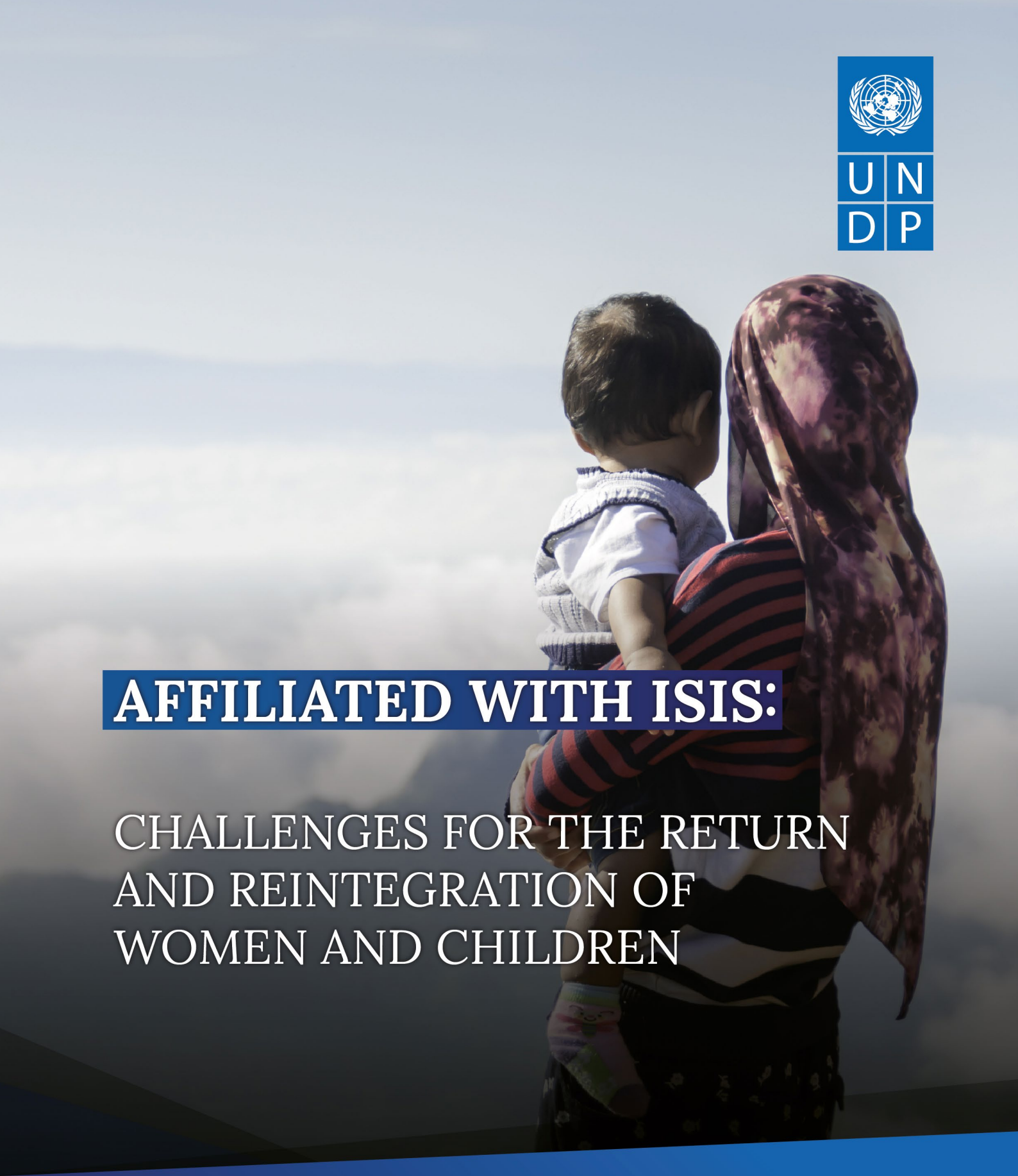

AFFILIATED WITH ISIS:

CHALLENGES FOR THE RETURN AND REINTEGRATION OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

United Nations Development Programme Iraq

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This study was written by Ouafae Sandi, an international consultant at UNDP Iraq.

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FOREWORD

Five years following the end of ISIL's occupation in Iraq, around 1.2 million Iraqis remain internally displaced. To preserve stabilization gains, strengthen Iraq's social fabric and support prevention of conflict and violent extremism, reconciliation and reintegration support is vital. It is now time to focus on helping those who are at risk of marginalization and facing the hardest challenges to settle and reintegrate, the families who are perceived to be affiliated with ISIL, regardless of the level of affiliation or even its validity in some cases.

Mostly women and children, these families require mental and psychosocial care, livelihoods support, and often access to social services and housing options. But first, they need hope. Both these families, but also those who suffered from ISIL atrocities, require acceptance and the viable chance for a better future to thrive. This starts with forgiveness and healing. This study aims to better understand the plight of families associated with ISIL, including those who remain displaced or imprisoned, to identify opportunities for rehabilitation and sustainable reintegration through gender-responsive recommendations.

UNDP Iraq has published several reports related to reintegration and community acceptance of families perceived as affiliated with ISIL during the past two years to inform its programmatic interventions in Iraq. This study, which focuses on recent challenges faced by mainly women affiliated and perceived as affiliated, comes in a critical time when the government of Iraq, with support from the international community, is leading a strategic process to repatriate Iraqi families from Al-hol camp in north-east Syria.

We sincerely hope that the analysis and recommendations of the study will contribute to advancing the national reintegration plan in Iraq.

Zena Ali-Ahmad

UNDP Iraq Resident Representative

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Around five years after the collapse of the so-called 'caliphate' of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria or 'ISIS' in Iraq, the issue of families perceived as associated with ISIS (known inside Iraq as 'ISIS families') still poses considerable security, social and economic challenges. Many residents of areas greatly affected by ISIS crimes reject the return of the families and relatives of people affiliated with ISIS after it seized territory in 2014. Whether these people are still alive, missing, imprisoned or even dead, their families, who were forced to flee to other areas in Iraq or to Syria after the defeat of ISIS, remain mostly rejected by Iraqi society.

The central Government, international organizations and some local officials are making intensive efforts to return some families to their original areas through the reconstruction of infrastructure and services and reconciliation with local communities.[1] Yet security concerns, administrative procedures, clan and sectarian tensions, unstable economic and living conditions and other huge obstacles persist. These prevent the return of thousands of families and their reintegration into local communities.

An official in the Iraqi Ministry of Interior estimated the number of people from families perceived as associated with ISIS and unable to return to their homes at about 250,000.[2] In some areas, this is due to the destruction of homes and infrastructure. But in most areas, the de facto ban on returns is a punishment for those who some clans, authorities, local communities or the Popular Mobilization Forces believe were sympathetic to ISIS or had a relative affiliated with or cooperating with ISIS.[3]

In areas previously seized by ISIS, the Iraqi National Security Service has imposed a security permit that is considered a certificate of disavowal from ISIS. It means that displaced persons can return, move from one area to another, build or rent houses, obtain official identification and other cards, receive monthly salaries and so on. It is not possible to obtain any document or conduct transactions without this clearance. To make it easier for relatives of ISIS suspects to obtain security clearances so that they can return home, local leaders in some liberated areas[4] have urged the judiciary to agree that if a wife, father, sister or other relative of an imprisoned or missing ISIS member, who may be dead or disappeared, lodges a criminal complaint against this person because of his membership in ISIS, the judge should issue a document giving them the green light to obtain a security clearance. This practice is called 'acquittal' or 'disavowal'.

Despite the importance of this practice, it poses concerns relating to rights and runs into obstacles when local communities reject the return of families. Further, acquittal is not an enacted law but a custom adopted by the judiciary to manage the transactions of families whose members belonged to ISIS.[5] Acquittal does not mean the end of families' problems and their reintegration into society as there is still popular anger and rejection of them. They may be subjected to reprisal or stigmatization and threats, including from ISIS, which sees acquittal as a betrayal. Sometimes families who disowned their relatives and returned have been unable to obtain all administrative documents to reintegrate into society.[6] Threats from other residents and poor living and economic conditions have prompted some families to return to the camps.

When ISIS lost its last strongholds in Syria in 2019, its fighters were arrested and imprisoned, while their families, mainly

women and children, were settled in Al-Hol Camp in north-eastern Syria. Of the 62,000 people in the camp, approximately 31,000 are Iraqis. Some estimates indicate that 95 percent are from families perceived as associated with ISIS, with 4,400 persons from Nineveh governorate, 18,000 persons from Anbar, Baghdad and Babylon governorates, and the rest from Saladin, Kirkuk and Diyala governorates.[7]

Iraq is moving towards recovering its nationals from Al-Hol Camp given humanitarian and human rights considerations, although there are legal complications and security considerations. As part of the existing mechanism of action between Baghdad and the Syrian Democratic Forces, the Iraqi authorities, between May 2021 and January 2022, recovered 450 Iraqi families in four batches. They included 1,796 people, mostly women and children and a few men.[8] It is expected that recovery will continue in batches from Al-Hol Camp to the Al-Jada 1 Centre for Psychosocial Rehabilitation near the town of Qayyarah, south of Mosul.

This issue raises many political, security and social concerns. The Iraqi security authorities confirm that all returnees in the first stage went through security checks inside Al-Hol Camp and other security checks after their arrival at the Al-Jada Centre, and that they are 'peaceful' and not from ISIS. Returnees are provided with psychological support and rehabilitation and special programmes prepared by the Ministry of Migration and Displacement and the National Security Advisory in cooperation with specialized international organizations.

Some see the return of families from Al-Hol Camp as a threat to the social fabric in the Mosul area, however, which is rich in national, religious and sectarian diversity. This is especially an issue since returns are not limited to internally displaced persons from Nineveh governorate but comprise all families from all governorates. One concern is that a camp for 'ISIS families' will threaten stability and restore ISIS cells in the area. All in all, it is not possible to be absolutely certain that Iraqi families in Al-Hol Camp are all peaceful and have nothing to do with ISIS, or that they are all from families associated with ISIS. Some actually escaped from ISIS crimes in 2014. Some returned in the first group that the Iraqi Government recovered. A large share is from families associated with ISIS elements by close or distant kinship.[9] They migrated to Syria with remaining ISIS militants when Iraq regained its lands in 2017.

The return of these families, even those with no association with ISIS, poses a danger. These people have experienced war and displacement and have been in contact with active ISIS members and families inside Al-Hol Camp for long periods of time. They may have been influenced by extremist ideas or subjected to campaigns of polarization and recruitment. The repercussions may emerge in the future, especially for women and children who make up nearly 80 percent of Al-Hol's population. The common assumption that women are always peaceful or victims and subordinate to men can therefore constitute a security gap and potential danger. Families who fled to Syria after the defeat of ISIS in 2017 pose a greater danger and need different procedures, whether in terms of security checks or conditions for return. They could benefit from psychological and intellectual rehabilitation programmes and social reintegration.

Despite Iraq's recovery of its citizens from Al-Hol and their placement in Al-Jada, the biggest challenge is returning families to their areas of origin. On the ground, it is difficult for families of victims to forgive perpetrators of heinous crimes and their families. Local communities often reject returns. Forcing acceptance may open the door to reprisals and a new bloody conflict. Yet leaving families for a longer

period inside Al-Hol or Iraqi camps could turn the camps into incubators for violent extremism, a time bomb that will explode at any time. This issue requires a comprehensive, multidimensional and multilateral strategy with a clear plan and comprehensive programmes for rehabilitation, integration and safe return to areas of origin. In addition, little will be achieved without local reconciliation.

Beyond families perceived as associated with ISIS, whether they are internally displaced or returnees from Al-Hol Camp, a third category of ISIS-affiliated people involves women with proven involvement or affiliation. Now serving time in Iraqi prisons, they include an unkown number of women and 47 underage girls. They pose a serious security threat inside prisons and after the expiry of their sentences and their return to their communities. The degree of polarization and recruitment inside prisons is very high, which implies taking measures to prevent female terrorism prisoners from influencing other prisoners. Gender-responsive disengagement and rehabilitation programmes in prisons and social reintegration programmes after release should be priorities. After serving their sentences, these women will not be welcomed, in most cases, inside their communities. If nothing confirms their retreat from extremist ideology, they will pose a security challenge in the future.

This study reviews various obstacles to the return of families perceived as associated with ISIS. It proposes measures to help overcome these difficulties, including gender-responsive recommendations. The study confirms that identifying needs and assessing risks requires separating internally displaced people from the returnees from Al-Hol, since the risks vary for each group. A good understanding of risks is essential in defining appropriate rehabilitation and reintegration programmes.

Given the large number of families perceived as associated with ISIS, it is difficult to study each case separately. But an individual, case-by-case approach can be adopted for returnees from Al-Hol and for women and girls inside prisons. So far, their numbers are still small; only 4,000 people have actually expressed their desire to return to Iraq, although this number may have increased recently. Returnees from Al-Hol or women and girls in prison also pose a greater danger that requires taking an individual approach. It should factor in age, gender, degree of vulnerability to extremist ideology, reasons for joining or supporting ISIS, reason for fleeing to Syria for returnees from Al-Hol, reasons for return, and means of rehabilitation and integration.

The study stresses that women and girls are associated with violent extremism in complicated and diverse ways. The Iraqi Government and other actors concerned with preventing extremist violence should understand the risks associated with women involved with ISIS, and that they are not necessarily 'peaceful' or 'victims.' Greater awareness of the gender dimensions of violent extremism can help the Government and other actors to adapt existing policies and practices accordingly. The lack of coherent and gender-responsive policies can otherwise have dangerous repercussions.[10]

For years, women have been almost absent from research on combating violent extremism and terrorism. Much information-gathering and the funding of research lack gender analyses.[11] The return of women and children perceived as associated with ISIS brings additional challenges. There are few data on whether women have voluntarily joined ISIS or were forced to join, and the extent of their perpetration of violence or roles mainly as supporters and assistants. This makes it difficult to identify needs and, subsequently, to design appropriate rehabilitation and reintegration policies.

The study stresses the continued lack of gender-responsive national policies in

camps and places of detention. When it comes to the fate of thousands of women, there is a wide gap between the reality on the ground and potential challenges and risks. Female heads of household, whose male relatives are missing or whose fate is not yet clear, or who were killed during the war of liberation, may be suspected of having ties with ISIS. These people face a double suffering: the loss of their family members and the harshness of displacement while supporting their children without decent job opportunities. These women have neither shelter nor a source of livelihood, and feel that displacement camps, where they live, are the only refuge for them, given the risks of violations that they may face outside the camps.

