American relations. For instance, Iraq may be subject to tariff policies imposed by the Trump administration on various countries, both adversaries and allies, necessitating Iraq's preparedness to adapt. Additionally, the issue of US troop withdrawal from Iraq remains recurrent, with demands arising intermittently from political, military, and popular factions opposing foreign presence. The policies of the United States itself, influenced by its decision-makers and elites' perceptions regarding regional deployment, also affect this issue. Notably, September 2025 is the planned date for terminating the mission of the US-led International Coalition. The actual withdrawal of US and foreign forces would create a new security environment requiring management, alongside potential shifts toward bilateral security arrangements, especially under an American administration historically averse to multilateral security frameworks. However, the agreement may permit a limited US military presence in Iraq. Regardless, this transition will either stabilize or complicate Iraq's security environment, contingent upon Iraq's capacity to adapt.

In 2025 and beyond, Iraq must manage the "UNAMI legacy" by demonstrating its ability to handle issues previously overseen by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). These ongoing challenges include the issue of missing

persons, Iraqi-Kuwaiti reconciliation requiring continued international facilitation, support for electoral processes, transitional justice, human rights monitoring, investigation of ISIS terrorist crimes, national reconciliation efforts, and the consolidation of sustainable development. Addressing these matters demands sustained efforts from the current and future Iraqi governments to fill the void left by UNAMI's departure. The Iraqi government has expressed confidence in its capacity to manage these files post-mission, with the coming years serving as a test of this capability.

The evolving situation in Syria necessitates vigilance and actions aligned with Iraq's supreme interests and national security. The regime change in Syria has imposed a new reality for which Iraq may have been unprepared. Nonetheless, Iraq has engaged with this change as an unavoidable *fait accompli*, exemplified by the National Intelligence Service Director, Ḥamīd al-Shaṭrī, meeting with Aḥmad al-Shar' (formerly known as "Abū-Muḥammad al-Jawlānī"). Iraq's obligation regarding Syria in the coming year involves prudent engagement and cooperation with the new Syrian administration wherever feasible, exercising caution to prevent or mitigate security deterioration in Baghdād and across Iraq.

Additional obligations for Iraq in 2025 include managing relations with neighboring countries and resolving outstanding issues related to water, borders, and other matters. Furthermore, cultivating robust relations with international actors remains essential, given the global challenges posed by ongoing wars and crises with the potential to escalate into broader conflicts.

XIV. Recommendations

- Iraq, or its decision-makers, must clearly define its national interests and realign these interests in response to changes in the regional and international strategic environment. This process should be achieved by fostering domestic unity rather than division, and through consensus among decision-makers to formulate a balanced foreign policy that portrays Iraq as both resilient and adaptable.
- Iraq should endeavor to enhance the momentum of United Nations support for its causes, ensuring that the conclusion of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) does not diminish this support. The completion of UNAMI's mandate should be viewed as a step toward affirming Iraq's sovereignty and demonstrating its readiness to manage its own affairs independently, without external interference or direct presence. Nonetheless, arrangements must be established to guarantee ongoing support for Iraq as a fully sovereign state within international institutions and forums.
- The continuation of internationally significant developmental projects, such as the Development Road, is crucial. These initiatives contribute to elevating Iraq's status, positioning it among influential nations whose instability could jeopardize regional and global trade and development.

Such projects are instrumental in reshaping Iraq's regional and international standing.

- The persistence of a rentier economy remains an impediment to Iraq's ability to assume a diversified and influential role in regional and international decision-making. Although oil may serve as a strategic asset for Iraq, particularly in dealings with importing countries, reliance on it alone is insufficient. Diversifying income sources and advancing toward self-sufficiency across multiple sectors will afford Iraq greater strategic autonomy, thereby enhancing its regional and international position. Conversely, dependence on oil presents a long-term risk.
- The relationship between the state and society, along with the cohesion of the elite regarding foreign policy positions, plays a critical role in the state's external strength. The absence of such cohesion undermines the state's capacity to mobilize resources and efforts in foreign policy, impeding its ability to respond effectively to international threats, opportunities, and strategic pressures. Therefore, consensus and alignment among elites and decision-makers on pivotal issues are essential for fortifying the state against international pressures.
- Iraq remains a prominent advocate for the Palestinian cause, a stance that is unlikely to change. However, efforts to support the Palestinian people should be conducted in ways that do not compromise Iraqi security and stability. Maintaining Iraq's strength is paramount, as it ultimately serves the interests of the Palestinian cause.

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11.

Pollution

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Pollution constitutes one of the most significant environmental challenges confronting the global community today, as its impacts transcend political boundaries. Consequently, addressing this issue necessitates international collaboration due to its direct effects on public health, as well as social and economic stability. Moreover, the proactive engagement of societies in fostering a healthy environment facilitates the development of comprehensive solutions that integrate both governmental and grassroots initiatives. Given the intensification of pollution, urgent interventions by media and health organizations are imperative to enhance environmental awareness and support remediation efforts. Additionally, the enactment of legal frameworks is crucial to regulate the conduct of individuals and institutions in safeguarding the environment and mitigating pollution.

This chapter endeavors to examine the critical dimensions of pollution and analyze the responsibilities of various stakeholders in addressing this issue, emphasizing the importance of cooperation between governments and communities to achieve environmental sustainability.

Environmental concerns have garnered considerable attention in many developed countries due to their direct implications for human health and the well-being of all living organisms. Consequently, substantial financial resources and effective administrative measures have been dedicated to this domain, with a focus on elevating environmental awareness among individuals and communities and reducing pollution levels. Achieving these objectives requires establishing collaborative mechanisms between governmental bodies and civil society, thereby enhancing outcomes in pollution reduction and enforcing stringent legal measures to curtail practices detrimental to the environment. This chapter specifically addresses the issue of pollution in Iraq, investigating the primary factors contributing to this phenomenon (including drought, armed conflicts, improper disposal of industrial waste, and unsustainable practices in agriculture and daily life) through an analysis of available data and an exploration of social, legal, and environmental perspectives.

I. Man and Ecological Balance

The ecosystem depends on a complex network of interactions between biotic and abiotic components, governed by cyclical processes that sustain environmental stability and balance. However, abrupt or persistent alterations can disrupt this equilibrium, necessitating natural or anthropogenic interventions to restore normalcy (Qādir, 2009, p. 19). Historically, human activities had minimal impact on nature, akin to other organisms, as waste generated was within the environment's capacity for natural recycling, thereby maintaining ecological balance. This equilibrium persisted until the nineteenth century, when industrialization emerged as the most developed human endeavor. The extensive utilization of industrial processes imposed significant burdens on the environment, as waste production exceeded the natural system's capacity for assimilation. This imbalance precipitated numerous environmental challenges, prompting urgent measures to halt and mitigate further degradation ('Abd-al-Maḡṣūd, 1981, p. 18).

