

Department of State's Annual International Religious Freedom Report

Executive Summary:

- Does forced demographic change (i.e., displacement via intimidation by militias and other groups) and harassment still take place in the Ninewa Plain against Christians and Yezidis and Kaka'i in Kirkuk?

A: This Nineveh Plain includes the districts of Tel Kaif, Hamdaniyah and Shekhan, which were historically populated predominantly by Syriac Christians (mainly Assyrians and Chaldeans). A minority of Shabaks (Sunni and Shiite) inhabited the rural areas of Hamdaniya, and particularly its Bartilla subdistrict. Shekhan district was inhabited mainly by Kurds with a Yezidi majority. While it is difficult to assess the current estimates, it appears that the majority of inhabitants in the Nineveh Plains are currently Shabaks (majority Shia, minority Sunni), followed by the Christian population, the Yezidis, the Kurds, Arab Muslims, the Kaka'is and Turkmen.

The plain, inhabited by a mixture of Christians, Yazidis and Arabs, witnessed serious setbacks, after it was taken over by the Shabak Hashd thanks to their association with the Popular Mobilization Authority (PMF).

There are different claims by the residents of the Nineveh Plains. Shabak respondents claim it is voluntary and underline freedom of movement in their native district. Christians label it as demographic change by stealth that slowly transforms the plains.

P.S. Details about alleged displacement efforts against Kaki's and Yezidis are alluded to in the next sections of this document.

- Were there any attempts of demographic change during 2022? If yes, what force or group was responsible for these actions?

A: According to the 1965 consensus of Iraq, Kurds made up 72 percent of the population of Khanaqin, while Arabs made up 26 percent. This number drastically changed by the time of the 1977 consensus, in which Kurds made up only 45 percent of the population, while Arabs made up 48 percent. The massive shift was attributed to the large-scale Arabization movement as a part of former

Iraqi president and dictator Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime campaign against the Kurds.

"From the beginning of this year, nearly 500 families from villages and areas outside Khanaqin have transferred their documents to Khanaqin," according to Khanaqin's office for the Region's general board of disputed territories.

There are 24 villages around Khanaqin that nearly 4,280 Kurdish families have left due to ISIS activities and lack of security.

- Were there any ISIS activities in disputed territories targeting Kaka'i or other minority groups? What are the examples and statistics of victims?

A: Since 2014, 250 Kakai's have been killed by terrorists and thousands of donums from their lands had been burned.

- What is the number of Yezidis still missing following ISIS's atrocities since 2014?

A: As of August 2022, the number of abductees was 6,417, including females 3548. Male 2869. The Numbers of female and male survivors from the grip of ISIL is 3,562: 1,207 females, 339 males, 1059 male children, 957 the kidnappees who were martyred at the hands of ISIL, and 146 persons whose bodies were found. Before the ISIL attacks, the number of Yezidis living in Iraq was 550,000. The number of Yazidis who are currently in the camps of the Kurdistan region is 135,860 IDPs. As for the number of IDPs present in the disputed areas in the region, it is 189,337 IDPs.

- The number of orphans produced by the invasion is 2745
- The number of mass graves discovered in Shingal so far is 83 mass graves. In addition to dozens of individual cemetery sites
- The number of survivors from the mass graves is 29
- The number of shrines and religious shrines bombed by ISIS: 68
- The number of those who emigrated outside the country is estimated at more than 120,000

- As of 2022, are there any reports of children kidnapped by the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) or its affiliates who are still missing?

A: As presented in the answers below, KRG has no access to the disputed territories. There are allegations of child abduction, but we cannot confirm them.

- What is the process for exhumation of mass graves for Yazidis and other minority communities and when did the last exhumation take place? How many mass graves were exhumed during 2022 and what is the number of victims found in those graves?

A: Beginning from 2015, the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs has continued to find mass graves of Yazidis and other religious communities. Since then, 83 mass graves have been identified. The Ministry of Martyrs has carried out several works alone and in collaboration with the Iraqi Directorate of Mass Graves towards 2019. The Ministry of Martyrs' Affairs participated in the excavation of 16 graves. The last mass grave that the Ministry of Martyrs' Affairs participated in was the mass grave of Hardan in Sinjar district, which contained about 52 remains. The excavation was carried out in February 2022.