In some cases, they, too, can turn to violent extremism, especially if they lose hope for favourable life opportunities. Previous experiences indicate that women who face a lack of options on top of stigmatization and being relatives of violent extremists have an increased risk of reradicalization and rerecruitment.[12] Their return is often associated with high levels of fear, anger and mistrust from communities. Social rejection, stigma, reprisals and difficult living conditions are all major challenges that should be factored into reintegration efforts.

The study shows that returnee women and girls exposed to sexual violence face additional stigma from their communities and have specific psychological, social and health needs. Women returnees also suffer from economic consequences and need vocational training and decent work to generate income and meet the needs of their children.

The study stresses settling the situation of thousands of children without identity papers, which deprives them of their rights to parentage, education, citizenship and a decent livelihood, just because they biologically belong to fathers affiliated with ISIS who are now likely dead or missing. These children, if their status is not settled, could become a threat in the future.

It is necessary to pay attention to terms describing women and children perceived as associated with ISIS. The phrases 'ISIS families' or 'Daesh', which are widely used in official and popular Iraqi circles, constitute a pre-stigmatization and accusation that will continue to follow these women and children for a long time. The repercussions on their psyches will be great. Such descriptions expose women and children to harassment, exclusion and marginalization and perhaps to attempts at retaliation now and in the future, just because they are or have been accused of being relatives of former ISIS members which is also in some cases false accusation thrown for personal or tribal conflict reason.

Dealing with women and girls inside prisons requires greater care and programmes for psychological rehabilitation and disengagement from violence. They also need social and economic reintegration into society after serving their sentence, based on a case-by-case approach. Prison staff need capacities to better understand the causes of violent extremism, its manifestations and indicators, how to face it inside prisons, and the gender dimensions of violent extremism as well as rehabilitation and reintegration.

The study calls for opening serious and effective societal discussion with the participation of all actors—tribal leaders, clerics, community leaders, local authorities, intellectuals, notables, civil society, youth and women—about the different challenges posed by families perceived as associated with ISIS and the need to establish restorative justice mechanisms with a local dimension. The latter are key to achieving justice by redressing harm caused to victims, reforming perpetrators and reconciling the two. These steps are fundamental for restoring social cohesion and avoiding new grievances leading to more violence.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout 2017, ISIS sustained increasing losses in Iraq, including its strongholds and administrative centres. On 9 December 2017, the then-Prime Minister, Haider Al-Abadi, declared victory over ISIS after months of fighting.[13] Despite the military defeat, the path to stability still faces many challenges, including a large number of unresolved humanitarian issues. In 2019, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs indicated that nearly 1.9 million Iraqis suffer from food insecurity, 7.3 million people lack health care, 5.2 million people need protection and support, 5.4 million people require water and sanitation services and 4.1 million people need shelter.[14] According to the World Bank, rebuilding devastated cities will take at least 10 years.[15] Many social, political and economic problems complicate the situation, such as corruption, unemployment, poor basic services and a humanitarian crisis that prevents the return of many internally displaced persons, including families perceived as associated with ISIS.

Iraqi government policies have encouraged the voluntary return of displaced persons but forced and coercive returns have also taken place through expediting the closure of camps without providing alternatives for people whose homes are still destroyed and who may otherwise be prevented from returning.[16] About 1.2 million Iraqis are still internally displaced. Four out of five live outside camps, in urban or rural areas, mostly in central, western and northern Iraq.[17] Of all internally displaced persons, about 250,000 are believed to be associated with ISIS.[18] After ISIS was defeated, civilians who had lived under its rule for a long time, more than three years in some areas, began to be seen as 'collaborators'[19] even if they did not actually join or support ISIS. They face discrimination, insecurity and difficult living conditions and struggle to meet basic needs.[20] Furthermore, they risk retaliation from families affected by the crimes of ISIS. Those who fled Anbar and Nineveh during ISIS' occupation are angry with those who did not flee, accusing them of supporting ISIS. Those who fled face threats if they return given the perception that one of their family members belonged to ISIS. Between these two groups there is enmity and a desire for revenge.

Some families were forced to return to their homes despite unsafe conditions. Some were subjected to landmines or retaliatory attacks by neighbours, or forcibly recruited (especially young men) into local armed groups. Most families prevented from returning to their areas of origin are detained in camps.

The return of women and girls associated with violent extremism groups is often associated with high levels of fear, anger and mistrust in communities. Rejection of these women, stigma, reprisals, the exploitation of their vulnerable economic and social situation, in addition to lack of income generation opportunities are major challenges to consider in reintegration efforts.

In addition to internally displaced people, at least 31,000 of the 62,000 detainees in the Syrian Al-Hol Camp are Iraqis, mostly women, children and boys. Some estimates indicate that 95 percent are from families with a perceived association with ISIS. Iraq is among the countries that support the prosecution of citizens involved in ISIS

terrorism. The Government is seeking to settle the issue of Al-Hol Camp through the gradual recovery of citizens who want to return. After conducting security checks, the Government transfers citizens to Al-Jada 1 Camp for rehabilitation and then to their areas of origin. Despite the importance of this step, it is risky. It provokes resentment in local communities that reject returns and angers people affected by the crimes of ISIS, first and foremost the Yazidis. They are waiting for a solution to their tragedy through a political settlement to prevent a repeat, which hinges on accountability.

There is no agreement on how much responsibility women married or related to ISIS members should bear for crimes committed by the organization. These challenges are not exclusive to Iraq. There are multiple gaps in the data, including the lack of classification according to gender and age, and limited information and studies on the extent of Iraqi women's involvement in ISIS terrorism and the roles they played. This makes it difficult to fully assess the extent of their participation in violent extremism[21] and to identify the most effective means of disengagement and rehabilitation.

To better understand the challenges and obstacles associated with returns and to design more effective responses can start by classifying women perceived as associated with ISIS into three groups. This distinction helps to understand the circumstances and challenges of each group and identify needs and risks.

The first group is where one of a woman's family members (husband, father, son, etc.) is perceived as affiliated with ISIS. Some of these women sympathize or cooperate in one way or another with ISIS; some have never been involved with it and may be resentful and criticize its extremist ideas and brutal rulings. These women, along with the rest of their relatives, had to flee to other areas inside Iraq after the defeat of ISIS for fear of reprisals. They do not pose a great security threat but ostracizing them and their children and exposing them to stigmatization, exclusion and threats may make them feel a sense of injustice that inspires malice against society. This matter can, in the medium or long term, constitute a real threat.

A second group comprises women perceived as associated with ISIS, who fled with the organization's members to Syria. Some went directly to Al-Hol Camp; others were detained after the Al-Baghoz battle and placed in Al-Hol. The Iraqi authorities have gradually begun to place them and their children in special camps. Some believe in ISIS ideas, some have abandoned these and some never adopted them. Their presence in Al-Hol Camp with active ISIS elements may over time result in them being influenced by extremist ideas or subject to polarization and recruitment. With this possibility, they pose a potential danger. There is a need for rehabilitation and reintegration programmes responsive to the specifics of each case.

A third category involves convicted women involved with ISIS through their affiliation with it or in covering up the involvement of a husband, father, son, brother, etc. They believed (and perhaps still do) in most or some of the ideas of ISIS and may maintain organizational, ideological and communicative ties with its elements or sleeper cells. They therefore represent a great danger. Underage girls imprisoned in juvenile rehabilitation centres pose less danger, given their young age and the marriage of most of them to ISIS militants under duress. Risks will be particularly low if they are psychologically and

intellectually rehabilitated inside prisons and reintegrated economically and socially after serving their sentences.

The classification of women perceived as associated with ISIS reflects marked variation in their association with the organization, adoption of its violent ideology and patterns of risk. This classification is important and should be taken into consideration across the various preventive and curative dimensions of rehabilitation, reintegration and disengagement programmes.

The challenges

Many official and unofficial obstacles remain to the return of thousands of families to their homes. There is an urgent need to overcome these and prevent threats to families after they return. Rehabilitation and reintegration programmes need to respond to the distinctive characteristics of different people and comply with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law. This process should be sensitive to immediate, medium- and long-term challenges facing families as well as local communities.

➔ The roles and motives of some women associated with ISIS are still not fully understood. Women joined ISIS, supported it or sympathized with it and covered up its elements for a variety of reasons. They played different roles, such as participating in the violence, assisting their male relatives within ISIS, enforcing ISIS laws, recruiting, promoting its ideology, and most importantly, serving as mothers and educators for the new generation of extremists. In many cases, women who are victims of violent extremism become supporters and even perpetrators within a violent extremism group.[22]

These complications are not specific to Iraq; many countries have similar fears with respect to the return of women from Al-Hol Camp. There is a lack of clarity about appropriate risk assessment and screening processes. Challenges arise in investigation and prosecution, and in securing sufficient and admissible evidence of the commission of crimes. There is limited understanding of best practices and the most effective means for rehabilitation and reintegration. These factors are exacerbated by public opinion, which tends to reject the return of families perceived as associated with ISIS. Women often bear the guilt of their male relatives. Such general trends may reinforce marginalization, exclusion and injustice, which may contribute to reinstigating extremism and undermine all rehabilitation and reintegration efforts.

Corruption, instability and sectarian and clannish violence continue, especially in areas where ISIS enjoys local support. Reprisal violence has been committed against the families of people associated or perceived as associated with ISIS. This ongoing situation creates an environment potentially enabling new waves of violent extremism.

Goals and methodology

This study aims to determine the main trends related to the return of thousands of families perceived as associated with ISIS, and to identify the security, administrative, social and economic obstacles. It seeks to define the challenges and risks associated with the recovery and return of families from Al-Hol Camp, and to probe the situation of women and girls inside Iraqi prisons who have been convicted of terrorism charges, including their needs for rehabilitation and reintegration.

The study also examines the risks and challenges arising from the non-return of families, while proposing solutions to help decision-makers shape perceptions and develop gender-responsive rehabilitation and reintegration. It strives to meet the requirements of Iraqi national security, returning families, families still internally displaced, women prisoners, victims of ISIS crimes and society as a whole.

The study aims to raise awareness of the gender dimensions of violent extremism as well as rehabilitation and inclusion, and to draw attention to the dangers of not settling the issue of thousands of children without formal identification papers. It considers risks from the continued placement of families associated with ISIS in their own camps. It urges supporting local reconciliation as part of solving the issue of displaced families inside camps and encourages creating a national strategy for return, rehabilitation and reintegration. Comprehensive programmes for the rehabilitation and reintegration of families perceived as associated with ISIS and their reintegration into their communities can help achieve social cohesion and prevent new outbreaks of violent extremism.

The study contributes to greater awareness about international best practices related to the rehabilitation and reintegration of women affiliated with or from ISIS-affiliated families, in line with United Nations resolution No. 2396 and the Addendum to the Guiding Principles on Foreign Terrorist Fighters (2018) issued by the Counter-Terrorism Committee, and detailed guidance on gender-sensitive approaches to returnees.

The study encourages the participation of women in countering violent extremism and rehabilitation programmes in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolutions 2242 and 2396. Integrating a gender perspective into strategies, policies, programmes and plans for preventing and countering violent extremism and for rehabilitation and reintegration is vital for effectiveness and sustainability. The study proposes practical solutions supporting rehabilitation and reintegration of internally displaced women and children, in a manner responsive to Iraq's political, cultural and social specificity.

The following methods helped to identify and analyse issues associated with the return of families perceived as associated with ISIS, internally displaced persons or returnees from Al-Hol Camp, and women and girls detained inside prisons.

A desk review surveyed existing national and international legal frameworks, strategies and programmes related to the return of internally displaced persons and residents of Syrian camps. This entailed reviewing shadow reports on the humanitarian situation in Iraq from 2017 to 2020, specifically on internally displaced persons; reports of human rights organizations and international organizations concerned

with migration, refugees and internally displaced persons; crisis group reports; and case studies of disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes.

The study also analysed a field study that included the Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre in Baghdad, Al-Jadaa1 Camp and Al-Jada 5 Camp in Al-Qayyara, a meeting with a group of women returning to their areas in the city of Fallujah in Anbar governorate, a meeting with another group of women from Al-Mahlabiya area and the testimonies of local communities.

Monitoring and analysing available information and data included identifying the challenges related to the study subject and proposing measures to shape perceptions and gender-responsive programmes and strategies for the return of families and their rehabilitation and reintegration. A primary focus on women reflects the reality that they represent the largest proportion of internally displaced families returning from the Syrian camps. The study sometimes addresses children and men based on their relationships with women and the needs identified.

Meetings with girls inside prisons provided a chance to learn about their conditions and reasons for their trial, and their needs for rehabilitation inside prison and reintegration after prison. Meetings with a number of women who could return to their areas shared their experiences with displacement, the conditions of return, the problems they suffer after returning, and their needs and those of their children. In visits to Al-Jada 1 and Al-Jada 5, meetings with large groups of displaced families took place in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Immigration and a trusted local resident as a guide to help meet families, listen to their stories and ensure their consent to participating in the study.

Research questions focused on social status, economic situation, mental health problems, the relationship with the community, economic needs, obstacles to return and the conditions in the camps. Questions were formulated to be responsive to the cultural and environmental specificities of the women interviewed. Sensitive questions were raised about psychological and other health needs, violence inside the camps, violence within the community and the psychological state of children.

The information generated should help in better identifying the needs of target groups, improving access to services among those still in camps pending their final return to their areas of origin, and providing those who can return with protection from stigmatization and reprisals. The study stresses adopting a comprehensive, multidimensional and multilateral approach to achieving quality rehabilitation and reintegration programmes.

Structure of the study

After a brief explanation of terms and concepts used, the study is divided into three chapters and a summary. Chapter 1 explores the difficulties of return and the challenges of reintegrating families perceived as associated with ISIS. Chapter 2 considers the situation of returnees from Al-Hol, rehabilitation needs and reintegration challenges. Chapter 3 examines women and girls inside Iraqi prisons and the challenges of disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration.

Beneficiaries

The main beneficiaries targeted by this study are stakeholders closely related to local communities and family institutions, including policymakers, security authorities, immigration institutions, law enforcement personnel, local authorities, psychologists, prison workers, women leaders, and non-governmental and civil society groups working with families perceived as associated with ISIS.