Within this context, environmental problems are defined as defects or degradations within ecosystems that pose threats to all forms of life on Earth, whether directly or indirectly. Climate change constitutes a major threat to ecosystems by inducing long-term alterations in temperature, humidity, and precipitation patterns. Such changes affect the viability of living organisms, compelling species to either adapt or face extinction. Rapid environmental changes often surpass species' adaptive capacities, thereby endangering ecological balance.

Anthropogenic activities, including the combustion of fossil fuels and methane emissions, have intensified greenhouse gas concentrations, resulting in elevated global temperatures. This warming has increased water evaporation rates, leading to extreme precipitation events in some regions and droughts in others, with significant repercussions for biodiversity. Elevated temperatures have also contributed to polar ice melt, threatening animal species with extinction, and have caused ocean acidification, which damages coral reefs and the marine life dependent on them. Additional consequences of climate change include heightened frequency of droughts and wildfires driven by hot, arid conditions, as well as more severe storms that devastate ecosystems and deplete natural resources. Climate alterations have disrupted biological cycles, including reproduction, hibernation, and migration, thereby affecting not only individual species but entire ecosystems. These challenges necessitate a coordinated global response to conserve biodiversity (Environment Go, 2021).

II. Prominent Impacts of Climate Change in Iraq

Iraq continues to endure significant challenges due to prolonged conflicts, persistent insecurity, and widespread corruption within state institutions, despite ongoing efforts to address these issues. These factors have contributed to weakened infrastructure and disrupted public policy implementation. Successive Iraqi administrations have failed to establish scientifically grounded, legally regulated,

and professionally institutionalized frameworks to effectively manage environmental concerns and mitigate high levels of pollution affecting water, air, and soil.

Environmental problems in Iraq are complex and interrelated; a single cause may trigger multiple issues, and conversely, a single environmental problem may result from several overlapping factors. A primary contributor is the unexpectedly rapid population growth. The Iraqi Ministry of Planning estimated the population at approximately 43.3 million at the end of 2023; however, the 2024 census revealed a total of 46,118,000 individuals. This demographic increase intensifies demand for goods, services, and employment opportunities, thereby exacerbating environmental degradation and placing additional strain on natural resources.

Effective solutions to the environmental crisis necessitate a clear understanding of the reciprocal relationship between humans and the environment. A cooperative approach with nature, emphasizing the sustainable and renewable utilization of resources rather than their depletion or destruction, is essential. Sustainable practices derive from a profound comprehension of natural laws and adherence to ecological boundaries. Such cooperation requires a fundamental shift in human values toward greater environmental harmony. Current practices, such as the indiscriminate exploitation of technology, contribute to resource depletion and pollution of water, air, soil, food, and noise, primarily due to industrial manufacturing processes. Unregulated human interventions have frequently precipitated environmental disasters.

The Environmental Performance Index (EPI) serves as a critical measure of a country's capacity to enhance environmental quality and protect against pollution and climate change. The EPI evaluates three domains: environmental management, environmental health, and climate change mitigation. Iraq's low score of 30.4 out of 100 in 2024 positioned it at 172nd out of 180 countries, reflecting poor environmental performance. This ranking is partially attributable to limited environmental awareness, which has contributed to increased pollution and environmental degradation (al-Jubūrī, 2024).

In conclusion, it is imperative to recognize the importance of ecological balance and adherence to its principles. This recognition necessitates a shift in human perceptions of nature, from a resource to be exploited to a partner deserving respect and collaboration, thereby fostering an environmental ethic and sustainable culture.

Iraq confronts substantial environmental and climatic challenges that impact its natural resources, economy, and population. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts by the government and international community, alongside the implementation of effective policies for climate adaptation and mitigation. Respecting natural laws and striving for a sustainable equilibrium between human needs and environmental preservation are essential to securing a stable and healthy future for both humanity and the planet (Zimmerman, 2006, pp. 23-44). The most significant impacts include the following:

- **Rising Temperatures:** Iraq has experienced a notable increase in temperatures in recent years, with record highs reaching approximately 54°C in al-Baṣrah. Elevated temperatures accelerate evaporation rates, adversely affecting water availability and crops.
- **Scarcity of Water Resources:** Iraq depends predominantly on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which supply approximately 98% of the country's surface water. Over the past four decades, water flow in these rivers has declined by 30-40%, with less than 50% of usual flow recorded in 2024. This reduction has resulted in the desiccation of numerous areas, including the southern marshlands.
- **Increase in Sand and Dust Storms:** The frequency of sand and dust storms has escalated markedly, with over 300 storms recorded in 2013 compared to fewer than 25 annually between 1950 and 1990. This increase is attributed to desertification and land degradation, which negatively affect public health and the environment. Data from 2024 indicate a continued rise in storm days, causing estimated daily losses of approximately one million dollars across sectors such as health, agriculture, transportation, and services. Both domestic and international entities have issued warnings regarding the worsening conditions associated with ongoing climate change and the proliferation of dust storms.
- **Impacts on Agriculture and Food Security:** Climate change has led to reductions in arable land due to drought and water scarcity, thereby diminishing crop yields. A study by the Norwegian Refugee Council found that 60% of farmers were compelled to cultivate smaller areas or reduce water usage due to extreme climatic conditions.
- **Displacement and Migration:** Severe climate conditions have forced many families to migrate from rural to urban areas in search of improved livelihoods. Reports indicate that 94% of displaced individuals in southern governorates identified water scarcity as a primary factor in their displacement.

III. Manifestations of Pollution in Iraq

To underscore the gravity of environmental challenges in Iraq and the urgent need for mobilizing governmental and public efforts toward remediation, environmental specialists have issued urgent appeals. Among these experts is Dr. Jihān Bābān, President of the Iraqi Environment and Health Society in the United Kingdom, who highlighted the environmental degradation in Iraq and the significant challenges confronting the government. These challenges necessitate appropriate legal frameworks and strategic practical measures across short-, medium-, and long-term horizons.

Dr. Bābān identified several causes that have directly and adversely affected pollution levels in water, air, and soil since the previous regime. These include the desiccation of marshes and water bodies, the felling of millions of palm trees, the

burning of oil wells in southern Iraq, the use of chemical weapons and depleted uranium, and the deployment of landmines. Additionally, successive wars have inflicted further environmental damage. The emergence of ISIS in 2014 exacerbated the situation, as militants seized radioactive and chemical weapons, including sarin gas and approximately 80 tons of sodium cyanide, alongside munitions and storage vessels containing remnants of mustard gas. Intense battles within urban and industrial areas further compromised the fragile environmental conditions.