Section I. Religious Demography:

- What is the number of Christians in Iraq as of 2022? It was estimated that it was fewer than 250,000 in 2021. Is it still the same? How many of those Christians are living in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR)?

A: According to the Directorate of Christian Affairs in the Ministry of Endowment, between 300,000 and 350,000 Christians live in the Kurdistan Region and the Nineveh Plains.

- Can you provide the estimated number for how many Christians are affiliated for each of the following: Chaldean Catholics, Assyrian Church of the East, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Armenian Apostolic, and Anglican, and other Protestants?

A: No exact figures are available. However, Chaldean Catholics comprise the majority of the Christians living in Iraq, followed by Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholics, and Armenians Catholics. Protestantism has the lowest number of followers in the KR.

- What is the number of registered members of evangelical Christian churches in the IKR?

A: There are 15 Evangelical churches in the Kurdistan Region.

- What is the number of Yezidis living in Iraq? What is the demographic distribution of the Yezidis within Iraq, including the IKR?

A: Before the ISIL attacks, the number of Yezidis living in Iraq was 550,000. As for the number of IDPs present in the disputed areas in the region, it is 189,337 IDPs.

- How many Yezidis are still displaced internally?

A: The number of Yazidis who are currently in the camps of the Kurdistan region is 135,860 IDPs

- What is the number of Kaka'i in Iraq? What is the demographic distribution of Kaka'I within Iraq, including the IKR?

A: Their number is between 110,000 and 200,000 in Iraq. Most of them are dispersed around Kirkuk and in Daquq.

- What is the population of Sabean Mandeans in Iraq? What is the demographic distribution of the Sabean Mandeans within Iraq, including the IKR?

A: There are 1,000 Sabean Mandeans in the KR and 15,000 in southern parts of Iraq.

- What is the population of the Jewish community in Iraq? What is the demographic distribution of the Sabean Mandeans within Iraq, including the IKR?

A: There are possibly as few as 100 to as many as 250 Jewish families in the IKR. They live in all the four governorates. No exact numbers do exist.

- What is the population of the members of the Zoroastrian faith in Iraq? What is the demographic distribution of the Zoroastrian community within Iraq, including the IKR?

A: There are between 80,000 to 100,000 followers of Zoroastrianism in Kurdistan Region. They inhabit lands from Hamrin Mountain to the entire territories of the Kurdistan Region.

- **What is the ethnic division of IDPs in Iraq? Do you have any breakdowns of religion among IDPs?**
- What is the most current count of the number of IDPs in the IKR? Is there information broken down by their location of residence? Are there any statistics available about their religious/ethnic affiliation?

A: Towards August 2021, Kurdistan Region hosted 926,018 IDPs and refugees. Precisely, 664,237 of them were IDPs and 261,781 were refugees. There are 241,937 Syrian, 8,479 Turkish, 10,548 Iranian, and 736 Palestinian refugees. Contrary to popular perception, the majority of IDPs and refugees live with the host communities in the Region, while only %30 live in 36 camps. About %41 of the total displaced populations live in Erbil, %40 in Duhok, and %19 percent in Sulaimani.

- What is the migration rate of religious groups in the IKR? To which countries do religious group members typically emigrate?

A: According to the Yezidi Rescue Coordinating Office, during the period 2014-2021, approximately 100,000 Yezidis left the country, with most moving to Germany and others to Turkey, Greece, Georgia, Armenia, France, the Netherlands, Croatia, the United States, Australia, Hungary, and Bulgaria.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

- Does the KRG enforce the federal ban on Baha'i practitioners? Does the KRG recognize the Baha'i faith as a religion? Can the Baha'i freely practice their faith in IKR?

A: The KRG does not enforce the federal ban as a matter of policy and recognizes the Baha'i Faith as a religion. Baha'i followers practice their religion in the KR without constraints. Baha'is have the Supreme Council for Baha'I Affairs to oversee their spiritual and social matters. According to the Letter No 179/64 dated 31/10/2022 from the aforementioned council, the Baha'i community requested the dedication of a territorial space for a cemetery to be exclusively used for the burial of Baha'is. The letter, similar to any letter from an official establishment, was

submitted to the Ministry of Endowment and from there had been transmitted to the Council of Ministers and it is currently in the process of implementation.