These groups may find this study useful in outlining problems and solutions for returning families, women in particular, including how to mitigate risks of renewed violent extremism through proper reintegration into communities, and how to prepare local communities to accept the return of internally displaced families who do not pose a threat. Other key elements involve providing a fair trial for those with proven involvement with ISIS and offering psychological and intellectual rehabilitation programmes to those found not guilty of affiliation.

International organizations and relevant stakeholders may find inspiration and ideas to develop partnerships and programmes for the rehabilitation and reintegration of families associated with ISIS.

An ISIS-affiliated family from Anbar, Iraq. 2021.

DEFINITIONS

These definitions explain the basic terms used in this study and are not official definitions of UNDP, the Iraqi Government or parties supporting or funding this study.

Armed conflict: An armed confrontation between the armed forces of States (international armed conflict), or between governmental authorities and organized armed groups, or between these groups inside a particular State (non-international armed conflict).[23]

Sectarian violence: Violence committed on ethnic, religious or sectarian grounds that has not reached the threshold of a non-international armed conflict. Sectarian violence, especially tribal violence, can overlap to a large extent with political violence so that one leads to the outbreak of the other.[24]

Displacement: The movement of persons or groups of persons who have been forced to escape or leave their homes to avoid armed conflicts and situations of generalized violence, or natural or human-made disasters, who have not crossed the internationally recognized borders of a country.[25]

Cross-border displacement: The forced movement of people across borders, whether due to conflict, natural disasters or other causes, including development projects, regardless of the legal status of the receiving countries.

Camp: A place far from urban areas where a group of tents or simple buildings, such as PVC houses or cabins, are set up as temporary accommodation for prisoners, or displaced people and refugees escaping acts of violence.[26] The term 'camp' is used throughout the world by a range of international and local organizations to refer to a variety of temporary camps or settlements, including planned or self-settlement camps, and collective centres for the transit, evacuation and hosting of internally displaced persons or migrants to distant areas. The term applies in current and emerging situations, as well as those that arise from natural or human conflicts or disasters—in other words, when displaced persons find themselves forced to find shelter in temporary places.[27]

ISIS families: A term that appeared in Iraq and Syria after the start of operations to expel ISIS from its strongholds. This definition usually refers to one of the following:

- ➔ A family member, the father or the whole family pledged allegiance and participated in logistics or combat activities
- ➔ A family member, the father or the whole family pledged allegiance and did not participate in any activity
- ➔ A family member, the father or the whole family pledged allegiance and coexisted economically or in the same circles with ISIS but did not participate in any actions
- ➔ A family member, the father or the whole family was forced to pledge allegiance and did not take part in any actions
- ➔ A family moved from its place of origin with an individual in one of the aforementioned categories

Persons affiliated with ISIS: All persons (irrespective of current age, relationship, gender, etc.) for whom Iraqi authorities have some responsibility through detention or otherwise, and whom the authorities believe have some contact with an organization classified as terrorist by the United Nations without

presumption or prejudgment about the nature of their relationship with the concerned organization.[28]

Within the broad category of ISIS affiliation in Iraq, there are many different types of association based on physical and social proximity to the organization. These include:

- Iraqi fighters who directly participated in military operations and other acts of violence
- Iraqi civil servants affiliated with ISIS who worked in ISIS administrative and service institutions, including tax departments, municipal services and health care; in many cases, these individuals did not definitively join ISIS but continued to work in the same jobs they had before the occupation
- Iraqi ISIS victims who have been captured or trafficked by ISIS, including thousands of Yazidi women and children
- Iraqis who have family ties to ISIS, whether through blood or marriage, including relatives of the fourth degree and above
- Foreign nationals of all the above categories detained by Iraq, in many cases because their countries of origin are not willing to repatriate them

Return: In the context of internal displacement, this includes movement from the place of displacement to the previous place of residence. In the case of cross-border displacement, it means the movement of displaced persons from the host country to the place of origin.

Returnees: A distinction should be made between 'returning refugees' and 'returning displaced persons.' In internal displacement, the returnee is a person who was in a situation of previous internal displacement and then returned, based on a voluntary and informed choice, in safety and dignity, usually to the former place of residence. Refugees or migrants unable to return to their previous place of residence, or unable to integrate permanently elsewhere, remain displaced. Refugees or former migrants who are forced, after their return, to escape or leave their homes or usual places of residence are also considered internally displaced persons.

Permanent solutions: A situation in which displaced persons no longer have any specific needs for assistance or protection related to their displacement and enjoy their human rights without discrimination based on displacement.[29]

Do no harm: The concept of 'do no harm' refers to the need for humanitarian organizations to reduce harm they may unintentionally cause through their presence and assistance. The scope of these unintentional negative effects can be wide and very complex. Actors in the coordination and management of camps can promote the principle in their work related to gender-based violence, for example, by paying attention to human rights approaches, survivors, the local community and other dimensions.[30]

Rehabilitation and reintegration programmes: The definitions and terminology used by policymakers, practitioners and researchers vary greatly across countries and organizations, and sometimes even within them.[31] As with the concept of violent extremism itself, the United Nations uses the terms 'disengagement', 'rehabilitation', and 'reintegration' in the context of terrorism and violent extremism without providing a specific definition.[32]

In general, reintegration has been defined as the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is basically a social and economic process with an open time frame. It takes place mainly in local communities. It is part of a country's overall development and a national

responsibility but often requires long-term, external assistance.

To create job opportunities and generate income after the end of a conflict, the United Nations in 2009 added the following sentences to the definition of reintegration, linking it to sustainable peace: "(...) the purpose of reintegration programmes is the participation in building sustainable peace, the return of the persons affected by the conflict to civilian life and improvement of material and social conditions. Job opportunities and income generation constitute one of the basic building blocks in building, not only for integrating or accommodating the persons affected by the conflict, but also for the establishment of long-term peace.[33]"

Recent policy developments within the United Nations and other multilateral organizations, especially with respect to returnees associated with listed terrorist organizations, have advanced the framework for screening, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration.[34]

Deradicalization and disengagement: These programmes are defined as: "Any method, activity, or program which aims at reducing individual or collective material or ideological commitment to a group, environment or movement that has been designated as 'extremist' or 'violent extremist'."[35] While deradicalization programmes aim at ensuring ideological and attitudinal changes among individuals, disengagement programmes focus exclusively on behavioural shifts (in other words, the rejection of violence) without aiming at ideological abandonment. The concept of deradicalization refers to actions that envision a process of cognitive re-education to facilitate the abandonment of beliefs that legitimize violence. In contrast, the concept of disengagement evokes a process that aims only at abandoning the use of violence as a framework for expression. In this regard, scientific literature indicates that deradicalization is not an indispensable condition for successful reintegration into society.[36] Indeed, extremist individuals can reject violence as a means of action without abandoning the framework of values, ideas and beliefs that form the basis of extremist engagement.

Gender: According to the World Health Organization, gender refers to "the socially determined roles, behaviors, activities and characteristics that a given society considers appropriate for men and women." UNDP has defined gender as "referring to social characteristics and participation in social activities as an individual in a specific group. Because these characteristics are learned behaviour and conduct, they are changeable and actually change over time and differ across cultures."

Gender relations are those ways in which a culture or society defines the rights, responsibilities and identities of men and women in their relationships with one another. But the term gender is often misunderstood by restricting its meaning to women only. In fact, gender issues include relationships between men and women, their roles, their access to and control of resources, the division of labour and other factors. Gender is not limited to the disparities between women and men and impacts on fertility, family planning, production and many other aspects of social and economic life.[37]

Gender approach: This considers the inclusion of gender issues and needs in all development programmes and projects within development plans. It requires the effective inclusion of women in development activities by clearly addressing patterns of participation and the needs of women and men for assistance in all steps of formulating policies and programmes.

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CHAPTER 1:

THE DIFFICULTIES OF RETURN AND CHALLENGES OF REINTEGRATION AMONG INTERNALLY DISPLACED FAMILIES

The chronology of displacement and return

In 2014, ISIS took control of 20 major Iraqi cities with 5 million people; 982,000 families were displaced from governorates experiencing ISIS attacks.[38]

During the first half of 2014, around 480,000 people were displaced from Anbar governorate.[39]

In June and July 2014, another 505,482 people were displaced, mostly from Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq.[40]

As of August 2014, 728,700 people were displaced from Mount Sinjar, along with several thousand from Nineveh Plain and a number of others because of military attacks in the Saladin area.

With the start of the attack on Mosul on 17 October 2016, 83,000 people fled the city and its surrounding areas within seven weeks, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. This number rose to more than 1 million displaced persons during the confrontations to free the area.

In 2017, new displacements reached 1.4 million, the highest number since the emergence of ISIS. About 28 percent of internally displaced persons were hosted in Kurdistan Regional Government areas, 68 percent were in central Iraq and 4 percent were in the south.

174 displacement camps were established throughout Iraq.

The governorates that hosted the largest number of internally displaced persons were Anbar, Baghdad and Kirkuk.[41]

Some internally displaced persons lived in rented houses or with host families while others stayed in 'critical shelters', including informal camps, places of worship, abandoned buildings or car parks.[42]

With the liberation of Mosul, new displacements decreased.

continue

The chronology of displacement and return

The number of displaced persons by the end of 2020 decreased by 21 percent compared to 2019, with 235,000 people returning to their areas of origin during the year, particularly to Nineveh, Anbar and Saladin governorates.[43]

With the end of the combat operations against ISIS, more than 4.6 million displaced persons returned to their areas of origin.

About 1.2 million persons remain internally displaced.

The number of people perceived as associated with ISIS and unable to return to their areas is estimated at about 250,000, most of whom are women and children.

Summary of key points

➔ After ISIS invaded Iraq, at least 6.1 million people were forced to flee their homes between 2014-2017.[44] The war destroyed homes and schools and disrupted hospitals. Seven governorates were severely affected by the destruction of infrastructure and services.[45] With the end of combat operations against ISIS, more than 4.8 million displaced people have returned to their areas of origin; some face insecurity and limited access to services. About 1.2 million are still internally displaced.[46] About 330,000 are inside camps, mainly in the governorates of Nineveh, Dohuk and Erbil in the areas surrounding the Kurdistan Region. Among displaced persons across the country, 60 percent are from Nineveh governorate.[47]

➔ About 103,000 internally displaced persons live in informal sites outside the official camps and are cut off from public services. These people face great obstacles to finding a solution to displacement, either by returning to their homes or by permanently moving to a new location. They face challenges in accessing basic services, obtaining land-use agreements and finding livelihood opportunities.[48]

➔ Persons who left their areas of origin were displaced in waves. Some left when ISIS reached their areas; others remained and left later, during the military campaign against the organization. Internally displaced persons perceived as associated with ISIS are considered part of the later wave.[49] According to Iraqi experts, families perceived as associated with ISIS are classified into one of three categories.

➔ The first involves families that fled their cities and had their homes looted during ISIS occupation, even if a family member was with the organization. They are welcome to come back to their communities. Such cases were recorded in Mahlabiya, west of Mosul, and Shura and Hammam Al-Aleel, south of Mosul. A second group of families has ISIS members or supporters and reported their relatives to the security forces after the liberation of the city and are beyond suspicion. Such cases are found in Shura and Hammam Al-Aleel. A third

category entails families who pledged allegiance to ISIS and survived and are constantly harassed and displaced.[50] Girls perceived as associated with ISIS are categorized according to the extent to which they were forced to marry an ISIS member or accepted marriage willingly. The first group may be allowed to return to their areas while the return of the second group is rejected.[51]

➔ Since mid-2020, the Iraqi Government has started a campaign to close the camps as part of a plan aimed at finalizing the displacement issue before holding early parliamentary elections, which took place in October 2021. In March 2021, the Government ratified the National Plan for the Return of the Displaced to Their Original Liberated Areas, developed by the Ministry of Planning and Ministry of Immigration and Displacement. The government closed 16 camps in a short period, leaving at least 34,801 internally displaced persons without guaranteeing their ability to return home safely or secure another safe shelter or access to affordable services.[52]

➔ By the end of 2021, the Government had closed all camps except for 28; 26 are in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, which shelters approximately 180,000 displaced persons. These are not expected to close soon.[53] One camp is in Mosul and another in Amiriyat Al-Fallujah. The majority of the displaced are concentrated in camps in the governorates of Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, with about 40,000 families. About 2,300 families are in one of the Mosul camps and 900 families are in the Amiriyat Fallujah camp in Anbar Governorate.[54]

➔ Internally displaced persons face threats to their safety and are exposed to violence and explosive ordnance that has caused many physical and psychological injuries. There are reports of the persecution of those perceived as affiliated to ISIS along with many cases of gender-based violence. Data on families perceived as associated with ISIS are inconsistent, however. According to official Iraqi statistics, one or more members from 14,767 families were affiliated with ISIS in four governorates: Nineveh, Anbar, Saladin and Diyala. These families were displaced to other areas or gathered in special camps following the collapse of ISIS and the liberation of these governorates from its control in mid-2017. They lived in camps and shelters in several governorates, especially the northern and western regions and in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The majority came from the governorates of Nineveh, Saladin, Diyala, Anbar and Kirkuk.

➔ As the fighting eased, some families started to return to their homes. Many quickly returned to the displacement camps, however, for social, economic and other reasons. Moreover, the rapid closure of some camps during 2020 led to forced or coerced returns to areas of origin. Due to fear of reprisals, lack of access to safe and decent housing,[55] bad economic conditions and poor and scarce services, many returned to the camps.[56] In some cases, families were not allowed to return due to the closure policy. When they were allowed to return, they were not registered and consequently no longer had access to services and humanitarian aid.[57]

➔ With the deterioration in livelihood opportunities, a large number of displaced persons in the camps resorted to managing by selling their means of transportation or what

they received from subsidies and foodstuffs.[58] The lack or absence of documents led to children deprived of registration in the public school system after the camps were closed.[59] Many camp residents are in female-headed families. The number of women in all Iraqi displacement camps is about 144,203.[60] They face official obstacles to their return and are rejected by society in their areas of origin. Many of those interviewed for this study stressed that there is nothing more severe or more dangerous than the label 'ISIS woman' and society's rejection of you and your children who are not guilty. In addition to the obstacles that prevent the return of the people in a safe, dignified and sustainable way, women are exposed to more risks after the closure of the camps; many will end up homeless or living in shelters fraught with dangers and violations.