Consequently, Iraq has become a highly polluted environment. The Ministry of Health has documented numerous pathological cases attributable to air pollution, alongside an increased incidence of cancer. These findings prompted appeals to relevant authorities, including the Ministry of Environment and the Mayoralty of Baghdād, to address pollution control. Desertification represents another critical environmental issue, with approximately 90% of agricultural lands in southern Iraq affected due to prolonged neglect of agricultural practices.

Jāsim al-'Azzāwī, former Head of the Iraqi Medical Association, asserted that Iraq faces unprecedented environmental problems and challenges that have broadly impacted human physical and psychological health. He noted that these issues have intensified recently due to war remnants, landmines, water pollution, waste management problems, overcrowding, and various forms of pollution. al-'Azzāwī emphasized that air pollution is among the most severe contemporary environmental problems, significantly affecting the respiratory system and potentially leading to chronic diseases (Raḥmah, 2022).

Similarly, Rajāal-Mūsawī, International Peace Ambassador and President of the Al-Rajā' Organization for Human Rights Protection, reported that ongoing environmental pollution adversely affects public health. She identified additional contributors to air pollution, including the widespread use of generators, the high volume of vehicular traffic, and the presence of factories within urban areas. al-Mūsawī noted that civil society organizations have proposed mitigation strategies such as establishing a green belt around the city of Baghdād (Raḥmah, 2022).

IV. Key Environmental Challenges

1. Air Pollution

Air pollution constitutes one of the most critical environmental challenges confronting Iraq. Major urban centers such as al-Başrah and Baghdād experience elevated concentrations of fine particulate matter, primarily attributable to vehicular emissions, private generators, and industrial discharges. The frequency and intensity of dust storms have increased due to desertification and diminished vegetative cover, exacerbating respiratory health problems. These environmental stressors have adversely affected flora and fauna and have contributed to soil degradation.

The air quality in Baghdād has been classified as “unhealthy,” indicative of a pervasive national issue. Contributing factors include industrial emissions, automobile exhaust, and the widespread use of low-grade fuels, all of which elevate the presence of harmful airborne particulates. Additionally, dust storms, intensified by desertification and poor land management practices, further aggravate the situation (Khalīl, 2024). Environmental assessments rank Iraq as the highest in air pollution within the Middle East and 13th globally. The country’s environmental performance has deteriorated markedly due to escalating greenhouse gas emissions and anthropogenic air pollution, resulting in significant public health and ecosystem consequences despite efforts by relevant authorities (ʿĀshūr, 2025).

Residents of Iraq, particularly those in urban areas, are exposed to air quality levels that fall substantially below international health standards. The absence of adequate air conditioning and filtration systems in many locales exposes populations to hazardous pollutant concentrations daily, correlating with increased incidences of respiratory illnesses. Vulnerable groups, including children and the elderly, are disproportionately affected.

Causes of Air Pollution

1. **Industrial Emissions:** Factories, brick kilns, and oxidized asphalt plants are primary sources of atmospheric pollutants, especially when heavy fuel oil is utilized in manufacturing processes.
2. **Transportation:** The continual rise in the number of vehicles in Iraqi cities, coupled with the use of substandard fuels, has led to increased emissions of harmful gases.
3. **Electrical Generators:** Frequent interruptions in the national power grid compel many residents to rely on private neighborhood generators, which significantly contribute to pollution.
4. **Waste Burning:** The routine incineration of waste at sites lacking sanitary landfill qualifications releases toxic smoke and gases. Rapid, unplanned urban expansion has precipitated severe environmental challenges, including inadequate waste management systems that result in the accumulation of garbage in streets, waterways, and residential areas, thereby emitting harmful toxins.
5. **Wars and Past Conflicts:** Decades of conflict, including the Iran-Iraq War, the Gulf War, the US invasion, and subsequent sectarian and tribal strife, have inflicted profound damage on environmental components and biodiversity (al-Ḥamāmiṣah, 2023).
6. **Dust Storms:** As previously noted.

Measures Taken to Mitigate Air Pollution

Recent enforcement actions by the Environmental Police Directorate have led to the closure of 111 brick kilns and 57 oxidized asphalt plants in the al-Nahrawān and al-Tājī regions of Baghdād as of October 2024, due to environmental violations and pollutant emissions. The government has also implemented monitoring mechanisms to prevent waste burning in unauthorized areas through field

campaigns. Efforts have been made to enhance fuel quality and promote the adoption of lower-emission fuels in heavy industry and transportation sectors.

Despite these regulatory measures, extreme temperature fluctuations (particularly during summer months) combined with inadequate access to reliable air conditioning, render living conditions challenging. This situation is exacerbated by recurrent power outages and high energy costs, limiting many households' ability to utilize cooling devices even when they are available (Khalil, 2024). These conditions not only cause physical discomfort but also pose serious health risks, including heatstroke and dehydration, especially among vulnerable populations such as children and the elderly.

2. Water Pollution

Water pollution in Iraq primarily results from the discharge of industrial waste and untreated sewage into rivers, leading to elevated salinity levels and chemical contamination that adversely affect the quality of water used for drinking and agriculture. Analyses of drinking water samples, conducted to assess the quality of reservoir water and pipeline supplies to households, have revealed the severity of this issue, indicating a high concentration of pollutants (al-Ḥamāmiṣah, 2023).

The widespread contamination of water resources exacerbates drought conditions by polluting the limited available water. Outdated sewage systems in Baghdad contribute to the contamination of approximately 40% of Iraq's rivers with bacteria and nitrates. Additionally, agricultural runoff containing pesticides and chemical fertilizers pollutes groundwater in farming regions. Consequently, southern governorates such as al-Baṣrah and Maysān have experienced a 70% increase in kidney failure cases, and contaminated drinking water has been linked to three cholera outbreaks over the past five years (al-Baṣrah for Agricultural Development, 2025).

Causes of Water Pollution

Several reports identify the primary causes of water pollution as follows:

1. **The discharge of large volumes of untreated or partially treated sewage directly into rivers**, which remain heavily polluted despite serving as essential sources of drinking water. Moreover, inadequate and deteriorating sanitation infrastructure frequently overflows into rivers, adversely affecting both human populations and aquatic ecosystems (Khalil, 2024). This pollution results in fish mortality, biodiversity loss, and the spread of waterborne diseases such as typhoid and cholera, alongside increased poisoning incidents.
2. **Industrial Waste:** Certain factories and industrial facilities release untreated liquid waste into rivers, thereby intensifying water pollution.
3. **Medical Waste:** Some hospitals dispose of waste and wastewater into rivers without treatment, posing significant health risks.