- What is the population of Baha'i followers in IKR?

A: They are about 200 families.

- Do all recognized religious groups have their own personal status courts responsible for handling marriage, divorce, and inheritance issues? Do Yezidis have a personal status court?

A: According to the KR Law of Judiciary No 23 (2007), in each governorate a court will be established to which a special judge will be appointed to settle issues related to the personal status of Yezidis, Christians, and other religious components. In case a special judge could not be appointed, the judges of cassation courts will have the authority to on cases related to personal status. The aforementioned law also allows for the establishment of courts in districts and municipalities whenever requested and with the approval of the Head of the Judicial Council.

Under the light of Law No 23 (2007), the religious components generally resort to the Court of Personal Matters and Muslims resort to the Personal Status Court. However, there is no a special law for non-Muslim communities. In fact, reconciling the religions and their diverse sects (for example, Christianity) in a single law will face formidable barriers in terms of jurisprudence. Still, some religions settle some subjects related to personal status within their religion establishments. For instance, Christians perform marriages and divorces within the churches; the priest will act as a judge. The, the papers will be transferred to the courts of the Judicial Council for approval. But, as far as other subjects such as custody of the children, inheritance, and dowry are concerned, the religious communities settle them in the existing courts.

- In the IKR, does the Personal Status Court still adjudicate personal disputes between members of the same religion while the Civil Status Court handles all other cases? Why the distinction?

A: The constitution provides citizens the right to choose which court (civil or religious) will adjudicate matters of personal status, including marriage, divorce, child custody, inheritance, and charitable donations. The law states civil courts must

consult the religious authority of a non-Muslim party for its opinion under the applicable religious law and apply the religious authority's opinion in court. In the IKR, the Personal Status Court adjudicates personal disputes between members of the same religion while the Civil Status Court handles all other cases.

- What are the legal issues with or penalties for practicing unrecognized religions? Are contracts signed by unrecognized religious groups or their institutions considered legally binding or permissible as evidence in court?

A: The law does not specify penalties for the practice of unrecognized religious groups; however, contracts signed by institutions of unrecognized religious groups are not legal or permissible as evidence in court.

What is the process for registration of a religion to be recognized by the KRG?

A: Religious organizations in the IKR can be recognized by signing up with the KRG Ministry of Endowment and Religion Affairs. A group has to have at least 150 members in order to register, as well as proof that it is not "anti-Islamic" and the sources of its financial support. Islam, Christianity, Yezidism, Judaism, Sabean-Mandaeism, Zoroastrianism, Yarsanism, and the Baha'i Faith are the eight religions that are acknowledged by and registered in the aforementioned ministry.

- What are the laws and regulations affecting religious freedom in the IKR?

A: Law number (5) for 2015 to protect Rights of Minorities at Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

- Does the KRG Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs (MERA) still operate endowments that pay salaries of clergy and fund construction and maintenance of religious sites for Muslims, Christians, and Yezidis? What about endowments for the other five registered religions, Zoroastrian, Kaka'i, Baha'i, Judaism, and Sabean Mandaeans? If not, why?

A: The KRG MERA operates endowments that pay salaries of clergy and fund construction and maintenance of religious sites for Muslims, Christians, and Yezidis. The other five religions also have representatives in the Ministry of Endowments who are on government's payroll.

- How does the KRG organize Hajj and Umrah? Is there a lottery to choose pilgrims for official Haj visas allotted to the IKR? How were the 2022 Haj and Umrah organized?

A: In the IKR, the Ministry of Endowments organizes Hajj and Umrah travel, administering a lottery to choose the pilgrims for official Hajj visas allotted to the IKR. The Kurdistan Region’s quota for Hajj attendance was nearly 2,000 pilgrims in 2022.

- What is the number of schools where instruction is provided in minorities languages such as Syriac and Turkmen? In 2021, there were 48 Syriac and 18 Turkmen schools reported – is that still accurate? What is the number of students study in Syriac and Turkmen languages?