➔ Families perceived as associated with ISIS, most of whom are women and children, suffer from a lack of health, education and living services. They live in a state of constant fear around their continued presence in the camps and with the ongoing threat of death or reprisals if they try to return to their homes. Calling them 'ISIS families' turns them into an abandoned class subject to collective punishment. This situation fuels resentment and anger. Without legitimate future prospects, they may be vulnerable to recruitment for organized violence, including for criminal, insurgent or terrorist groups.

➔ Avoiding these scenarios requires addressing the crisis of families perceived as associated with ISIS by removing formal and informal obstacles to their return to their areas of origin, in consultation with local authorities and clan leaders, and with the participation of civil society representatives.

Addressing the causes of the societal rejection of families and bringing viewpoints closer together can come by intensifying efforts to broker societal reconciliation. This crisis should be approached from the perspective that it particularly affects women, children and female-headed families.

Obstacles to the return of families perceived as associated with ISIS

There is no one agreed definition of the term 'ISIS families.' There are no agreed official figures for the numbers of the families still stuck inside the camps or in unofficial sites throughout the country. The term 'ISIS families', although widely used, is misleading and carries a great deal of stigma.

Overall, authorities and communities classify persons as being from 'ISIS families' based on suspicions that one of their relatives was an ISIS member or sympathizer. These classifications are often applied in the absence of any evidence that these families have personally shown sympathy for ISIS, joined it or committed a crime in its name. There is no way for these families to challenge this description. Many may be distant relatives of ISIS suspects as uncles, cousins and so on.

With the return of more displaced people to their areas of origin, Iraqis increasingly assume that anyone still living in the camps has an association with ISIS.[61] As a result, there is a risk that public resentment will extend to include all displaced persons living in the camps.

The de facto ban on returns is a form of punishment against those whom security forces, armed militias and

local communities perceive as having sympathized with ISIS or who have a relative affiliated with or sympathetic to ISIS. Some areas welcomed the return of families, such as Bashiqa and Mahlabiya, east and west of Mosul. Other areas rejected their return, except for a very few cases, such as the Shura and Qayyarah districts, south of Mosul. In other areas, there is an absolute rejection of returns. In a press conference on 31 January 2021, a senior commander from the Anbar Operations Command[62] criticized security forces and community leaders for allowing families with a perceived ISIS affiliation to return to their areas of origin and apply for compensation. He said his command would continue to 'trace' and 'chase' families believed to be affiliated with ISIS to ensure that they received no compensation for damages to their property. He also threatened to arrest security forces and community leaders who supported their demands for compensation and said: "Whoever killed us and destroyed our homes will not be allowed to receive any money from the state."[63]

In some cases, although some families returned to their homes, there was a reverse displacement to the camps due to challenges arising from the lack of public services such as for electricity and water as well as destroyed homes. This was in addition to clan-related problems and fears of reprisals. These obstacles remain a major impediment to returns.[64]

The obstacles to the return of families perceived as associated with ISIS can be summarized in four categories: local communities' rejection of their return, administrative obstacles, living conditions and the return of ISIS.

Rejection by local communities

The motives that prompted some people to support or join ISIS are numerous and complex. Sometimes the motivation was ideological or there was a desire for material gains.[65] At other times, young men and women were forced into compulsory conscription. In some areas, the people did not support ISIS, but they were not inclined to fight against it.[66] In other areas, local support for the organization was based on social and economic factors. Additional reasons varied from corruption in the justice system to high unemployment rates, especially among young people to whom ISIS offered economic incentives.[67]

After the defeat of the organization and its expulsion from its strongholds, many families perceived as associated with it were forced to flee their areas. After nearly five years, many difficulties prevent their return. The obstacles differ from one area to another. Tribes in the Hatra region, south-west of Nineveh, say that they do not believe in punishing relatives of ISIS members just because of family ties. People affected by ISIS terrorism and brutal crimes see silence in the face of violations by relatives and the failure to intervene as a reason to consider families as partners to their sons and to refuse to allow them to return.

In Tal Afar, west of Nineveh, the Popular Mobilization Forces stipulated that in return for allowing the families to come back, the Government would provide services to families of victims. This prompted victims' families to express their anger over the delay in achieving justice or obtaining compensation. In this case, the authorities face two problems: satisfying the families of the

victims and returning the families of perpetrators. Sinjar district, in Nineveh governorate, remains torn apart by the division between its Arab and Yazidi populations as the Yazidis, who survived the massacre perpetrated by ISIS, reject the return of their Arab neighbours, whom they accuse of being involved in the kidnappings and killings. In other areas, fault lines may be tribal or between Sunni and Shiite populations, depending on history and demographic composition.

In mid-2018, in the Sinsil district in Diyala governorate, the Popular Mobilization Forces told local families willing to return to their homes that the most capable man in his family should join a local armed unit, without pay, to patrol and guard the neighborhood.[68] In Kirkuk, officials believe that there are no legal, clan-related or economic obstacles to the return of families. They say that the Sunni Arab tribes, Sunni Turkmen and Kurds support the return of families. The main problem lies in the opposition of the Shiite Turkmen and Popular Mobilization Forces. Some attempts to return families in the villages of Amerli, Salman Pak, Daquq, Al Bashir, Dibis and Tuzkhurmatu have failed. The main stumbling blocks are the security concerns of the Popular Mobilization Forces, particularly the Shiite Turkmen, even though the families involved have been vetted by the National Security Advisory and Iraqi Military Intelligence.[69]

In Saladin governorate, the clans and families of ISIS victims still do not allow talk about the return of families and their integration into society. Even those who have obtained security and judicial clearances are not welcome to return. In Diyala, family returns have been halted due to legal, economic, clan-related, social and security obstacles. With the increase in ISIS attacks, Diyala Operations Command and the Popular Mobilization Forces advised rejecting returns until retaliatory operations stop.

In some areas, the feelings behind societal rejection may be local and sometimes personal. Some women confirmed that their local communities stipulated that, in return for allowing them to come back to their homes, they abandon their male children even if the boy is only one day old.[70] The reasons for rejection and hostility vary not just from one district to another but even from one residential group to another. Residents of areas controlled by ISIS say that they remember everyone who joined or helped ISIS. Sometimes, allegations of these links can be malicious and involve abuse.[71] Some may make allegations due to old grudges.[72]

In other areas, there are other methods of tracing families. In late January 2019, authorities in the town of Garma, north-east of Fallujah in Anbar governorate, issued special pink identity cards to at least 200 families of relatives of suspected ISIS members. In this case, families are allowed to go home and can use the documents to travel across checkpoints. But they will be permanently marked with pink cards and subjected to harassment, stigmatization and sometimes violations.

Administrative obstacles

The difficulty of obtaining civil documents: As a result of the long conflict, cases of loss, theft or confiscation of civil documents remain frequent. In addition, those who lived under ISIS hold documents that are not recognized by the Iraqi Government. Iraqi law requires obtaining civil documents from the person's area of origin. Displaced families often cannot reach their areas to obtain documents because they are not welcome and

fear reprisals. Such documents allow freedom of movement and access to basic services, including health and education,[73] and civil services, such as recognition of marital status, the parentage of children, property rights, job opportunities and social protection benefits.

Internally displaced persons should register with the Ministry of Migration and Displacement to receive one-time government assistance of 1 million Iraqi dinars, in addition to any other assistance that may be provided during the crisis. Officially, this registration requires a certificate of citizenship, civil ID, public distribution system card and residence card. In many areas, non-governmental organizations are required to use beneficiary lists provided by the Ministry of Immigration. This means that displaced families unable to produce these documents cannot obtain locally provided humanitarian assistance.

Families without civil documents are more vulnerable to marginalization, harassment and violations, including sexual and gender-based violence.[74] In some cases, the lack of documents limits freedom of movement and increases the risk of arrest and detention. The bureaucratic procedures for requesting the reissuance of identity documents, in addition to being complex, are not standardized. They are fraught with allegations of corruption, bribery and mediation[75] and require going to precarious places with security concerns, checkpoints and other constraints. These impose insurmountable limitations on the ability of displaced families to access documents to meet basic needs and stay safe.

Security clearances: In addition to the complexities and bureaucracy that characterize the Iraqi administration, there are numerous additional administrative obstacles that prevent families perceived as associated with ISIS from obtaining security clearances and documents, including their identity cards and birth certificates for their children. This leave thousands of children without identity and consequently without the right to education and citizenship. These obstacles hinder the safe return of families to their homes and their access to social welfare benefits and government services.

A 'security clearance' is considered mandatory for internally displaced persons willing to obtain a set of official documents, including civil certificates that prove their identity and nationality.[76] Without this clearance, Iraqis (especially in liberated areas) are not allowed to move freely inside their country. They cannot be employed, rent property, qualify for any government benefits such as health care or obtain birth and death certificates. Without a security clearance, children born in areas formerly controlled by ISIS cannot be registered. It is also not possible to obtain a number of public transactions and services, including health care and education.[77]

The clearance involves several security agencies and depends on the testimony of the *mukhtar* in the displaced person's town or neighbourhood. As part of the licensing process, the security services require the *mukhtar* to provide a certificate that the person is not associated with ISIS, after consultation with residents in the area.[78] Without this certificate, displaced people cannot return to their areas of origin. In some cases, families have been unable to return because they cannot find anyone to testify that they did not belong to ISIS.[79]

Displaced female-headed families face greater administrative obstacles due to legal complications and the social status of women linked to tribal customs and traditions. Sometimes a woman cannot, on her own, obtain a security clearance or civil documents for herself and her children. Women with husbands who have been arrested, are wanted by the security forces or are missing and whose fate is unknown, find themselves in serious trouble. They cannot obtain a security clearance and thus cannot renew their documents and obtain their civil rights.

Acquittal: One practical solution has emerged to obtain a security clearance for relatives of persons perceived as associated with ISIS. Local leaders in Anbar persuaded the judiciary to agree that if the wife, father, sister or other relative of a dead or missing ISIS member lodges a criminal complaint against that person because of his ISIS membership, the judge would issue a document giving them the green light for the security clearance.

This practice is called 'acquittal'. It has no basis in Iraqi law but is a custom adopted by the judiciary. In various parts of Nineveh, the procedure faced tribal rejection due to the concept of revenge, however. In other areas, even after obtaining acquittal, many families accused of being associated with ISIS are ostracized, threatened and assaulted. Some Iraqi organizations help women to obtain acquittal. But many human rights organizations, international agencies and donors refuse to do so because they believe that this process may violate the 'do no harm' principle. The acquittal stigmatizes women who perform the operation and blames others.

For wives who resort to 'acquittal' to return to their areas, the procedure remains fraught with burdens and risks. A statement that a detained or missing husband was an accomplice to ISIS puts him at risk. It becomes a tacit admission that stigmatizes the whole family and may endanger the wife. Obtaining an acquittal can also undermine a woman's rights to inheritance and other entitlements under Iraqi law and risk causing a conflict with her husband's family. The wife may face threats of violent retaliation or the removal of her children. In some cases, wives have been able to obtain acquittal but not a divorce ruling from a husband who is missing or died more than five years ago.[80]

In some cases, women obtain acquittal but not all the administrative documents they need. Four administrative documents in Iraq are considered the golden square: the personal card, the citizenship certificate, the housing card and the ration card. These are needed to activate civil rights (the right to education for children, housing, rent, aid payments, obtaining a passport, etc.). Preventing women from obtaining one or more of the four documents is considered a form of punishment as it prevents them from reintegrating into society.

Women who are not willing to disavow their husbands or relatives will not be able to obtain a security clearance. Even if they manage to obtain the clearance and renew their personal documents, they may not be able, in the absence of their husbands, to obtain basic documents for their children. If the husband is detained under Article 4 of the Anti-Terrorism Law, the wife will not receive a residence card in his name and will not be able to request any civil

documents let alone obtain housing under a legal lease. With or without the security clearance, their communities will refuse their return. If families do return, permanent solutions are not guaranteed.

Identification documents: The Iraqi Constitution guarantees that anyone born to an Iraqi father or mother has the right to obtain Iraqi citizenship and register it in official departments. Most displaced families are completely or partially separated from each other, which makes it difficult to prove marriage and parentage. During ISIS's control, many marriages took place according to the organization's provisions or outside the court, either through an oral contract or by a cleric. In some cases, the husband died, went missing or was arrested, which makes it difficult for the woman to certify the marriage, prove the parentage of the children and complete official procedures. Most displaced persons live in environments or camps that are far from the courts, which complicates access, in addition to their fear of arrest and the imposition of some restrictions by local authorities.

If procedures for issuing identification documents for children are not completed, they lose their right to education, the opportunity to work and exercise public rights, and even the right to citizenship. One displaced woman said that her 5-year-old son, who was born in an ISIS hospital, cannot obtain a valid Iraqi birth certificate without his father's consent. With her husband's death not officially declared, she still needs his signature on everything, including proof of parentage and for enrolling her son in school. Another displaced woman, who holds Jordanian nationality and has four children from an Iraqi husband, says that she cannot return to Jordan after the death of her husband because three of her children are without identity cards. She lives inside the camp because she has no one in Iraq and will not return to her country without her children.[81]

Economic and living challenges

The slow reconstruction process: Some returning families suffer from the absence of income, decent houses and job opportunities. Infrastructure may be nearly destroyed. In some cases, the homes of ISIS members were partially or completely destroyed to prevent their families from returning.[82] Reconstruction needs are huge. While more than 27,663 homes are undergoing basic rehabilitation or emergency repairs,[83] this number represents only 13 percent of the more than 200,000 homes assessed as severely or completely destroyed.[84] Development and humanitarian programmes are not authorized to undertake major reform projects of the required scale in Iraq, as these require very large resources.

Overall, the reconstruction process is widely seen as slow and dependent on complex administrative procedures. For many people, faltering reconstruction means that their homes remain in a state of destruction, even as they lack decent living opportunities and public services.[85] One family managed to return to their home but found it without furniture.[86] During its rule, ISIS seized and sold property, which led to property disputes.