4. **Agricultural Activities:** The extensive use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers leads to their runoff into rivers via rainwater, causing chemical contamination.
5. **Water Scarcity:** Iraq faces a critical environmental challenge due to water scarcity, which is exacerbated by prolonged drought, mismanagement of water resources, and pollution. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the country's primary water sources, have experienced significant declines in flow due to dam construction by neighboring countries and excessive water consumption (Khalil, 2024).

The United Nations reported in 2024 that Iraq has lost 39% of its fertile land due to drought, and the declining levels of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers have caused soil salinization affecting 35% of southern agricultural areas (al-Başrah for Agricultural Development, 2025). Government policies that place part of the burden of water rationing on rural communities (requiring farmers, livestock breeders, and rural residents to adopt efficient agricultural techniques to enhance climate resilience) have led to competition and tensions within rural areas. Small-scale farmers perceive that politically connected agricultural conglomerates monopolize subsidized equipment and investments in water infrastructure, prompting many to abandon farming over the past five to eight years. Furthermore, the Middle Euphrates and southern regions have witnessed armed conflicts between clans over water shares, with numerous incidents reported (Khalaf & Vizoso, 2024).

3. Associated Gas Flaring

Associated gas flaring in Iraq represents a significant environmental and economic challenge. This practice involves burning off associated gas produced during oil extraction rather than utilizing it, resulting in the loss of valuable natural resources and the emission of substantial quantities of greenhouse gases, including methane and carbon dioxide. These emissions contribute to global warming and environmental pollution. Although the government has formulated plans to harness this gas for power generation, implementation has been slow, allowing the problem to persist and negatively impact air quality and public health. Iraq ranks as the third-largest country globally in associated gas flaring, following Russia and Iran. In 2023, the World Bank reported that Iraq flared approximately 18 billion cubic meters of gas.

Impacts of Associated Gas Flaring

- **Environmental Pollution:** Associated gas flaring contributes to global warming and releases fine particulate matter and toxic substances into the atmosphere.
- **Economic Waste:** Associated gas is a valuable resource that could be utilized for electricity generation or various industrial applications; its flaring results in significant economic losses.
- **Health Hazards:** Emissions from gas flaring pose health risks to populations living near flaring sites, including respiratory diseases and cancer.

Government Plans to Reduce Gas Flaring

The government has announced a phased plan to reduce associated gas flaring:

- **By the end of 2024:** Reduce gas flaring to 20%.
- **By the end of 2025:** Achieve an 80% utilization rate of associated gas.
- **By the end of 2027 or early 2028:** Complete cessation of flaring.

Several projects are underway to utilize associated gas, including:

- **al-Ḥalfāyah Field Project:** Initiated in June 2024, this project aims to process associated gas in al-Ḥalfāyah oil field located in Maysān Governorate.
- **Grand al-Fāw Port Project:** This project seeks to establish a fixed platform for gas export.

Challenges Impeding Plan Implementation

- **Financial Investments:** Substantial investments in infrastructure and advanced technology are required to reduce gas flaring. The International Finance Corporation estimates that Iraq needs approximately 233 billion dollars to implement programs aimed at reducing and ultimately stopping gas flaring by 2040.
- **Technological Requirements:** The projects necessitate advanced technologies and specialized expertise to process associated gas effectively.
- **Interagency Coordination:** Successful implementation demands effective coordination among the Ministry of Oil, the Ministry of Electricity, and oil companies.

V. Popular and Civil Activism and the Government Response

Environmental pollution has adversely affected the daily lives of Iraqis by exacerbating health and environmental crises, particularly in densely populated residential areas and regions adjacent to industrial sites. In recent years, these conditions have incited affected populations to engage in “environmental protests,” which have become integral components of broader popular movements advocating for political and economic reform. Notably, al-Baṣrah protests of 2018 and 2019 centered on demands for clean water and electricity, linking these issues to wider grievances concerning corruption. Localized protests, especially in rural areas, have emphasized water shortages and their detrimental effects on agriculture and livelihoods, as communities increasingly perceive economic decline attributable to climate change, resulting in significant losses. The ramifications of climate change may further exacerbate poverty and unemployment among Iraqis.

Although environmental concerns have been incorporated into popular demands and environmental activists have participated in major protests in 2015, 2016, 2018, and 2019, these issues have yet to coalesce into organized political movements or receive substantial prioritization within political agendas. Political

parties have largely neglected environmental issues, with few exceptions such as the *Imtidād* Movement, which included environmental initiatives in its electoral platform (such as enhancing irrigation techniques and reducing water waste) without explicitly identifying as an environmental movement. Some parties have also supported campaigns like “*al-May Ḥaḡnā*” (Water is Our Right), which advocates for solutions to the water crisis in al-Baṣrah; however, these efforts have not culminated in a cohesive and effective environmental movement.

Non-governmental environmental activism in Iraq predominantly depends on NGOs reliant on international funding, which constrains their efficacy and responsiveness to local needs. Moreover, these organizations seldom employ confrontational tactics to pressure governmental authorities, instead focusing on activities such as awareness-raising and engagement with officials (Khalaf & Vizoso, 2024).

Post-2003 environmental organizations in Iraq have been limited in number, with most dissolving without successors. These organizations also suffer from governance deficiencies, characterized by unclear and unstable organizational structures and frameworks. They can be categorized as follows (‘Abd-Allāh, 2025):

- Environment-supporting organizations engaged in relief and humanitarian aid.
- General environmental organizations.
- Specialized environmental organizations.

In October 2024, the Department of Non-Governmental Organizations announced a campaign to increase green spaces in several municipal areas of Baghdād, aiming to plant one million saplings and trees. Enhanced collaboration among activists, NGOs, and local communities is necessary to ensure that environmental issues become central to Iraq’s political and social agendas (Khalaf & Vizoso, 2024).

Environmental protests addressing ecological degradation transcend technical demands related to water and pollution; they embody broader discontent with a political-economic system characterized by favoritism and sectarian power-sharing. This perspective regards environmental problems not as incidental but as inevitable outcomes of Iraq’s fragile power structure.

Iraq’s near-total dependence on oil complicates efforts to regulate the environmental sector, as the Ministry of Environment lacks sufficient political influence to hold the Ministry of Oil accountable. Additionally, oil companies benefit from political protection, which impedes transparency regarding environmental damages and restricts access to environmental data, underscoring the sensitivity of these issues within the political regime. Attempts to investigate the nexus between oil production and public health often provoke severe reprisals.