A: There are 48 Syriac and 18 Turkmen schools. Approximately, 7,000 students are enrolled in Syriac schools in the Kurdistan Region.

- What are the procedures to register private or public schools for religious minorities?

A: To register with the KRG Ministry of Endowment, private schools need to provide information on the school’s bylaws, number of students, size, location, facility and safety conditions, financial backing, and tax compliance and to undergo an inspection.

- What is the number of registered Christian schools and educational institutions in the IKR?

A: There are 48 Syriac schools. There is also a college for Assyrian language in the Department of Education.

- Do IKR laws forbid “religious, or political, media speech individually or collectively, directly or indirectly that brings hate and violence, terror, exclusion, and marginalization based on national, ethnic, or religious or linguistic claims.”? If yes, which laws?

A: Law No 5 (2015) forbids “religious, or political, media speech individually or collectively, directly or indirectly that brings hate and violence, terror, exclusion, and marginalization based on national, ethnic, or religious or linguistic claims.”

- What are practices that affect religious minorities? Have there been reports of verbal harassments, physical abuse, insulting special ceremonies and occasions, etc.?

A: No harassments or physical abuse against religious communities reported in 2022.

- What is the electoral quota system in the IKR and how many seats are reserved for religious minorities? What are the key KRG and IKP position allocations for minorities?

A: Eleven MPs represent Christian (five seats), Turkmen (five seats), and Armenian (one seat) political parties, who are guaranteed seats to ensure the participation of all the Kurdistan Region's ethnic and religious components in the political process.

Government Practices

Forced Displacement/ Harassment/Security

- Do Kurds, Turkomans, Kaka'i, Christians, and other minorities face abuses including, but not limited to, violence and forced displacement by Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF)/Hashd al-Shaabi and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), especially in the disputed territories?

A: The security and administration vacuum have paved the way for various methods of persecution against the inhabitants of the disputed areas.

- Were there claims of abuse or harassment of Christians in the Ninewa Plain by PMF 30th Brigade and other security forces? Were there claims of harassment by Shabak 30th PMF Brigade and/or the Babylon 50th PMF Babylon Brigade to force out Christians?

A: No such reports were recorded against Christians in 2022.

- In the Ninewa Plain, are there still reports of some government officials seeking to facilitate demographic change by providing land and housing for Shia and Sunni Muslims to move into traditionally Christian areas, such as the Bartalla subdistrict?

A: In 2017, the Hashd and Shabak brigades distributed lands on non-Christian citizens to settle in Batela. Efforts are in place to change the demography of Bartela.

- What are the Christian towns and cities that have been subjected to this kind demographic change? Are there statistics available?

A: Militant groups reportedly were building an office in Bartella, while in Batnaya and Tal Kayf reportedly controlled the local real estate market, selling land to non-Christians from outside the district, granting questionable security approvals, and taking bribes. Militants also reportedly controlled trade routes in the Ninewa Plain through checkpoints, forcing Christian merchants to pay bribes to gain access.

- Were there reports of physical abuse and verbal harassment by KRG Peshmerga and Asayish forces in the KRG-controlled portion of Ninewa province?

A: No.

- Does the KRG provide protection or support to religious groups for ceremonies or special holidays?

A: The KRG has given religious believers the full support they need to carry out their religious practices and ceremonies. The KRG has also provided them with resources and support.

- What is the threat of ISIS on Kaka'i in Khanaqeen and disputed territories?

A: Not in 2022. Further details illustrated above.

Yezidi-Specific Issues

- There are claims that former Yezidi captives of ISIS who were repeatedly raped and bore children who were then forced to register those children as Muslims and convert to Islam themselves to obtain identification cards, passports, and other governmental services. Does the Yezidi community still not consider these children to be Yezidi? What actions, if any, has the KRG taken to advocate on behalf of these women and their children?

A: According to the Iraqi laws, children born from unidentified fathers and/or mothers will be registered as Muslims. The Yezidi community still doesn't accept these children. As a result, the women often convert to Islam and register their children as Muslims to obtain documentations. This dilemma is partly caused by the legal restrictions of the Iraqi laws and the commitment to implement cultural traditions within the Yezidi community.

Are there reports of discrimination against Yezidis who do not identify themselves as Yezidis?