Delayed payment of compensation: At the meeting of the National Security Agents Council on 11 December 2017, the Iraqi Government commissioned the Deputy Minister of Migration and Displacement to prepare a specialized paper on cooperating with the international community to provide financial grants to families who return

to their areas. It recommended that the National Security Service expedite procedures for issuing security approvals and determine the final position of a security audit to release employee salaries that had been suspended in areas liberated from ISIS. The paper examined the problems facing ISIS members prevented from returning for clan-related and security reasons. It looked at cases where security services are responsible for security audits of displaced persons who have security indicators, but no arrest warrants issued against them and are not allowed to return to their areas to refer these cases to the National Intelligence Coordination Commission. It is also suggested to referring social and other service recommendations to the concerned authorities to help expedite the return of displaced persons.[87] The compensation process established by the Government for those whose homes were destroyed in the fighting is complex and marred by nepotism and corruption.[88]

Local authorities apply the Compensation Law No. 20 of 2009, as amended by Law 57/2015 and Law 2/2020 (the Compensation Law), which provides compensation to all citizens, including internally displaced persons and returnees, for damages inflicted upon them due to military operations or terrorist acts. The law covers compensation for the destruction of property, injury or loss of life, irrespective of the cause of the destruction and the belligerent party involved. For families with a perceived affiliation with ISIS, this law is applied in a discriminatory manner, however.[89] Many families have submitted applications for compensation but have not yet received it.[90] The authorities prevent some families with a member listed as wanted for his affiliation with ISIS from submitting applications. As a result, many of these families will not have the necessary resources to rebuild their homes.

Poor provision of basic necessities: Among the families who return, only a small share live in their homes while the rest are tenants or residents with other families or live in unfinished and abandoned buildings.[91] Some fear expulsion by security forces or their local communities because of their perceived affiliation with ISIS. They said they do not get enough food or water to meet their basic needs.[92] Some have returned to their areas of origin only to find their homes had been seized or there were attempts to seize them by influential people on the pretext that the families are associated with ISIS.[93] Some have been forced to rent a house on the same street as their house, waiting for the law to provide justice. In some cases, the payment of salaries has been delayed for several months, a situation further complicated by the loss of documents and the inability of government departments to communicate with counterparts to provide logistics services to the camps.[94] In many cases, families have lost their breadwinners in the war or their members have suffered injuries that caused a disability. In this case, they prefer camp life. At least they find shelter and receive a regular package of food allowances.[95]

Stigmatization and the desire for revenge: Families returning to their areas of residence have suffered from two difficulties at the same time: the bitterness of displacement, which forced them to leave their homes, and the bitterness of return to areas from which they had been displaced amid stigmatization, accusations and the desire for revenge. This is in addition to fragile living conditions and lost

properties and livelihoods. In many conflict-affected areas, residents or security forces marked the homes of families perceived as affiliated with ISIS with an 'X'[96] or graffiti indicating ISIS. Others engaged in violent reprisals.[97] One family said members were unable to mix with the community because of the X mark, which has imposed a psychological stigma.[98] In some cases, schools have refused to enrol children with family ties to ISIS. Even some children who have managed to get into school have been bullied so severely that they felt compelled to drop out.[99] Some schools refuse to receive children from families with autism and psychological problems.[100] They also suffer from bullying within the community.

Gender-based violations: For women supporting their household, getting a job is a major challenge. Employers who check women's backgrounds often consult local *mukhtars,* who report on the women's alleged links to ISIS. Usually, they are not employed. Many women can only find economic opportunities with the support of humanitarian organizations, which are also under pressure from local communities not to employ them. In some cases, women are employed with meager salaries as a kind of exploitation of their social and economic status.[101] All these difficulties encourage some families supported by women to stick to life in the camps.

In some cases, isolated and economically needy women have been subjected to sexual abuse and exploitation by camp authorities or local security authorities. Some women are forced to engage in sexual relations with men in exchange for money, humanitarian aid or protection from other men.[102] It is difficult to measure the scope of this problem but violations occur in some camps.[103] Some testimonies indicate that the stereotype that these women are from families affiliated with ISIS makes it easier to exploit them. Employees of government departments or security forces may exploit some pregnant widows or those who have lost documents during displacement when they try to secure civil documents for their children.[104]

ISIS widely used rape as a weapon of war. Human Rights Watch reported that about 70 percent of women and girls examined in a health facility in Dohuk appeared to have been raped by ISIS members. All showed signs of severe psychological distress due to the physical assault. After the defeat of the organization, women survivors struggle with stigma and discrimination. In addition to their suffering while in captivity under ISIS, they now face a society that views their rape or assault as a 'disgrace'. Some had to give up children born as a result of their abduction to return to their homes. According to Pramila Patten, the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on *Sexual Violence* in *Conflict*, many girls released from ISIS face stigma and are locked in their tents, unable to benefit from any potential support services. With stigma and feelings of shame and guilt, they may resort to self-harm or even suicide.

Displacement generally amplifies pre-existing vulnerabilities and inequalities. Since women in Iraq are economically, legally, politically and socially less empowered than men, those who are displaced are doubly disadvantaged. Under unjust laws, religious traditions and clannish customs, separation from their families, community and home can mean that women have no possibility to re-establish themselves elsewhere. Women may not be able to receive assistance in cases where the family head is listed as the only beneficiary or recipient and may not be able to

claim former homes without a husband.[105] Some women who have returned to their homes have faced evictions, forced displacement, looting, threats, ill-treatment and sexual harassment. In some cases, the word 'ISIS' was written on their homes, the homes were demolished or electricity, water and other services were cut off. Widows of ISIS members are deprived of government benefits such as pensions.

Physical and psychological health: The living conditions of women in camps for internally displaced people are not conducive to their physical and psychological health due to insufficient supplies and services, harsh weather conditions, inadequate safety and hygiene, the use of shared facilities and the severe lack of privacy, which hampers the ability to maintain personal hygiene. Women's access to reproductive health care is greatly challenged by displacement. It is mostly provided by mobile medical teams who visit the camps at very extended intervals due to the large size and geographical spread.

The Iraqi Government has approved a strategy to provide health, preventive and curative services to displaced people and returnees in liberated areas since 2014. It reported providing psychological and social support to at least 5,000 displaced returnees in the liberated governorates. On the other hand, data from the World Health Organization showed that the average psychiatrist working in the mental health sector is 0.37 per 100,000 citizens.[106] A study of 668 women and girls who escaped from ISIS reported that only one was receiving continuous care while the rest reported suffering from various forms of breakdown and trauma (insomnia, anxiety, flashbacks, etc.).[107]

Many testimonies indicate that girls were sexually harassed and raped, experienced early marriage and lived in very harsh life conditions of poverty and destitution. Many suffered from psychological disorders and obsessive-compulsive disorder due to conflict and displacement. For children, access to food, medical care, education and other basic rights and services is limited. Although many have been subjected to extreme violence or physical, sexual or psychological abuse, the camps are unable to provide adequate assistance for reintegration and rehabilitation, including through psychosocial support or post-traumatic counselling.[108]

COVID-19 implications: COVID-19 containment measures have restricted the movement of internally displaced persons.[109] In some cases, families have been further prevented from returning given that they are at particular risk of infection. Such measures and the closure of camps have resulted in unexpected secondary displacement, making it difficult for the displaced to gain livelihoods and increasing their vulnerability in urban and semi-urban areas where they face difficult conditions.[110] Conditions are particularly harsh in the districts of Sinjar, Tal Afar and Baaj in Nineveh governorate, in the districts of Balad, Baiji and Al-Tuz in Saladin governorate, and in the districts of Heet, Ramadi and Fallujah in Anbar governorate.[111]

The threat of ISIS returning

Since the fall of Baghouz in March 2019 and until March 2020, ISIS has claimed nearly 2,000 terrorist attacks in Iraq and Syria. Deir Al-Zor governorate in Syria witnessed 580 attacks and Diyala governorate in Iraq saw 452 attacks.

ISIS forces in these areas seem stronger and more capable. The organization's insurgency campaign aims to slow reconstruction and contribute to continued chaos and instability. Operations increased in several Iraqi areas and cities in 2021. ISIS currently targets security forces, power stations, infrastructure and civilian elements in a way that indicates the continuing danger posed by its remnants in northern Iraq and north-eastern Syria.

Despite the presence of ISIS in remote areas of Iraq, it classifies the whole of Iraq as one 'province'. Its cells carry out hit-and-run operations to undermine vital infrastructure projects, fuel sectarian divisions and social grievances, and gain media coverage.[112] In early 2021, ISIS targeted Baghdad, the Iraqi capital, with two double attacks in a market in Al-Tayaran Square that led to the death of at least 32 people. Later in the year, ISIS launched attacks against Iraqi forces and some Popular Mobilization brigades in the governorates of Diyala and Saladin. This was met by preventive measures by Iraqi forces to abort any reestablishment of the organization. Between 28 November and 5 December 2021, the organization launched three violent attacks on the Peshmerga forces, killing 17 members and 3 civilians, according to official figures. The three attacks occurred in areas with security gaps separating the Peshmerga and the federal forces, the result of tensions between the two sides following the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's 2017 referendum on succession from Iraq.

The long-term strategy of ISIS focuses on rural insurgency based on hit-and-run tactics against government structures and other targets. The organization adopted this tactic to prove that nothing is beyond its reach and to prevent opposition to its rule. It uses targeted assassinations against Sunnis who cooperate with government forces, and systematically attacks village leaders and other civilians who have cooperated with armed groups and anti-ISIS forces.

An estimated 10,000 ISIS members still circulate in Iraq and Syria. These constitute sleeper cells that have abandoned the 'caliphate' project in favour of lone wolf operations. The organization is gradually trying to return to its old strongholds in Iraq, especially after attempts by ISIS militants to attack security points and assassinate local leaders to strengthen and grow its ranks. Iraqi intelligence monitored an unusual public appearance of more than 50 ISIS members in September 2021 between Kirkuk, Diyala and Nineveh in northern Iraq.

Systematic attacks, reprisals carried out by ISIS and fears of its re-emergence in Iraq have further complicated the return of families with a perceived association with the organization, particularly in communities affected by its crimes. Earlier, a high-ranking Iraqi government official warned that families associated with ISIS could coordinate with ISIS members to facilitate terrorist attacks.[113] Iraqi intelligence and security officials have linked the increase in attacks to the return of families, although little or no data are available to confirm this.[114]

Interviews have suggested that increased ISIS activity may affect communities' willingness to allow the return and reintegration of families with a perceived association.[115] Whenever there is a new terrorist attack, rejection of the return of ISIS families increases, indicating how the re-emergence of ISIS has made the broader society more cautious. Other opinions indicated that "the re-emergence of the organization does not affect society's attitudes

towards the families it is perceived to be associated with because the society strongly rejects the extremist ideology, and those with links to ISIS are very keen to comply with the security restrictions and fear losing everything again."[116] Some evidence suggests that the re-emergence of ISIS may negatively affect prospects for the return and reintegration of families perceived as associated with it.

The apparent relationship between the return of ISIS and terrorist activities and the return of families perceived as associated with the organization requires closer scrutiny. If there is a link between families and ISIS, this represents a major security challenge, whether these families return to their villages and towns or remain together in one camp. If there is not a link, assuming families are tied to terrorist activities is also a concern as it may lead to greater injustice and the exclusion of a large segment of the Iraqi population. Both scenarios represent a security concern that requires rapid intervention and support from all countries and non-governmental organizations interested in Iraq and the stability of the region.

Challenges of reintegrating families with a perceived association with ISIS

To a large extent, the Iraqi Government has dealt with the crisis of internally displaced people in a decentralized manner. The Kurdistan Regional Government and affected governorates have managed it with relative independence. In 2004, the Iraqi Government established a Federal Ministry of Migration and Displacement, and in 2014, it created a higher committee to address the issues of internally displaced persons. The commission received significant financial resources but was widely criticized for mismanagement and corruption.[117] Despite the Government's assertion that it would respond to internally displaced persons in ways that would achieve justice and security and rebuild the social fabric, there has been insufficient focus on reintegration. Instead, the strategy has been to encourage returns and expedite the closure of camps after stabilizing the areas of origin of displaced persons, and to delegate reconciliation to local administrations. This may lead to negative results, including the obstruction of returns and reverse returns.

With limited support for livelihoods, slow infrastructure restoration, faltering reconciliation and other initiatives necessary to accept returns and the absence of conditions for sustainable returns, many families are unable to go back to their areas. At the same time, they need support, including through greater efforts to identify their needs in formal and informal camps, pending their return and reintegration.

The return of families in particular requires clear political decisions followed by accurate implementation and follow-up, and an integrated strategy with social, economic, educational, cultural and legal dimensions. The alternative would be social stigmatization of families that may negatively affect social cohesion efforts and break trust, especially among women and children, in their surroundings and the values of peace, humanity and coexistence. This may lead to more frustration and a growing sense of malice and hatred towards society.

Closing the displacement file under any circumstances is not warranted—

nor is assembling families perceived as associated with ISIS in their own camps. What is required is to create a community environment that allows the return of displaced persons, including families, and to ensure that they can settle again safely, whether by going back to their homes or to any other place. This means they must have access to essentials such as food, water, shelter, education and health. A complementary support would be compensating families affected by the brutality of ISIS, which creates a suitable space for broad societal reconciliation.

Continued collective punishment of families perceived as associated with ISIS, in parallel with the rapid closure of the camps, which are currently the only refuge for thousands of people, could displace thousands of women and children and endanger their lives. They cannot be held responsible for crimes they did not commit. If their problem is not resolved now, it will become more complex in the future. With the Iraqi authorities transferring the remainder of displaced persons to a smaller number of camps where harsher conditions seemingly prevail, and where residents are mainly from families with a perceived association with ISIS, these families will face prolonged difficulties that may prepare the ground for more episodes of violence in the future. To prevent this outcome, the Iraqi Government should exert more efforts to avoid subjecting families to collective punishment because of the crimes of some members or because they believe they belong to a terrorist organization. The process of returning them to their areas should be dignified, safe and sustainable.

Risks of not returning and reintegrating

The facts on the ground as well as the statements of dozens of officials and the testimonies of families and victims reveal the extent of the crisis among families perceived as associated with ISIS. They were part of the community and now they are rejected by it, a gap that undercuts social cohesion now and in the future. Continuing this situation and creating new grievances will deepen divisions.

The refusal to allow the return of families and the failure to take measures to integrate them into society in a safe and healthy way leaves them at risk of becoming a permanent excluded class. Denying them the opportunity to live as ordinary citizens who enjoy their civil rights and abide by the law will make them feel oppressed, excluded and marginalized. They may see this as a result of poor governance and become targets for recruitment by criminal gangs or remnants of ISIS or any other organization that might come after it.