An apparent paradox exists wherein some oil sector workers also engage in environmental activism, reflecting internal awareness of environmental challenges despite benefiting from the sector. This phenomenon indicates a growing

recognition that oil constitutes not only a livelihood source but also a primary contributor to environmental and health detriments (Khalaf & Vizoso, 2024).

Government Response

In September 2024, Iraq launched a comprehensive national strategy aimed at environmental protection, pollution mitigation, water conservation, recycling, and carbon emission reduction to address escalating environmental challenges. The strategy encompasses the promotion of renewable energy projects, expansion of afforestation initiatives, enhancement of water management systems, and reduction of associated gas flaring. Iraq ranks fifth globally in vulnerability to climate risks, including rising temperatures, water scarcity, increased dust storms, droughts, and floods. The six-year plan (2024-2030) is supported by the United Nations and the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

The strategy entails annual investments estimated at no less than one billion dollars, according to a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) expert involved in the project, who noted that this figure represents an approximation and pertains to only a segment of the program (Khalil, 2024).

During the conference inaugurating the national strategy, the Minister of Environment, Nizār Āmidī, emphasized that environmental scientists and researchers have reached a consensus regarding the significant challenges confronting the planet. These challenges include escalating global pollution levels, climate change, and the deterioration of natural systems. He further asserted that anthropogenic activities, driven by the pursuit of development and urban expansion, adversely impact the environment by disrupting natural systems and ecological balance. Consequently, he urged all nations to unite through international agreements and treaties aimed at environmental preservation and the restoration of ecological equilibrium. He highlighted that this strategy, alongside a pollution mitigation strategy, constitutes the Ministry of Environment's roadmap, with numerous national partners playing pivotal roles in planning and implementation as mandated by relevant legislation (INA, 2024, September 18).

The UNDP Resident Representative in Iraq, Auke Lootsma, endorsed the project as "a bold and comprehensive roadmap reflecting our collective aspiration to build a cleaner, greener, and more resilient Iraq," and emphasized that the new strategy will safeguard water resources and combat water pollution, particularly by ensuring sewage water treatment and recycling for irrigation or the restoration of the southern marshes affected by summer droughts.

Given Iraq's status as the second-largest oil exporter in OPEC, the plan prioritizes addressing associated gas flaring from oil production, aiming to eliminate gas flaring by 2030 due to its polluting effects.

Addressing pollution's severe economic and social impacts necessitates coordinated local and international efforts. Proposed measures to confront environmental challenges include:

- Establishing an effective administrative and institutional body to coordinate stakeholders in an organized manner, with clearly defined human

and financial resources aligned with sustainable green development objectives, such as solar energy projects and the construction of solar power plants to support the national grid and provide electricity for water desalination facilities.

- Developing a pollution monitoring institution and adopting policies for effective treatment, including preventing biological, bacterial, and chemical pollution (e.g., factory waste, leaded gasoline use), reducing organic compounds and dust from transportation, private generators, and sewage mismanagement, conducting periodic water, air, and soil surveys, providing modern equipment, and formulating frameworks to address radioactive pollution sources and their health consequences (Bābān, 2018).

Overall, this vision is ambitious and essential but requires clear implementation mechanisms and genuine political will, supported by social engagement, to ensure sustainability. Therefore, the vision faces the following potential challenges:

- **Lack of Execution and Implementation Mechanisms:** Proposals such as solar power plant construction and pollution monitoring equipment acquisition demand substantial financial investment, and implementation may encounter bureaucratic obstacles or insufficient governmental commitment.
- **Neglect of Citizen and Civil Society Roles:** The plan overlooks the critical role of individuals in pollution reduction.
- **Absence of a Defined Timeline:** The lack of phased execution schedules may render the plan susceptible to delays or non-implementation.

VI. Agenda for 2025

Environmental degradation in Iraq constitutes a complex issue necessitating immediate intervention from governmental authorities, the international community, and the citizenry. Addressing the fundamental causes of pollution, water scarcity, and climate-induced disasters is imperative for Iraq to rehabilitate its environment and enhance the quality of life (Khalīl, 2024). The strategies to mitigate environmental degradation are summarized as follows:

- **Government Intervention and Policy Implementation:** The Iraqi government must undertake prompt and decisive measures to counteract environmental degradation. This involves enforcing more stringent environmental regulations on industrial activities, enhancing waste management systems, and investing in sustainable infrastructure. Collaboration between governmental agencies, international organizations, and environmental experts is essential to formulate comprehensive plans for environmental restoration and protection.
- **Maximizing Water Rationing and Recycling:** The highest levels of water rationing should be implemented, alongside the diversion of sewage

water for irrigation and watering purposes. This approach should be supported by expertise from Arab and international specialists experienced in desert and erosion-affected regions to execute relevant projects.

- **Public Awareness and Education:** Elevating public consciousness regarding environmental conservation is critical. Educational initiatives must be integrated into schools and local communities to instruct citizens on recycling, waste management, and energy conservation. Media campaigns can effectively disseminate information about the hazards of environmental pollution and promote protective behaviors.
- **Investing in Clean Energy and Sustainable Technologies:** Iraq's dependence on fossil fuels has substantially contributed to air and water pollution. To address this, governmental investment in renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power is necessary. Iraq possesses significant potential in these areas, particularly in desert regions, which can be harnessed to reduce reliance on oil and gas.
- **Reforestation and Land Restoration:** Desertification poses an escalating threat in Iraq, resulting in frequent dust storms and loss of arable land. Afforestation efforts can mitigate soil erosion, improve air quality, and diminish the intensity of dust storms (Khalil, 2024).
- **Establishing Wastewater Treatment Infrastructure:** The construction of wastewater treatment facilities is essential to prevent untreated discharge into rivers. Additionally, stringent monitoring of industrial activities must be enforced to ensure compliance with waste disposal regulations. Awareness campaigns targeting farmers should promote the judicious use of pesticides and fertilizers to minimize runoff into water bodies.
- **Global Legal Efforts to Combat Climate Change:** Numerous countries are engaged in establishing and enforcing laws, treaties, and agreements aimed at addressing climate change and mitigating its adverse effects. Notable international accords include the Paris Agreement, adopted by 190 countries in 2015, the Kyoto Protocol, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Domestically, various nations have enacted legislation to limit climate change impacts; for instance, the United States introduced the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 to incentivize green initiatives.