A: The Yezidi community residing in the Kurdistan Region are entitled to preserve their identity and practices without constraints. They are politically represented regardless of their affiliations. The immense and consistent efforts by KRG - through the Yazidi Rescue Office - to rescue the Yezidi brothers and sisters from ISIL captivity, and the robust coordination with the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'ish (UNITAD) to prosecute ISIL detainees and exhume the mass graves, display intimate intentions of KRG to ensure that the rights of Yezidis are solely met.

- What is the status of the KRG's high committee to resolve outstanding land disputes affecting Christian communities in Ankawa, and Duhok? There are claims by Christian residents that KRG took the land of Christians for residential purposes and development projects, who were not then properly compensated. Does the KRG have a plan to compensate the landowners and resolve the dispute? Were there any practical steps taken during 2022?

A: After thorough investigations and consultations with the relevant parties, the committee inferred several conclusions. First, the Council of Ministers' data that there are 58 confiscations occurred in Christian villages and communities in the province is not precisely accurate, as some villages, such as Jlk, Bedar, and Hezany w Zhuly names have been repeated more than once in their statistics. The actual number is 55 confiscations. Second, a massive number of people have been forcibly placed on registered lands of others by the Baathist regime in the last decades. Some of these lands, such as Kuret Gavana, Bersevi, Hezawa, and Kani, belong to Christians.

The committee asked for immediate compensation to the Christians whose lands were confiscated. Third, in order to ensure the safety of Christians' properties, a decree was issued to centralize the purchase and sale of the lands and properties

located in the Christian villages in the Duhok Governorate Council. Fourth, the committee estimated the compensations of some Christian villages to be as follows: Aradan Nasara village by 368,406,000 IQD, Jqli Sfli village by 450,625,000 IQD, Kwany village by 1,879,000,000 IQD, Bebad Nasara village by 114,000,000 IQD, and Kani Masse village by 383,500,000 IQD. The total cost is 3,195,531,000. Fifth, the efforts are ongoing by the representatives from relevant municipalities, directorates, and other involved parties to remove the occurred confiscations in villages if Merga Chya, Dyry w Merstk, Benata in Amedi, Kshkafa and Greysur in Akre, Mala Arab, Levo, Yusf Aval in Zaxo).

After pursuing the matter, 38 of 55 confiscations have either been removed or, after the villagers signed a consent letter indicating that their properties haven't been confiscated, no confiscation was recorded.

- Does the KRG continue to actively support and fund the rescue of captured Yazidis and provide psychosocial support services at a center in Duhok province? What are the statistics of the number survivors? How many survivors has the center served? to date?

A: As of August 2022, the number of abductees was 6,417, including females 3548. Male 2869. The Numbers of female and male survivors from the grip of ISIL is 3,562: 1,207 females, 339 males, 1059 male children, 957 the kidnappees who were martyred at the hands of ISIL, and 146 persons whose bodies were found. Before the ISIL attacks, the number of Yazidis living in Iraq was 550.000. The number of Yazidis who are currently in the camps of the Kurdistan region is 135,860 IDPs. As for the number of IDPs present in the disputed areas in the region, it is 189,337 IDPs.

KRG continues to provide psychological support to the survivors. More than 1,000 Yazidi survivors have benefited from this support and the centers have actively operated in 2022.

- What is the impact of PKK and PMF forces on Yazidi IDPs?

A: In early May 2022, about 701 Yazidi families numbering 4,083 people were displaced from the towns of Sinune and Dugere in their homeland of Shingal, in the wake of two days of intense fighting between the Iraqi army and a militia group affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

- What is the status of the Sinjar Agreement developed in cooperation with UNAMI? What steps has the KRG taken to implement the agreement in 2022?

A: Conflicts and political instability produce everlasting impacts on civilian lives. It is imperative to search for feasible ways to ease the effects of war. And among the most important means is national reconciliation; because it is a fundamental requirement to achieve political and social stability, to rebuild the demolished houses, and to open a new page for a secure political and social future that embraces all components of the Iraqi people.