Creating new grievances: In Iraq, poor governance that results in real or perceived injustice is a major driver of conflict. When the Government neglects or fails to address basic grievances and mismanagement in areas where the population feels marginalized, this creates an environment conducive to incubating extremism. This was an important factor in helping ISIS control parts of Iraq. In contrast, if people who feel marginalized believe that the Government will be more responsive, accountable and just, support for armed violence and extremist groups will likely

decline.[118] When ISIS provided public services in areas under its control, such as in Mosul, for example, this generated some local support. By the time Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki resigned in August 2014, this support had fallen from 49 to 26 percent.[119] This change highlights the role of governance in public support for or rejection of armed opposition. On 16 June 2020, on the sixth anniversary of the ISIS takeover of Mosul, Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi visited the city and its surroundings[120] and emphasized that Iraq would not repeat the corruption and mismanagement that allowed the rise of ISIS.[121]

Abandoning families and leaving them in a vulnerable position will make them easy prey in the hands of violent extremist groups, however, which will effectively exploit their sense of deprivation and marginalization to recruit them or gain their support, as they did before. The most urgent facet of this problem is the plight of women, who are subjected to violence, harassment, threats and rape, and children, who spend their formative years in camps.

Extremism among women: There is increasing interest in recruiting women into violent extremist groups. Grievances related to gender-based violence, stigma and marginalization, a difficult socioeconomic situation that produces psychological anxiety, and a sense of isolation, injustice and frustration[122] all drive women to adopt extremist ideology and participate in diverse acts of violent extremism. Feelings of frustration, fear and anxiety accumulate in women and girls during and after conflict, especially those who feel persecuted in their family and social environment. Some women aspire to forget these 'traumas' by breaking with their world and rushing headlong into a newone.[123]

In some cases, widowed women perceived as associated with ISIS, subject to stigmatization and social rejection, and exposed to poor social and economic conditions are targeted by violent extremist organizations. They exploit feelings of anger and a desire for revenge, motivating these women to work as spies within local communities or as recruiters and female recruits, or to play other roles. Often these women are more violent and motivated after the murder of their husbands, sons or fathers, and the accompanying social rejection.[124] Feelings of grief and loss transform into a desire for revenge that leads them to volunteer for violent extremist groups, take leadership positions within them and carry out acts including suicide operations.[125]

Child recruitment: Children who continue living in camps without future prospects are at risk of being exploited or becoming tools in the hands of violent parties. While some Iraqis worry that these children are from core ISIS elements or that they have imbibed the organization's ideas as normal and thus pose a potential danger, it is difficult to see how isolating them in camps will prevent risks. For the sake of the children and for the stability of Iraq in the future, these children need identity cards, psychological rehabilitation and guaranteed access to education and health care and social reintegration. There is a big difference between children growing up in a reconciled society that considers them a part of it and growing up trapped in camps and constantly thinking about revenge.

Displaced persons and refugees suffer from high rates of psychological and mental disorders.[126] Continuous insecurity may exacerbate post-traumatic stress disorder in children as the absence of permanence and a sense of security prevents traumatized

children from absorbing the events they have witnessed. Under these difficult psychological and living conditions, marginalizing displaced children means destroying their future and raises the possibility of them becoming terrorists and criminals.

There is a fear that families perceived as affiliated with ISIS may have adopted the organization's ideas. Iraqi officials often suggest solutions that presuppose the need for a rehabilitation or deradicalization programme.[127] Without accurate studies and data, however, nothing can confirm or deny the extent to which families, especially women and children, are affected by extremist ideology. This possibility remains valid but requires comprehensive treatment based on studying the case of each family separately. In general, the paradox lies in the fact that the same policies that discourage the return of families, for various reasons, including security, threaten to exacerbate factors that lead to extremism and threats that the government is supposed to combat. The experience of conflict and displacement, coupled with injustice, exclusion, a lack of opportunities, the absence of education and health care and increased unemployment, may make calls of violent extremist organizations and criminal groups, in general, more acceptable to some groups.

Although Iraq should not leave its citizens in a state of prolonged displacement, the rapid closure of the camps and the forced return of displaced persons exposes some families to reprisals, stigmatization and marginalization. The Government and its international partners should make greater efforts to ensure that local communities accept families before closing the camps or gathering them all in one camp for 'ISIS families'.

Proposed measures to facilitate return and reintegration

Previous studies, reports, testimonies and statements affirm that Iraqi society is more inclined to accept returnees who fled from ISIS than those who remained and lived under the organization and fled later after its defeat. This reflects an assumption that those who did not flee from ISIS are supporters or collaborators. This view is the basis for rejecting the return of thousands of displaced persons while depriving them of civil documents and their most basic human rights. If not resolved now in a comprehensive and proper manner, this situation may pose a great danger in the future.

To avoid this scenario, policymakers, donors and other actors should take a series of actions. First, it is important to correct the mistaken perception that those who did not flee ISIS control are automatically collaborators or supporters. People remained in their areas despite ISIS for many reasons, such as their surrender to the status quo, their deep attachment to their homes and lands, the lack of resources to move, fear of the organization or because they were compelled to stay. Removing the stigma against these people will require combined efforts and cooperation among the Government, local authorities, media, civil society and humanitarian and peacebuilding organizations, with support from international organizations and donors. Religious leaders, clan elders, community leaders and influencers can help shift change attitudes towards coexistence.

As this study showed, official and unofficial obstacles block the return of families. The Iraqi Government and its partner international organizations and donors

should consider informal obstacles that have received less attention. Resolving these calls for more consultations with representatives of local communities, clan leaders and *mukhtars* in the areas of origin of displaced persons. It requires sensitizing people on the danger of long-term displacement for the future security and stability of Iraq, and the importance of reintegrating families that do not pose a security threat. The nature of consultations and agreements on return will vary from one region to another, given tribal traditions and the degree of harm and particular grievances in different localities. Some communities may demand that families go through 'psychological rehabilitation' programmes as a prerequisite for accepting return; other communities may demand reparations first. It is important to reach settlements and reconciliation that guarantee the speedy and safe return of families.

Objections to returns may be due to strong emotions after the shock of the invasion of ISIS, its brutal crimes against people and the pressures of the war of liberation. Addressing the resulting anxiety is not easy or simple. Iraqis in the occupied areas have gone through a harsh experience and terrible psychological trauma and see some of their neighbours and acquaintances as involved in it. Only a few years have passed; processes to dissipate anger or pain have moved slowly. For example, the Government was late in paying the compensation it promised to those who suffered during the war against ISIS.[128] Such a delay intensifies the rejection of the return of families perceived as associated with ISIS and contributes to non-acceptance of those who have already returned.

Compensation for damages may be the main intervention for the Government to repair injustice and alleviate resentment. The compensation plan, if implemented transparently, can promote the social and economic recovery of people affected by the crimes of ISIS as well as displaced persons, ensure sustainable returns and restore confidence between local communities and the Government and among local communities. Compensation for affected persons and returnees means not just financial grants but also investment in public services, including infrastructure, education and health care, and in job opportunities for youth and the capacities and empowerment of women heads of families. This would both facilitate returns and reduce tensions.

The authorities should communicate with families in the camps and other places to help them obtain or renew documents, prove marriage and parentage, and gain the necessary assistance. This requires allocating an appropriate budget each year and establishing oversight mechanisms to ensure the correct and equitable disbursement of funds and humanitarian aid. Another possibility is to explore legal and administrative amendments that would allow displaced women to obtain civil documents for themselves and their children independently of their missing or imprisoned husbands. This may mean separating security clearance procedures from access to civil documents or drafting exceptional laws to enable women to obtain basic documents for their children in the absence of a father. Providing financial support to women should give them greater autonomy in studying their legal options and choosing where to live, whether in their communities of origin or other areas, and in securing housing and paying living expenses.

It is critical to provide security protection to displaced women inside the camps and prevent violations such

as trafficking, bargaining and blackmail. Any party that tries to harm or blackmail women in any way should be held accountable.

Investing in building the capacities of displaced women and heads of families and empowering them economically can build on training inside the camps on contemporary professions. This can take place under the auspices of the Iraqi Government and with the assistance of international organizations and civil society organizations. Accompanying efforts should create job opportunities inside or outside the camps, and open doors to grants and small loans to improve livelihoods and contribute to family reintegration.

Educational symposia and community discussions on radio and television programmes, sponsored by local and central authorities and civil society organizations, can help bridge rifts. They can raise awareness about the dangers of revenge and the need to avoid holding entire families accountable for actions by one member.

It is imperative to preserve the civil rights of Iraqi children born under ISIS or inside the camps and provide them with protection and care. Several organizations could collaborate, supported by the Iraqi Government and the United Nations, to rehabilitate children and reintegrate them into society, and to ensure documentation of their parentage so they can enrol in school.

It is necessary not only to solve the problem of displacement and the return of families but also to ensure peace and prevent future conflicts. Towards long-term recovery, Iraqi officials, clan leaders and community leaders should work together to establish restorative justice mechanisms with a local dimension. They are one of the means of redressing harm inflicted on victims, reforming offenders and reconciling the two. In conflict-affected areas, through restorative justice, families perceived as associated with ISIS can gain an opportunity to redress damages in a constructive and innovative manner by removing manifestations of harm and showing remorse, considering the specificity of each region. Qualitative and sustainable responses require involving family members, clan leaders and socially influential persons to achieve consensus and compromise among families and their communities.

The role of civil society organizations in restorative justice remains important. While it is often difficult to measure the impact of civil society efforts, due to long time frames or a lack of concrete indicators, active and effective organizations are an essential component of societal reconciliation mechanisms. They have a major role in forming a collective identity, especially after ISIS and its crimes, the war of liberation and campaigns of revenge.

With nearly 60 percent of current internally displaced persons from Nineveh, 11 percent from Anbar and 11 percent from Saladin, the Iraqi Government and its international partners should consider making strategic investments in these areas and in places where return remains difficult, linking the provision of services or reconstruction to community reconciliation. Giving priority to recovery, stabilization and development activities in affected residential districts and linking them to returns would greatly contribute to ending the displacement of families and facilitating sustainable returns. Given the volume of resources that Iraq needs to restore stability, international organizations and donors have an opportunity to encourage and support the national and local

government partners in the process of facilitating return and reintegration of tens of thousands of women, children and youth as a main goal and condition for support to reconstruction.

The role of weak governance, indicated by corruption at the central and local levels or by security actors, creates a fertile ground for violent extremism and recruitment into terrorist groups and should be more widely recognized.[129] Important steps include enacting or activating legislation that criminalizes corruption, prosecutes corrupt acts and achieves social justice. These measures would constitute proactive measures to prevent violent extremism, achieve societal reconciliation and bolster societal cohesion.

Donors should increase investments in shock- and gender-sensitive peacebuilding, including long-term programmes to address the psychosocial needs of affected individuals and communities, and programmes for the social and economic empowerment of women. Psychological rehabilitation, social support and trauma recovery can help facilitate the return process,[130] enhance social cohesion after return and build trust within and between communities.

The voices, experiences and leadership of women and girls should be central in designing and implementing programmes to end displacement and promote peaceful coexistence. This is in line with the internationally agreed women, peace and security agenda, the United Nations Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Finding solutions for families perceived as associated with ISIS and reintegrating them into society is in the national interest. It is a prerequisite for the country's recovery after years of conflict. These are, after all, Iraqis, who cannot be ignored or wished not to exist or exiled inside their homeland. They may form part of the problem but they are also part of the solution and integral to Iraq's future. They should be partners and peacemakers and not simply judged and excluded without evidence, as this could turn them into enemies and a new wave of violent extremists.

Recommendations

Develop Iraq's legal framework for displaced persons in line with international human rights and other obligations, and build strong coordination between the federal, regional and local governments to rebuild infrastructure and seek permanent solutions.

Protect displaced persons in general and families in particular inside the camps and during the return to their areas, and provide better basic services, such as for food, education, health and mental health, while implementing community integration programmes that ensure their return and ability to lead a normal life.

Protect people from forced returns and ensure that procedures to combat terrorism and violent extremism are in line with international human rights, refugee and humanitarian laws.

Develop more detailed data on displaced persons with information on gender, age and living conditions and monitor returning people more consistently to assess the sustainability of their situation.

Simplify administrative and legal procedures and enable women to obtain

necessary documents, including for their children, to encourage their return and opportunities for local integration.

Open investigations into human trafficking cases and sexual violations against women inside the camps, punishing people responsible and ensuring survivors reach health care and psychological treatment.

Given a lack of confidence in the rule of law and public institutions in combating violence against women, with formal and informal judicial systems and social perceptions reflecting discrimination against women and increasing their vulnerability within the camps, take specific measures to ensure that women and girls who survive violence are protected under the law and access justice and health care.

Given stigma and lack of trust between women survivors of violence and the police, establish centres for listening and providing psychological support outside the official framework. Employ more female officers and social workers who deal with reported cases of violence against displaced women.

Solve the issue of missing and disappeared persons by investigating them and informing their families of the outcome, and complete legal procedures for persons killed in a manner that guarantees the rights of individuals and their families. The continuation of the status quo is an obstacle to the return of many families and to settling the status of women in a state of uncertainty about their spouses.

Adopt a comprehensive transitional justice approach to support the rights of ISIS victims, including by promoting joint initiatives among religious sects to rebuild trust and address challenges faced by survivors of ISIS and conflict-related sexual violence.

Develop comprehensive and integrated strategies and plans of action for reintegration that include the roles of women, families, youth, religious and cultural leaders, educators and other relevant civil society organizations.

Avoid further conflict by investing in long-term governance, involving local communities in decision-making, strengthening the Iraqi Reconciliation Commission and continuing to improve the Government's response and accountability.

Formulate special programmes to strengthen national identity, and education on citizenship, human rights, a culture of diversity, coexistence and acceptance of others.

Provide international funding to relevant international organizations, and offer grants, financial aid and technical expertise to the Iraqi Government and local authorities to help manage the crisis of families perceived as associated with ISIS, and to achieve integration, coexistence and peace.