VII. New Climate Legislations in Iraq: From Replication to Innovation

In the context of combating global warming and the role of national legislation in addressing its consequences, agriculture and climate expert Dr. Khadijah al-Jābirī asserted that incorporating climate change provisions within Iraq's environmental protection law significantly enhances capabilities to promote environ-

mental sustainability. This is achieved through establishing a robust regulatory framework for mitigation, fostering adaptation strategies, strengthening institutional capacities, generating economic opportunities, and directly confronting existing challenges.

Water policy expert Dr. Ramaḍān Ḥamzah underscored the importance of Iraq's adherence to international agreements via active participation in climate conventions such as the Paris Agreement and biodiversity-related accords. Such engagement reinforces Iraq's commitment to mitigating climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. He further emphasized that the enforcement of stringent domestic environmental laws can bolster adaptation and mitigation efforts. These laws may encompass specific standards for natural resource management and developmental projects, alongside penalties or obligations to ensure compliance with local regulations (Ṣubḥī, 2024).

Iraq's practical efforts commenced with the enactment of the Iraqi Law for the Protection and Improvement of the Environment No. 27 of 2009, which aims to safeguard and enhance the environment, remediate environmental damage, conserve natural resources and biodiversity, and ensure sustainable development through various measures. Subsequently, the National Center for Climate Change was established within the Ministry of Environment, initiating its operations in conjunction with the Paris Agreement's launch. This was followed by the formation of the Supreme National Committee for Climate Change in Iraq, comprising representatives from most ministries.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020, it was agreed, according to academic specialist Ibrāhīm al-Sūdānī, to update or enact new legislation providing a legal foundation to address climate change crises effectively. This initiative led to the creation of a specialized committee of legal experts, dedicated departments, and the Directorate of Climate Change tasked with developing a vision to amend the existing environmental law (Ṣubḥī, 2024). al-Sūdānī indicated that the proposed amendments will affect over 50% of the current law, effectively constituting a new statute. The draft is anticipated to be finalized soon for parliamentary approval within the forthcoming year. The legislation includes provisions for the Carbon Economics Company, an executive entity responsible for environmental improvement projects, carbon credit trading, emission reductions, and other initiatives supporting the Ministry of Environment.

Consulting attorney Ḥusām al-Bahādilī highlighted the necessity of a comprehensive analysis of Article 27 of the 2009 Environmental Protection Law to assess its adequacy in addressing contemporary climate challenges. He noted that this requires reviewing current secondary legislation and the law's objectives to ensure it encompasses measures to combat climate change and promote renewable energy utilization (Ṣubḥī, 2024).

The Executive Director of the Iraqi Green Observatory, 'Umar 'Abd-al-Laṭīf, warned that in the absence of decisive climate legislation, Iraq faces an imminent environmental catastrophe. He described desertification as consuming the

land, the water crisis as undermining agriculture, and drought as devastating the hopes of farmers and villagers, compelling migration to overcrowded urban areas. He emphasized that Iraq stands at a critical juncture: it must swiftly adopt stringent climate laws to avert this dire future or succumb to a relentless cycle of crises that extinguish all prospects (Şubhî, 2024).

The responsibility to preserve Iraq's environment as safe, healthy, and verdant is a fundamental human right and an obligation incumbent upon the government, supported by public cooperation and awareness, to ensure a secure life for present and future generations.

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al-Rafidain Center for Dialogue (RCD)

al-Rafidain Center for Dialogue RCD is an Iraqi independent think tank that works on encouraging dialogues in educational, political, cultural, and economic affairs, among all elites, in order to enhance the democratic experience, achieve societal peace and help governmental and societal institutions actualize their role and enhance their performance by providing them with experiences and strategic visions. RCD represents a free forum for dialogue characterized by objectivity and impartiality and it invests its outcomes to help decision-makers and guide public opinion towards establishing a state based on institutions.

al-Rafidain Center for Dialogue is considered one of the distinguished think tanks in Iraq that brings together on its platform the active political, economic, and academic elites who guide visions and influence decision-making and public opinion. The Center was established on February 2, 2014, in the city of al-Najaf al-Ashraf as a virtual group in the virtual world, comprising a number of academics, intellectuals, and politicians. The idea later evolved to acquire legal status by registering RCD in the NGO Affairs Directorate of the General Secretariat of the Iraqi Council of Ministers.

Vision

The center is a cultural hub where the opinions of elites and decision-makers from all their political, religious, and national spectrums converge. It provides a positive dialogic environment that enhances the creation of common ground among those opinions and contributes to building a prosperous country.

Mission

RCD's mission is to encourage and develop objective and serious dialogues between Iraqi elites and decision-makers in a manner that enhances the democratic experience and achieves societal peace and sustainable development in Iraq through the following objectives:

1. Enhancing societal peace through constructive dialogue among Iraqi elites.
2. Strengthening national responsibility, supporting the state's democratic experience, and building its institutions.
3. Assisting state institutions in solving problems by providing suggestions and consultations in various fields through its diverse publications and informed experts.

4. Expanding common ground between political and social entities through neutral dialogue that strengthens the relationship between the citizen and the state.

Means

1. Organizing seminars and panel discussions in the fields of RCD's concerns and following up on their outcomes with media coverage to promote them inside and outside Iraq.
2. Issuing books and strategic reports, conducting research and studies, and publishing them in print and electronically.
3. Forging partnerships with local and international research and academic institutions and think tanks with shared objectives.
4. Collaborating with esteemed universities to hold scholarly events and forums.
5. Establishing research departments and specialized committees to promote scientific research.
6. Holding dialogues between differing parties to promote social integration.

Structure

al-Rafidain Center for Dialogue RCD consists of an administrative structure formed in accordance with its internal regulations, which includes: the Board of Directors, consisting of the founder, Mr. Zayd al-Ṭālaqānī, as Chairman of the Board and eight members; a CEO and his deputy; a Board of Advisors; and a number of scientific and administrative departments, which are: the Department of Research and Development, the Department of Administrative, Legal, and Financial Affairs, and the Department of Protocols and Public Relations, in addition to an Advisor for Cultural Affairs and International Cooperation.

Like any giving and fruitful institution, al-Rafidain Center for Dialogue has been exposed to a considerable number of challenges, harassments, and targeting that have attempted to undermine it, yet it has insisted on continuing its triumphant march with sustained giving and strength of will.

RCD addresses several local, regional, and global issues through its diverse publications in the following fields:

1. Political Science and International Relations.
2. Economics and Development.
3. Sociology.
4. Intellectual Affairs and addressing social phenomena.
5. Strategic and Military Affairs.
6. Technology and Cybersecurity.
7. Constitutional, Social, and Legal Issues.

8. Geography.
9. State and Society.
10. Environment and Climate Change.
11. Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformations.