The mechanisms of national reconciliation, such as transitional justice, determine the extent of the success or failure of the national reconciliation project, as well as its acceptance. This mechanism gives an opportunity for societies to deal with the situation after the conflict stage and transforms it from a state of chaos and confusion to a state of a pluralistic democratic system so that the new system respects and protects human rights. The regional government is working to restore security and political stability to the disputed areas through the execution of the Sinjar agreement in coordination with the federal government and urges the international community to provide support for the implementation of the aforementioned agreement.

In this respect, KRG strives to give priority to the processes of ensuring the achievement of national reconciliation and transitional justice, by developing a strategy to address human rights violations committed by all parties to armed conflicts; implementing Art 140 of the Federal Constitution, because it is a stepping rock for coexistence, national reconciliation, security and stability; promoting transitional justice measures that enable the realization of the right to truth and compensation for victims as well as accountability for those responsible for violating human rights and international humanitarian law; and taking further steps to promote the full and meaningful participation of women.

If implemented, the Sinjar Agreement will set a decent example to other areas in which the discretionary powers of Erbil and Baghdad overlap. There is not a clear split of jurisdictions between the Federal authorities and KRG subsequent to the October 2017 events. The Federal authorities militarily proceeded to seize further territories, following October 2017, causing security vacuums to arise in some spots

in the disputed areas. This, by and large, allowed ISIS militants to operate actively and launch strikes on Peshmerga forces and other Iraqi forces.

KRG supports the existence of a joint-task force that represents the line national and regional security counterparts, and Peshmerga is an essential force whose participation in this regard is imperative to restore stability. Peshmerga has invariably protected ethnic and religious components in these areas.

The existence of forces that do not operate solely under the authority of the Iraqi Chief Commander of the Armed Forces made the security situation more volatile, paving the way for ISIS militants to take this opportunity to conduct terrorist activities that severely damaged the stability in the disputed areas.

KRG and the federal government had cooperated from 2003 until 2017 to manage the security in those areas. KRG has strived to promote democratic and humanitarian principles in these areas, most important of which is the protection of coexistence between ethnic and religious components, and it believes in the implementation of Art 140 of the Iraqi Constitution guarantee these initiatives.

KRG has continuously asked the federal government to execute Art 140 as soon as possible and it displayed its utter commitment for coordination and cooperation in this respect. KRG also asked the international community, prior the war against terrorism, to render self-rule rights for the people residing in the disputed areas, in order to eliminate the existent frictions and conflicts, and to eradicate traces of terrorism.

Committees formed to implement the provisions of Article 140 under the successive governments after 2003, and the Iraqi Federal Court, as the highest judicial authority in the country, resolved an Iraqi political and legal debate over Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution, and acknowledged that this Article is still in effect until the full implementation of its requirements for restoring the status quo in the disputed Iraqi areas to the way they were before the demographic changes, especially in the Kirkuk governorate. Furthermore, Law No 75 (2015) was enacted, which sets a framework for the compensation of the victims of the armed conflicts and terrorist acts. Additionally, six joint coordination centers were also established in Kirkuk, Makhmour, Kasak and Khanaqin, in addition to the two main centers in Erbil and

Baghdad. Work is underway to form two joint brigades from the Peshmerga and the Iraqi army to fill the security gaps and eliminate terrorist cells.

Nevertheless, halting the implementation of the Shingal Agreement presented huge challenges for appeasing the security conditions in the disputed areas. KRG has suggested a number of steps to restore stability in the disputed areas within the Action Plan for Human Rights: Cooperation and coordination between the executive authorities in the federal government, the regional government, the United Nations and the international community to carry out their duties in order to implement the Shingal Agreement; compensation for all those affected by the attacks of terrorist groups; working on the reconstruction of the stricken and damaged areas and allocate an adequate budget for the extent of the damages inflicted on those areas; delivering the necessary daily services in preparation for the return of the displaced to their areas; removing the remaining mines and explosives in some areas to enable the return of their people; and working to implement what is stated in Art 140.

- What is the status of the KDP-sponsored bill in the Iraqi COR to recognize the 2014 Yezidi genocide?

A: In October 2020, Khalil submitted a bill to the Iraqi COR presidency to recognize the 2014 Yezidi killings as genocide.