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CHAPTER 2:

REHABILITATION NEEDS AND REINTEGRATION CHALLENGES FOR RETURNEES FROM AL-HOL CAMP

The chronology of displacement to Al-Hol Camp

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in coordination with the Syrian Government,[131] established the Al-Hol Camp in north-eastern Syria in 1991 to accommodate Iraqi refugees. The camp was reopened after the invasion of Iraq in 2003 as one of three camps on the Iraqi-Syrian border; it continued until its closure in 2010.[132]

With the People's Protection Units taking control of the town of Al-Hol on 13 November 2015, the United Nations re-equipped the camp to receive displaced Syrians and Iraqi refugees fleeing the battles of Mosul. Since then, the Syrian Democratic Forces have been supervising the management and guarding of the camp.

The population structure of the camp changed dramatically with the fall of Baghouz, the last stronghold of ISIS in Syria, at the end of March 2018. The population grew from about 9,000 people to nearly 74,000 at the end of March 2019. By June 2021, the number of residents had decreased to about 60,000 people[133] after some countries repatriated their citizens and some residents returned or fled to their countries or a third country.

The camp includes, in addition to its small number of original residents, who have nothing to do with ISIS, individuals who fled from ISIS after it seized land in Syria and Iraq, and individuals and families affiliated with the organization who were displaced from its former strongholds after its military defeat. The latter encompass women compelled to join the organization through forced marriage to fighters.

Estimates indicate that 94 percent of detainees in the camp are women and children;[134] 86 percent are Iraqis and Syrians. Also the camp hosts over 11,000 foreign women and children from 51 countries. The camp has six sections, one has displaced Syrians with no ties to ISIS. Iraqi refugees occupy another section, while families of Syrians affiliated with ISIS have a section of their own. Non-Syrian families of ISIS members are distributed into two sections, one for Europeans and one for other nationalities.[135]

one part of the camp sections include a mixture of Syrian and Iraqi families.[136]

Summary of key points

➔ **Since March 2019, Al-Hol Camp has been organized as a two-level system:** a stricter one that includes foreign terrorist fighters, and another, perhaps less extreme, that houses Iraqis and Syrians. Most likely, both sections contain families associated with ISIS.

➔ In the foreigners' section, manifestations of extremism and loyalty to ISIS remain more intense, as the organization's black flags are raised, strict rules of conduct are applied and some women act as if they are still part of the Al-Khansa Brigade. According to some reports, women are indoctrinating their children with ISIS doctrine and regularly tell them that the Syrian Democratic Forces have killed their fathers and destroyed their homes. There are also women who only want to go back to their countries after realizing that ISIS leaders used them to further ideological goals.

➔ Life in the other section of the camp for Iraqis and Syrians is less strict, even though most residents come from families associated with ISIS. They are allowed more freedom of movement within the camp although they can only leave it in a few cases.

➔ The number of Iraqi citizens in Al-Hol is estimated at about 31,000 people, divided into three groups: Iraqis who fled to Syria after 2014, when ISIS seized their original areas; Iraqis who crossed the border during military operations to expel ISIS from Iraqi territory; and Iraqis who were arrested and detained in the camp after the last remaining ISIS positions in Syria were retaken. Studies indicate that nearly 80 percent of these people may be willing to return to Iraq. The second and third groups pose more complex problems. Some say that they are not from families with ISIS members but this causes others Iraqis to ask why they fled to Syria instead of the safe areas controlled by the Iraqi Army and the Peshmerga. Answering this question requires using evidence and data from Iraqi security sources and relying on trusted people in local areas to know the backgrounds of displaced people who are willing to return, not to punish them, if no charges are proven against them, but to identify needs and assess risks.

➔ The Government of Iraq previously facilitated voluntary returns but suspended these in 2018-2019 due to the situation in north-eastern Syria. In early 2021, the Government informed the United Nations of its intention to resume voluntary returns, and in May of the same year, the Government returned the first group of 94 families with a total of 381 people. In October of the same year, Iraq returned the second group from Al-Hol, which comprised 117 families, with a total of 487 people. Two additional groups returned in December 2021 and January 2022, with a total of 239 families with 928 people.[137] All returnees were placed in Al-Jada 1 Camp in Nineveh. This camp is considered a transitional point to host families returning from Al-Hol before their final return to their areas of origin or integration in other places in Iraq.[138]

➔ As with the return of internally displaced Iraqis, the return of Iraqi families from Al-Hol poses security, social and economic challenges, in light of the continued rejection of returns of people associated with the tragedy that took place under ISIS. Returns are further complicated for women for a number of reasons: a lack of clarity about appropriate risk assessment and screening processes for women, a lack of clarity about

the gender dimensions of violent extremism, challenges in investigations and prosecutions related to securing sufficient and acceptable evidence that women have committed terrorist crimes, and limited understanding of best practices and the most effective means of rehabilitation and reintegration for women. These factors are exacerbated by social rejection of women returning from Al-Hol Camp and gender-based stigma. Such attitudes may reinforce perceptions of marginalization, exclusion and injustice, and may contribute to the reproduction of extremism, thus undermining rehabilitation and reintegration.

➔ Returning some families to Iraq while assuming that they are 'peaceful' could constitute a serious security gap. This can lead to women specifically being deprived of benefits from rehabilitation programmes even though many have spent a long period inside Al-Hol Camp and experienced conflict. They may have been subjected to violence and physical and sexual abuse,[139] mixed with more extremist elements inside the camp, and faced polarization and recruitment attempts under harsh living conditions. These possibilities should be taken seriously in return strategies so that these women are not left to an unknown fate. The Iraqi Government should adapt comprehensive and quality policies for rehabilitation and reintegration to mitigate the risks of fostering a new generation of extremists.

Risks of women's violent extremism inside Al-Hol Camp

ISIS mobilized thousands of young men and women of different nationalities and ages. Women constituted an important part of its structure yet the perception of their involvement with violent extremist groups tends to suggest they are either coerced victims or active perpetrators of violence. The women play roles in violent extremism that transcend this simple binary view, however.[140] In recent years, research has highlighted the different experiences of women and girls, showing that compared to past waves of violent extremism, the current one is more complex, more global and more diverse in terms of age, gender and experience in conflict areas.[141]

Women joined ISIS for a variety of reasons and played different roles during their time with the organization. Some participated in the violence. Others played important non-combatant parts as moral law enforcers, recruiters, social media promoters and mothers to the new generation of ISIS supporters. In many cases, the difference between victims and perpetrators was ambiguous, and the degree of a woman's capacity and legal responsibility unclear.[142]

After the expulsion of ISIS from its last strongholds in Syria, the families and wives of ISIS members constituted a large proportion of the residents of Al-Hol Camp. There is no data on the extent to which these women are saturated with the ideology of ISIS. Some women and children detained in the camp were members of the organization's Hesba Police or fought with it as part of the so-called 'cubs of the caliphate'. Others were wives and mothers. Some have nothing to do with the organization although they may have been subjected to attempts at polarization inside the camp. Women in Al-Hol come from different backgrounds and affiliations. A large number believe in the organization's ideas and defend them. Others joined the organization based on misperceptions, fragile circumstances and/or coercion.

Propaganda and indoctrination inside Al-Hol Camp

After losing territory and in the absence of male leadership, ISIS did not hesitate to use women inside Al-Hol as an important weapon to expand its ideology.[143] In June 2019, pro-ISIS pages on social media began publishing propaganda materials from Al-Hol. For example, they posted videos of women pledging allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, women and children raising the ISIS flag inside the camp, and children chanting slogans in support of the organization. Some reports have indicated that women inside Al-Hol administer accounts on social media platforms to post ISIS propaganda or collect donations, and engage in smuggling operations of all kinds.

In June 2019, ISIS supporters launched campaigns on Telegram to raise funds and announce their continued presence in Al-Hol. There were also calls to liberate the camp's residents. Some reports suggest that ISIS has maintained contact with individuals in camps or prisons and is actively collecting money for them on the Internet.[144] These funds often help to maintain activities such as indoctrination, basic services for female members not provided by aid workers and camp authorities, purchases of communications supplies such as mobile phones, the procurement of weapons, bribes for officials, purchases of forged documents, money for smugglers to move families out of the camp, etc.

ISIS relies on the ineffectiveness of its opponents in dealing with the fragility of the situation inside Al-Hol to continue ideological indoctrination campaigns. It may actually be able to achieve one of its main goals, which is to prepare, indoctrinate and train women and the next generation of its fighters. The organization uses women to educate children and indoctrinate them, and to attract and recruit new elements inside and outside the camp.

Some reports have indicated that a group of women cells associated with the organization forcibly impose the ideology of ISIS on other women in the camp. Female supporters have formed units of the Hesba or 'religious police', which oversee implementation of ISIS laws. What is worrying is that the activities of the units are not limited to punishment and condemnation. When they suspect that a camp resident has deviated from the ISIS doctrine or attempted to spread negative ideas about the organization, harsh punishments result, such as flogging, torture, deprivation of food, burning of tents and killing.

Recruitment and strict application of ISIS laws

In late 2020, an Iraqi woman was strangled in front of her children with an electric wire after she posted a video on Instagram of her dancing in her tent, which violates the rules imposed by ISIS, according to people who contacted her family in the camp. On 20 March 2021, another 18-year-old Iraqi woman was killed after being accused of being an informant.[145] Women who have abandoned the organization live in constant fear of militant attacks,[146] as ISIS women monitor other women who regress in upholding the organization's instructions.[147] For example, women are prohibited from wearing sunglasses, speaking with men in the markets or removing their face coverings. Although the camp is under the authority of the Syrian Democratic Forces, its large population allows women to work with

relative freedom. Some camp residents are urged to respond to the calls of ISIS women active inside the camp to preserve their income and well-being. Others are forced into extremism under the threat of being harmed or even because of fears for their security and the security of their families abroad, or persuaded to get involved based on their grievances.[148] Since the beginning of 2021, more than 60 people have been reported as killed in the camp,[149] including 10 by beheading; not all murders are necessarily linked to the Hesba units. Camp authorities launched a major operation in March of the same year to arrest ISIS fighters and active supporters, and announced the detention of 70 members.[150]

The percentage of women in the camp who uphold ISIS doctrine and continue to actively disseminate it is unclear but it is not small, according to several reports. These families have been living with each other for years. Women have experienced conflict, extremism and violence inside the camps, and children have also experienced harsh living and deprivation and may have been imbued with extremist ideology and normalized violence and killing. Some children have lived in Al-Hol for years. Some were born under the rule of ISIS and brought up on its extremist ideas. According to some reports, sons are prepared to build on the grievances and legacy of their fathers. Women have transformed the camp into a centre for teaching extremism, in which children receive religious teachings, conditions, rules and regulations at the hands of their mothers. Many children in the camp lost fathers during the operations of the Syrian Democratic Forces and the International Coalition to combat ISIS. The longer they stay in the camp, the greater their spirit of revenge.[151]

Al-Hol: A complicated environment and micro-ISIS inside the camp

The chaotic environment in Al-Hol Camp includes overcrowding, a lack of rules for residents, constant violence, repeated attacks on Syrian Democratic Forces guards, continuous riots, extremists mixed with moderates in all sections and compounds, strict application of ISIS laws, lack of appropriate and effective communication between the Syrian Democratic Forces and the population, intimidation and fear. All of this has turned the camp into a complex environment with considerable danger from either closing it or keeping it as it is. The polarization and violence are expected results of gathering the remnants of ISIS elements in one spot. Despite some restrictions, especially on foreign terrorist fighters, in general, detainees inside the camp can meet, agree, consult, plan and influence the rest of the residents and impose ISIS laws. Even when ISIS was powerful, this many extremists were not gathered in one geographical spot. Al-Hol Camp brought together extremists from different areas controlled by ISIS, with the Syrian Democratic Forces and International Coalition watching them from afar. Perhaps they are aware of the danger but are not taking preventive measures.[152]

What complicates the dangers of Al-Hol Camp is that women and girls are often seen as 'followers' or 'victims' and considered low risk, even if they are an integral part of the organizational structure of violent extremist groups. This inadequate view means most fall outside the scope of monitoring and tracking by authorities of countries recovering their citizens, including Iraq. In some cases, women benefit

from mitigating conditions in the event of interrogation or detention, whether inside prisons or camps. But they generally do not benefit from rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, which misses an opportunity for disengagement from violent extremism.

At the cultural and social level, women involved in violent extremism are often seen as violating societal norms and customs. They are stigmatized and subjected to harassment and, in some cases, psychological, physical and sexual abuse. Sometimes, even women forced into joining violent extremist groups through subordination to a man (husband, father or son) have been stigmatized and attacked repeatedly, including in State detention centres. In this case, women are doubly punished for violating social norms and affiliation with violent extremist groups, while having few or no means of accessing justice or protection. This is partly due to the absence of policies and laws sensitive to the gender dimensions of violent extremism and rehabilitation and inclusion.

Even if they have been forced, are victims of violence, or are kidnapped or trafficked, they are stigmatized as bringing shame and disgrace to their families. Women and girls who have been sexually abused suffer more violations because families or communities stigmatize or blame them for inflicting shame on the family or tribe. This can lead to continuous rejection of their return to their countries or regions or exposure to so-called 'honour' crimes if they do return.[153] If the opportunity to deal with women in a conscious, fair and humane manner is missed, attempts at rehabilitation may come too late, and many may end up as violent extremists.

The current situation in Al-Hol Camp suggests that it may turn into another version of Camp Bucca, which earlier produced ISIS. Any security change in the region, such as the collapse of the autonomous administration of the Syrian Democratic Forces because of a sudden American withdrawal, may lead to the escape of thousands of persons affiliated, sympathetic to or influenced by the organization's ideology. A few months before his death, the leader of ISIS, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, urged ISIS militants to release the women and children detained in Al-Hol. The call bears a great deal of resemblance to the 'Break the Walls' campaign launched by Al-Baghdadi in Iraq between 2012 and 2013. This campaign was aimed at freeing extremists held in Iraqi prisons. At that time, American forces had already withdrawn from control of these prisons, and ISIS carried out a series of sudden attacks on the main prisons, releasing a number of important elements of the organization in addition to many potential volunteers to join its ranks.

If the ISIS insurgency wins its battle in the deserts of Iraq and eastern Syria in the near future and establishes a foothold in this region, the women and children who have been held for many years in Al-Hol will most likely become a key element in achieving ISIS regional goals. The alternative is to deal with them now in an appropriate and correct manner by returning them to their countries, prosecuting them and/or subjecting them to rehabilitation programmes.