RCD's Research and Scientific Connections Locally, Regionally, and Internationally

As a research center that works to promote dialogue with the other, al-Rafidain Center for Dialogue is keen to build bridges of cognitive and research cooperation by establishing connections with Arab and foreign research centers and institutions around the world. This is done through cooperation agreements signed with institutions and centers of significance at the Iraqi, Arab, regional, and global levels, including Foreign Service Institute of the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Center for Banking Studies of Central Bank of Iraq, Salahaddin University-Erbil, International Crisis Group ICG (Belgium), Geneva Institute for Water, Environment and Health GIWEH (Switzerland), French Institute for Research and Analysis of International Policy CFRP, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations CICIR, Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, Russian International Affairs Council RIAC, Governance and Policy Think Tank GPTT (Iran), The Arab Institute for Democracy (Tunisia), Center for Afghanistan, Middle East & Africa CAMEA at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad ISSI (Pakistan), and other important institutions.

al-Rafidain Center for Dialogue RCD has managed to be a pioneer in holding forums through its largest annual forum (RCD Forum), an international forum held annually in the capital, Baghdad. It discusses the most prominent topics and developments at the local, regional, and global levels, provides a free space for discussing opinions in the fields on which it is based among elites of high importance at the local and international levels, and dedicates its outcomes to building the state and its institutions and promoting the culture of dialogue and coexistence at all levels.

RCD receives support and funding from its sponsoring institutions through public agreements and in accordance with applicable Iraqi laws and regulations, and it is keen to announce the sources of this support and funding with transparency and clarity. This support for the RCD's activities is represented by contributions from the administrative body (Board of Directors), internal and external donations, grants, endowments, and unconditional gifts, in addition to financial grants from international organizations, United Nations agencies, Iraqi and international donors, humanitarian and development bodies, and private companies such as Central Bank of Iraq CBI, the Iraqi Ministry of Oil, Communications and Media Commission, European Union Mission, British Petroleum BP, Trade Bank of Iraq TBI, Iraqi Economic Council IEC, Wādī al-Khayr Company for Agricultural Investments, al-Thiqah International Bank, al-Nāfidhah Company

for Internet Services and Information Technology, Iraqi Business Council, Wajh al-Qamar Company for Investments and Contracting, Madīnat al-Ma'ālī Company for Investments and Contracting, and Ta'lim Platform.

Additionally, RCD receives support from reputable, legally licensed Iraqi institutions, most notably al-Waṭanī by Earthlink, which is the first and leading company in Iraq specializing in fiber optic technology (FTTH) and the largest provider of internet services in Iraq, and Asiacell, the first telecommunications company in Iraq and the main provider of high-quality mobile communication and internet services, with a subscriber base that has reached 19.7 million. And Maṣrif al-Ālam al-Islāmī (Islamic World Bank), one of the most important Iraqi banks in the field of economic development, which is a private joint-stock company founded by an elite group of locally and regionally renowned businessmen.

Publications

I. Authored Books

No.	Book Title	Author	Year of Publication
1	The Iraqi Economy After 2003	Zayn-al-'Ābidīn M. 'Abd-al-Ḥusayn Ṣādiq 'A. Ḥasan	2018
2	The Iraqi Marshes: Regional Analysis Through Interdisciplinary Lenses	'Abd-'Alī Ḥ. al-Khaffāf Ḥusayn 'A. al-Zayyādī Khālīd G. al-Farṭūsī	2019
3	Lectures on the Iraqi Affair	Group of Authors	2019
4	Building Iraq: Reality, Foreign Relations, and the Dream of Democracy	Luqmān 'A. al-Faylī	2020
5	The Political Economy of Education in Iraq	Prof. Dr. Kāmil 'A. al-Fatlawī Prof. Dr. Ḥasan L. al-Zubaydī	2020
6	Between Two Generations: A Series of Dialogues Between a Young Iraqi and His Older Brother	Luqmān 'A. al-Faylī	2021
7	Central Bank of Iraq: Roles, Tasks, and Future Options	Group of Authors	2021
8	Iraq 2020: RCD's Strategic Report	Prof. Dr. Ḥasan L. al-Zubaydī (ed.) Prof. Dr. Aḥmad S. al-Ma'mūrī (ed.) Prof. Dr. Miqdām 'A. al-Fayyāḍ (ed.)	2021
9	Summary on State Succession: A Legal Study in Light of the Provisions of International Agreements	Dr. Abū-Ṭālib H. al-Ṭāliqānī	2021
10	The Philosophy of the Frameworks of the Interrelationship between Ethics and Law: A Critical Legal Study of Reality and the Post-Secular World	Prof. Dr. Iyād M. Ṣayhūd	2021

No.	Book Title	Author	Year of Publication
11	The Social Contract According to Shaykh al-Nā'inī in Iraq	Prof. Emer. Dr. 'Abd-al-Amīr Zāhid	2022
12	New Visions for Managing the Oil Extraction Industry in Iraq	Prof. Dr. Jawād K. al-Ka'bī	2022
13	Contemporary Iraqi Problems	Prof. Dr. Walīd 'A. Jabr	2022
14	Iraq 2021: RCD's Strategic Report	Prof. Dr. Ḥasan L. al-Zubaydī (ed.) Prof. Dr. Aḥmad S. al-Ma'mūrī (ed.) Prof. Dr. Miqdām 'A. al-Fayyāḍ (ed.)	2022
15	China and Technology Companies: Arms of Espionage and Sources of Superiority and Digital Hegemony	Prof. Dr. Ḥasan L. al-Zubaydī Dr. Karrār A. al-Budayrī Dr. Aḥmad Amīn	2022
16	Financial and Administrative Corruption in Iraq: A Geopolitical Vision	Prof. Dr. Ḥusayn 'A. al-Ziyādī	2023
17	ISIS's Violations of International Humanitarian Law	Dr. Fāḍil 'A. al-Gharrāwī	2023
18	Energy Sources and the Future of Mankind	Dr. Ḥusayn al-Shahristānī	2023
19	Studies in Contemporary Islamic Movements in Iraq	Group of Authors	2023
20	Islamic Presence in Europe and Its Future: A Study in Light of Contemporary Orientalist Sources	Hibah Ḥ. al-Rumāḥī	2023
21	Najaf 2050: A Future Vision	Prof. Dr. Ḥasan L. al-Zubaydī (ed.) Prof. Dr. Miqdām 'A. al-Fayyāḍ (ed.)	2023
22	Evaluation of the Iraqi Government's Work During a Full Year 2022-2023	Group of Authors	2023
23	Iraq's Two Inflamed Decades: The Proliferation of Crises and the Intractability of Solutions (5 Volumes)	Prof. Dr. Ḥasan L. al-Zubaydī (ed.) Prof. Dr. Aḥmad S. al-Ma'mūrī (ed.) Prof. Dr. Miqdām 'A. al-Fayyāḍ (ed.) Asst. Lect. 'Ammār K. Ḥamīd (ed.)	2024
24	Iraqi Kirkuk and the Conflict of Sub-Identities	Dr. Dahḥām M. al-'Azzāwī	2024
25	The Economic Importance of the Grand Faw Port and Its Reflection on the Reality of Sustainable Development in Iraq	Prof. Dr. Ḥamīdah Sh. al-Īdāmī Asst. Prof. Dr. Amjad R. al-Zāhidī	2024
26	Iraq 2022: RCD's Strategic Report	Prof. Dr. Ḥasan L. al-Zubaydī (ed.) Prof. Dr. Aḥmad S. al-Ma'mūrī (ed.) Prof. Dr. Miqdām 'A. al-Fayyāḍ (ed.) Prof. Dr. As'ad K. Shabīb (ed.)	2024
27	Iraqi Military Establishment 2003-2020	Dr. 'Imād H. al-Rubayṭ	2024