Education

- Are non-Muslim students required to participate in Islamic education classes in IKR schools? Is there a curriculum in IKR schools to teach students about various religions and religious diversity in the IKR?

A: Non-Muslim students are not required to participate in Islamic education classes. Religious teachings are reflected in the school curriculums. The curriculum contains materials of the history, culture, and texts of various beliefs.

- Specific case: What is the status of KRG Ministry of Education's religious studies or the history of religions curriculum program to update its curriculum?

A: Efforts are in place to update the curriculum.

- What is the number of non-Muslim schools and universities that teach non-Muslim curriculum, such as Christian religious education schools or schools for other ethnic and religious minorities?

A: There are 48 Syriac schools. There is also a college for Assyrian language in the Department of Education.

- Does the KRG Ministry of Education (MOE) fund religious instruction in schools for Muslim and Christian students? Does the KRG support public elementary and secondary schools for Christian students? How many Syriac language public schools are operated in the IKR?

A: There are 48 Syriac schools. There is also a college for Assyrian language in the Department of Education.

- Does the KRG supports reform of education curriculum, especially reform of religious studies to include materials about all recognized religions in the IKR? What are the KRG's efforts to embrace diversity and add more materials about religious minorities in the IKR?

A: Answered above.

- What are private school registration procedures and fees?

A: To register with the KRG Ministry of Endowment, private schools need to provide information on the school's bylaws, number of students, size, location, facility and safety conditions, financial backing, and tax compliance and to undergo an inspection. Regulations of opening private schools is attached.

- What is the status of coordination between the KRG's MOE and MERA with the Harvard University project to develop a curriculum of Islamic studies?

A: The step met with disputed within the parliament. But it is still ongoing.

Financial Support for Construction/Buildings

- Did the KRG provide financial support for construction and renovation of religious and educational facilities in 2022? What were the projects that KRG has

supported – such as building churches, shrines and temples for religious minorities – in 2022?

A: KRG continues its financial support to various religious establishments. In addition to working on dedicating a space for graveyard exclusive to Bahai followers as mentioned above, the directorates within the Ministry of Endowments submit regular requests to the KRG Council of Ministers to build, renovate and maintain their religious sites. A budget of 340 million Iraqi dinars has been devoted to renovate a church in Zaxo, 1 billion IQD is dedicated for the electricity bills of the churches, 70 million is devoted to build a church in Al-Qosh, 1 billion IQD is allocated to build Um Al-Nur church in Ain Kawa, and 18 million Iraqi dinars is devoted to renew Nabi Nahum shrine, among others.

- What is the status of the Zoroastrian temple that opened in December 2020 in Erbil?

A: The Zoroastrian temple was opened two years ago. Religious activities were freely performed there for two years. However, the activities were reportedly suspended due to disagreements in dividing the financial burden of running the temple.

- How many registered evangelical Christian and other Protestant churches are in the KRG? What are the names of the Christian denominations?

A: There are 15 churches in the Kurdistan Region.

- International Evangelical Union Church in Erbil, Duhok, and Sulaimani
- The Ainkawa Evangelical Prophetic Church in Erbil
- The Renaissance Evangelical Church in Erbil and Duhok
- The Kardazman Evangelical Church in Erbil
- The Good Pastoral Baptist Church in Erbil
- The New Testament Baptist Church in Erbil
- The Episcopal Evangelical Church in Erbil
- The Nazarene Evangelical Church in Erbil
- The Free Evangelical Church in Duhok
- The International Evangelical Church of Praise in Duhok
- The Prophets Evangelical Church in Duhok
- Ashti Evangelical Church in Sulaimani
- Seventh-day Evangelical Church in Erbil

- The Armenian Evangelical Church in Erbil
 - Anapa Bayes Church
- How many registered places of worship are there for recognized religious minorities in KRG? Were there new worship places opened by recognized religious minorities in the IKR in 2022?

A: The Kurdistan Region now has around 7,000 different places of worship where different religious components pray and carry out their religious duties in peace.

- During the year, the Kaka'i community reported it controlled all of its places of worship. In 2018, Kaka'i leaders had reported that the central government's Shia Endowment had forcibly taken over several places of Kaka'i worship in Kirkuk, Diyala, and Baghdad, converting them into mosques. Does the Shia Endowment still control the Kaka'i places of worship in Kirkuk, Diyala, and Baghdad? What actions have the authorities taken to ensure the Kaka'i can control its own places of worship?

A: Temples:

- In 2014, the temple of Bawa Haider was destroyed by ISIS in Wardak village
- In Tuleban village/Baba Yadgar temple collapsed by ISIS
- Keverli / Sheikh Mohammed Temple believed by both Shabak and Kaka communities. It collapsed at the hands of terrorists
- Bawa Mahmi in Khanaqin, it became a Shiite endowment after the war against ISIS
- King Ibrahim in Baghdad became a Shiite endowment after the fall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq.
- Gumati Mekhas in Khanaqin. It has been destroyed by terrorists.

P.S. Details about the overlap of jurisdictions between the federal and regional governments in the disputed areas are illustrated above, where the Sinjar Agreement is mentioned.

Restrictions on religious acts/assembly and voting

- Are there any reports or cases of discrimination against religious minorities in the IKR during the year? Were there any reports of discrimination against Zoroastrians in IKR? Are Zoroastrian followers listed as “Muslim” on their federal identification cards?

A: No discriminations whatsoever have been recorded in 2022. Zoroastrian followers are listed as Muslims because of the federal laws. Issuing national IDs falls within the federal jurisdiction on the basis of Article 10 from the Iraqi constitution.

- Are there any statistics on the number of IKR minorities who hold senior KRG positions?

A: The directorates within the Ministry of Endowment are managed by the religious components themselves. The Secretary of Parliament, the state minister for Components Affairs, the Head of the Independent High Commission of Human Rights, and the Minister of Communication, are from the religious minorities.

- Does the law restrict who can vote for quota seats during elections? What were the arrangements for voting for quota seat MPs in the October 2021 national parliamentary elections?

A: There are no restrictions about who can vote for quota seats during elections. Ninety-five of 329 (29%) seats in the Council of Representatives of Iraq are held by women. The law reserves nine of the Council of Representatives’ (COR) 329 seats for members of religious and ethnic minority communities: five for Christian candidates from Baghdad, Ninewa, Kirkuk, Erbil, and Dohuk; one for a Yezidi, from Ninewa; one for a Sabeen-Mandean, from Baghdad; one for an ethnic Shabak, from Ninewa; and one for a Faili Kurd, from Wasit.

Actions by Foreign Forces and Non-State Actors

- In 2020, there were reports on multiple attacks by ISIS against Kaka’i villages, killing a total of 13 people. Did similar incidents or attacks take place in 2022?

A: No attacks were reported in 2022. Their casualties mentioned in the beginning of this report.

- What steps were taken in 2022 to increase the safety and security of the Kaka'i and other religious minority groups? Yezidi NGOs reported in 2020 that the PKK had seized control of local schools in Sinjar and transformed them into military camps and indoctrination centers. Has there been any progress in removing the PKK from these areas? What have the authorities done to date?

A: Details are illustrated above, where the Sinjar Agreement is discussed.

- What is the impact of PKK presence in Sinjar and related Turkish airstrikes?

A: Details are illustrated above, where the Sinjar Agreement is discussed.

- How many Yezidi mass graves have been identified and how many of them were exhumed in 2022?

A: 83 mass graves have been identified. In 2022, one mass grave was exhumed in Hardan.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom:

- What are the societal issues facing religious minorities in IKR? Were there reports in 2022 of violence against or harassment of religious minorities, including but not limited to arson, forced disappearances, killings, etc.?

A: KRG has strived to promote and materialize peaceful coexistence through genuine incorporation of the religious and ethnic groups in the governmental institutions, invariably recognizing rituals and ceremonies of KR-I communities, and cooperating with international agencies to rescue and protect minorities from terrorism. Hence, recognitions and acknowledgements from our international counterparts will indeed be assistive in further improvements in religious freedoms in the Kurdistan Region.

- Does the Yezidi Supreme Spiritual Council still not accept children born of ISIS rape? Has the KRG engaged with the Yezidi Supreme Spiritual Council on behalf of the mothers/children?

A: The Yezidi community still does not accommodate the children born of ISIS rape. Further details are illustrated above.