No.	Book Title	Author	Year of Publication
28	Iraq 2023: RCD's Strategic Report	Prof. Dr. As'ad K. Shabīb (ed.) Prof. Dr. Aḥmad S. al-Ma'mūrī (ed.) Prof. Dr. Miqdām 'A. al-Fayyāḍ (ed.)	2025
29	1999 Popular Uprising in Iraq After the Martyrdom of Sayyid al-Ṣadr: Preludes, Trajectories, Results	Prof. Dr. As'ad K. Shabīb (ed.) Prof. Dr. Miqdām 'A. al-Fayyāḍ (ed.) Prof. Dr. Aḥmad S. al-Ma'mūrī (ed.)	2025
30	Republics of the Former Soviet Union: New Facts on Old Land	Prof. Dr. As'ad K. Shabīb (ed.) Prof. Dr. Miqdām 'A. al-Fayyāḍ (ed.) Asst. Lect. 'Ammār K. Ḥamīd (ed.)	2025
31	US Policy in the Middle East During the Trump and Biden Administrations 2017–2024	Prof. Dr. As'ad K. Shabīb (ed.) Prof. Dr. Miqdām 'A. al-Fayyāḍ (ed.) Asst. Lect. 'Ammār K. Ḥamīd (ed.)	2025
32	Najaf in the Pre-Islamic Era: Excavations in the Memory of a Region	'Abd-al-Amīr al-Mu'min	2025
33	Iran's Role in defining the Parameters of Strategic Balance in the Middle East: The Case of the Nuclear Program	Prof. Dr. As'ad K. Shabīb (ed.) Prof. Dr. Miqdām 'A. al-Fayyāḍ (ed.)	2025
34	Iraq 2024: RCD's Strategic Report	Prof. Dr. As'ad K. Shabīb (ed.) Prof. Dr. Miqdām 'A. al-Fayyāḍ (ed.) Asst. Lect. 'Ammār K. Ḥamīd (ed.)	2025
35	Green Policies: Redefining Progress in the Age of AI	Prof. Dr. As'ad K. Shabīb (ed.) Prof. Dr. 'Amir 'A. al-Wā'ilī (ed.)	2025
36	The 2025 Parliamentary Elections in Iraq: Dynamics of Presence and Influence, and Future Outlooks	Prof. Dr. As'ad K. Shabīb (ed.) Lect. Dr. Khālīd 'A. al-Rammāḥī (ed.)	2026
37	The Contemporary Arab State and the Sectarian Problem	Muḥammad Maḥfūẓ	2026
38	Justice and Natural Law: Approaches in Ancient Civilizations	Prof. Dr. Khālīd S. al-Mahdāwī (ed.) Asst. Lect. 'Āmir 'A. al-Mūsawī (ed.)	2026
39	Social Protection and Poverty Reduction in Iraq: Approaches with Global Models	Prof. Dr. As'ad K. Shabīb (ed.) Prof. Dr. Miqdām 'A. al-Fayyāḍ (ed.) Asst. Lect. 'Ammār K. Ḥamīd (ed.)	2026
40	Iraq from Within: Investigative Studies on State, Society, and Economy	Prof. Dr. As'ad K. Shabīb (ed.) Prof. Dr. Miqdām 'A. al-Fayyāḍ (ed.) Prof. Dr. Muḥammad al-Qurayshī (ed.) Prof. Dr. Aḥmad Sh. al-'Allāq (ed.)	2026
41	Harvest of the Iraqi Political Experience: Elite Dialogues	Prof. Dr. As'ad K. Shabīb (ed.) Dr. Ḥasan Z. al-Ṣarrāf (ed.)	2026
42	Encyclopedia of Iraqi Politics	Prof. Dr. Ḥasan L. al-Zubaydī	2026
43	Programs of Iraqi Governments (2003–2025)	Prof. Dr. As'ad K. Shabīb (ed.) Prof. Dr. Miqdām 'A. al-Fayyāḍ (ed.) Asst. Lect. 'Ammār K. Ḥamīd (ed.)	2026

II. Translated Books

No.	Book Title	Author	Year of Publication
1	War Without End: The Iraq War in Context	Michael Schwartz	2019
2	Political Philosophy: An Introduction	Jason Brennan	2019
3	Resource Rents and Economic Growth	Peter Kaznacheev	2019
4	Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation	Adeed Dawisha	2019
5	Patriotic Ayatollahs: Nationalism in Post-Saddam Iraq	Caroleen Marji Sayej	2020
6	Al Qaeda, the Islamic State, and the Global Jihadist Movement: What Everyone Needs to Know	Daniel Byman	2021
7	Illusions of Victory: The Anbar Awakening and the Rise of the Islamic State	Carter Malkasian	2021
8	Waging Insurgent Warfare: Lessons From the Vietcong to the Islamic State	Seth G. Jones	2021
9	The Iraqi Federation: Origin, Operation and Significance	Farah Shakir	2021
10	Global Trends 2040	US National Intelligence Council	2021
11	The Arab Shi'a: The Forgotten Muslims	Graham E. Fuller Rend Rahim Francke	2021
12	Rulers, Religion, and Riches: Why the West Got Rich and the Middle East Did Not	Jared Rubin	2021
13	Soldiers and Citizens: An Oral History of Operation Iraqi Freedom from the Battlefield to the Pentagon	Carl Mirra	2021
14	Security in the Persian Gulf Region	Fatemeh Shayan	2021
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