Challenges associated with the return of Iraqi families from Al-Hol Camp

Hundreds of Iraqi families are detained in Al-Hol Camp. Their access to food, medical care, education, rights and other basic services ranges from limited to non-existent. Although many women and children have experienced extremist violence or mobilization attempts and in many cases have suffered human rights violations and abuses, the camp administration is unable to provide appropriate assistance for rehabilitation, including for psychosocial support or post-trauma counselling. In May 2021, the Iraqi Government decided, for humanitarian and human rights considerations, to gradually recover its citizens detained in Al-Hol Camp, around 31,000 people, most of whom are women and children. As of this study, a list of more than 4,000 Iraqis, mostly women and their children who want to return to their homeland,[154] has been submitted, with the number expected to rise.[155] The Iraqi Government has recovered 450 Iraqi families with 1,796 people in four batches.[156] It is expected that the process of moving families from Al-Hol to Al-Jada 1 Camp near the town of Qayyarah, south of Mosul, will continue.

Iraq's recovery of its citizens from Al-Hol Camp raises many political, security and social concerns. Security authorities have stressed that all returning families have been subjected to security checks; are peaceful and not affiliated with the so-called 'ISIS families'; and were displaced as a result of military operations in Iraqi cities adjacent to Syria. The authorities have also emphasized that people in Al-Jada Camp will undergo psychological support and rehabilitation through special programmes prepared by the Ministry of Migration and Displacement and the National Security Advisory, in cooperation with the competent international organizations.

Yet some observers see the return of these families as a threat to the social fabric in Mosul, with its great national, religious and sectarian diversity, especially since the returns are not limited to internally displaced people from Nineveh governorate only. All families from all Iraqi governorates will settle initially in Al-Jada Camp. This raises concerns around stability and the potential for reorganizing cells in Nineveh governorate. Another perspective centres on why people who are ostensibly peaceful and not affiliated with the organization are in the camps. One point of view is that it would have been more useful to conduct security checks and then send displaced people to their original areas of residence in the governorates of Anbar, Saladin, Nineveh and others.[157]

Security authorities have stated that the transfer of families to Al-Jada 1 Camp is just a transitional phase that does not exceed 90 days, during which a security check takes place. This seems reasonable for the first group that was recovered, which was not widely suspected of having affiliations with ISIS. Other groups include families perceived as associated with ISIS, some of whom fled to Syria after the defeat of the organization in Iraq, and some of whom were detained after the battle of Al-Baghouz. This calls for a comprehensive return plan, clear procedures that account for all needs and challenges after returns, and well-defined programmes for rehabilitation and integration.

Obstacles to the return of Iraqi families detained in Al-Hol

Iraq considers it necessary to recover citizens in Al-Hol Camp but there is great ambiguity around the plan to repatriate them in one camp and conduct a risk assessment, provide protection for families, and offer quality rehabilitation and inclusion programmes inside the camp and in areas of return. In general, there is a popular rejection of the return of families perceived as associated with ISIS who are returning from Al-Hol, for the same reasons that lead to the rejection of the return of internally displaced families.[158] In addition to the reasons mentioned earlier, many people consider transfers in large numbers as a 'time bomb', especially since Al-Jada Camp is located in an area considered the most anti-ISIS. Local people fear that returned families will become involved in acts of violence within their communities or feel angry because they were affected by crimes committed by ISIS.

In addition to general societal rejection, returns of families from Al-Hol encounter opposition by the Yazidis, who rejected the passage of buses that transport returnees through Sinjar, their homeland, because of the crimes ISIS committed against them. According to statistics from the Office for Rescue of Abductees in Dohuk, ISIS kidnapped about 7,000 women and children, liberated 3,500 people and killed thousands of Yazidis, and caused the internal displacement of more than 360,000 and the emigration of about 100,000. A woman in her sixties said: "When the Iraqi government decides to return the families of the organization to Iraq, especially to Mosul governorate, where the organization carried out the most heinous crimes, it places a tank of fuel near the stove." She added: "My adult male grandchildren are more than 10, and at least half of them are still in a state of great anger, full of desire for revenge, and they cannot control their feelings and behavior, and they consider the Government's return of ISIS families as an underestimation of their feelings."[159]

For returnees making sincere efforts towards reintegration, harassment can affect their ability to resume a normal life, which may greatly increase their potential for relapse. These issues take time to be resolved and require integrated interventions involving families, community leaders, local authorities, service providers and the media, together with the returnees themselves. It takes time to rebuild trust between community members and returning families, based on the conviction that leaving families inside the camps in Iraq or in Al-Hol in Syria constitutes a real threat to the security of Iraq, the region and the entire world.

Many families detained in Al-Hol cannot return to Iraq because they do not have identification documents, or their security position has not been verified. Some women refuse to return for reasons that include the fate of their husbands and children, which poses additional challenges. A 35-year-old woman says that her patience has run out, like many other ethnic refugees, and asked: "How can we return without our husbands and brothers, and how long will they stay in prisons? Is the world watching our tragedy, and does the Iraqi Government know how we live in this place? The whole world is turning away from this issue." She was referring to the organization's fighters being held in the prisons of the Syrian Democratic Forces. This woman said that her husband was a civilian worker in the ranks of the organization and

surrendered in Al-Baghouz battle in March 2019.[160] Another woman asked: "I want to know where my husband and my son are, three years have passed and I have been waiting to know the fate of the two. Are they alive, died or were transferred to a second country?" She added with anger: "I will not move from here until I know their fate. Either they release them, or they are referred to a fair court that looks into the charges against them."[161]

In other cases, convincing some families, including women and children, to return will be more difficult if they fear being sent to prison. Some Iraqi authorities accuse these families of collaborating with ISIS elements and providing information to them to carry out acts of violence. The authorities demand to hold women in the camp if there involvement is proven.[162] Evidence that some women have committed crimes will be referred to the courts, even though it is often insufficient, but the fear of this possibility has hindered the decision to return home.

Further, many Iraqi women associated with ISIS find themselves in a state of legal uncertainty regarding the status of their children, who were born under ISIS control of an Iraqi husband or one of another nationality. They do not have papers proving parentage to allow the children to travel. Some other women, including kidnapped and raped Yazidi women, despite being victims, refuse to return for fear of stigmatization and reprisals. Some who do return have abandoned their children born from rape by ISIS fighters due to fear of stigma and the difficulty in obtaining identity papers. Such situations demand a rapid and sustainable response based on human rights and the interests of the children. It should include health care, psychosocial support, social and economic reintegration measures for women victims, and legal support for abandoned children.

Challenges of rehabilitation and reintegration of families returning from Al-Hol

Not all returnees from the Al-Hol are peaceful. Certainly families with no connection with ISIS have returned but they also lived in Syrian camps and mixed with violent extremists whose main preoccupation has been to turn Al-Hol into a small 'Islamic state'. Other families who have returned or will return are associated with the organization. Many returning women and girls harbour sympathy for the organization or their male relatives in it. There are women who may have been active elements in the organization during its control of territory in Iraq but are unlikely to be convicted because of the difficulty of gathering sufficient evidence to prove their actions. Gender analysis reveals that proving the guilt of women and girls associated with ISIS can be more difficult than in cases involving men and boys.[163] In this case, returns without intellectual and religious rehabilitation programmes and efforts to restore social cohesion and societal trust can be very risky. But this does not mean, on the other hand, that every returning family should be treated as extremists for life.

Many if not most Iraqi families returning from Al-Hol have suffered or been subjected to severe violence and psychological trauma before displacement as well as while fleeing from or with ISIS or during their time in the camp. They may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder,[164] behavioural unpredictability, emotional instability as well as 'moral damage' that may "lead them to question their moral picture

of the world, and make them they feel betrayed by society".[165] Groups that have returned face a high degree of uncertainty about their future as they have received little or no information about when and how they will return to their areas of origin or settle in a third location. They have also received no information about relatives still in Al-Hol and continuously call to be reunited with their families.[166]Although some returnees currently have no association with ISIS, they are subjected to severe stigmatization[167] and live in a state of fear and terror from threats and accusations, worrying that the camp will be targeted.[168] This situation necessitates appropriate interventions to protect families and rehabilitation programmes with intellectual, religious and social dimensions.

As is the case for internally displaced people, the economic conditions of Al-Hol returnees worsened during the refugee period. The reasons include the loss of job opportunities (in the public sector, etc.) and the theft or destruction of economic assets (including homes, cars, agricultural machinery, land, etc.). This has led to difficulties in meeting essential needs after returning to Iraq and the heavy reliance on humanitarian aid.[169] Many families in Al-Jada 1 Camp depend completely on humanitarian aid but it remains insufficient to meet their needs, which leads them to borrow inside the camp and buy on credit, a passive coping mechanism that raises some protection-related concerns.[170] This situation requires economic responses and the creation of job opportunities to ensure decent living.

It is possible that among the returnees from Al-Hol, now and in the future, there will be families associated with ISIS and influenced by its extremist ideology, families subjected to polarization attempts inside Al-Hol and families affected by the long periods of the closed lifestyle inside the camp. Rehabilitation and disengagement and reintegration programmes need to consider these diverse issues. They require a clear vision and a comprehensive and long-term strategy that begins with intensive rehabilitation during their transition in Al-Jada 1 Camp or after their return to their areas of origin or third areas. Efforts to ensure their return to their normal life should include building confidence in their national identity and social affiliations.

There is also a need to prepare societies to accept returnees from Al-Hol through measures fostering societal reconciliation, promoting tolerance, acknowledging wrongdoing, allowing for apology and reparation, ensuring the legal accountability of perpetrators and achieving justice. The political dimensions of this issue should be put aside as they threaten to create a space for new grievances to emerge and stir hatred and marginalization.

Proposed measures to rehabilitate and integrate returnees from Al-Hol

The rehabilitation and integration of returnees from Al-Hol requires studying each case separately. Some may be reintegrated with little risk. Others require rehabilitation and psychological care. There are also individuals saturated with extremist ideology without being involved in violence. These people need special interventions based on psychological and religious

rehabilitation and exposure to special programmes of disengagement from violence. Adopting an effective policy in dealing with returning families will require dialogue and participation with a wide range of actors, such as clan leaders, community members and leaders, religious leaders, teachers, local authorities, police and intelligence services.[171] Such a multipronged approach should include an extensive process for dealing with returning families within an environment of cooperation and transparency.[172]

One urgent need is to organize and classify lists of returnees in three groups: Iraqi refugees fleeing from ISIS crimes after 2014, families who fled their areas to Al-Hol Camp after the defeat of ISIS in Iraq, and families associated with ISIS who were detained in the camp after the Al-Baghouz battle in 2019. Within each group, detailed data should be collected on gender, age, marital status, security files and asylum conditions in Syria, their activity before asylum, the extent to which they experienced violence inside the camp and their reasons to return. For families perceived as associated with ISIS, the extent to which they and their families are associated with the organization and the reasons for return or rejection of return should be determined. Such detailed information can guide accurate assessments of needs and risks on a case-by-case basis and help in identifying the specific requirements of women and children.

It is important to have an open and honest dialogue with persons willing to return from Al-Hol. The authorities should be clear in their intention to bring to justice persons with a proven involvement with ISIS. For those against whom nothing has been proven, everything should be done to return them to their areas of origin or other areas if needed. The most important responsibility of the Government is to provide protection for returnees and ensure that they go through psychological and religious rehabilitation programmes, if necessary, and societal reintegration. A framework of action and appropriate conditions should make these opportunities possible for all returnees.

The Government should address some of the main questions, including: What are the intended goals and objectives of programmes to rehabilitate returnees from Al-Hol? These should be clearly defined. Second, how can local communities be persuaded that people should return to their areas after their stay in Al-Jada Camp 1? Third, what are the different roles of various actors and the limits of their responsibilities? Fourth, what is the responsibility of the government to returnees, women in particular, who suffer from potential vulnerability? Determining clear answers to these questions could greatly contribute to the formulation of more effective programmes and strategies.

The rehabilitation and reintegration process may face many obstacles, foremost of which is weak management and coordination between concerned authorities and institutions, and limited experience of staff in this area. These gaps underline the importance of a national strategy for rehabilitation and reintegration. It should be comprehensive with clear distribution of the responsibilities and roles of each party and include a unified coordination

mechanism. Building the capacities of the various actors in rehabilitation and reintegration programmes is also necessary, alongside raising awareness concerning gender dimensions.

Families returning from Al-Hol need a variety of specialized supports adapted to their needs, including psychological care and vocational training, that go beyond the capabilities or mandate of the security forces. Effective and sustainable disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes will require attention and action by the State as well as communities, families and individuals. Individual, psychological and social processes require sustained participation and the involvement of communities, families and other supportive social networks. Religious leaders can have a great impact on communities and play a greater role in reconciliation. Civil society organizations in affected communities, with support from the Government, can make a unique contribution, as they often enjoy the confidence of community members and can reach them in ways that officials cannot. Because they are rooted in society, they have a special interest in providing long-term support, which often represents a challenge to international and even governmental entities.[173]

Guidance, awareness and follow-up are essential in any rehabilitation and integration programme. It is important to seek the help of highly skilled professionals and experts working with people without much confidence in authorities or local communities. Experts should be well acquainted with the psychology of women and children and the risk factors for extremism. Most importantly, they should have the interpersonal skills necessary to communicate with families.

Risk assessments should be carried out by social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists but the experience of workers in social affairs or other government agencies in dealing with returnees is limited. This requires building their understanding of different dimensions of violent extremism and the gender aspects of rehabilitation and reintegration, which would permit better management of returns and reintegration, and help prevent future recruitment.

Gender and age considerations are important in formulating rehabilitation programmes. Men and women take different paths to extremism that leads to violence, which requires making rehabilitation and reintegration gender-responsive. These go beyond common misconceptions that women are mainly 'victims' and 'followers'.[174] They would address prevailing tribal and patriarchal norms that automatically exclude women from rehabilitation and reintegration efforts, leaving them at the mercy of security forces in places of detention as well as stigma and societal threats upon release.[175] Such misconceptions require a review that stresses how women can be active elements within terrorist and violent extremist organizations, are affected by violent extremism like men and consequently need rehabilitation and integration.

Combating stigma is an essential element of effective reintegration. Women often face more difficulties, isolation and stigma from their local communities. Programmes should be aware of whether individuals are from urban or rural areas, are married and/

or have children, and their level of their education as these details affect whether families and communities will accept or reject women and girls upon their return.[176] Orphaned children should be sorted by age.

Developing the most effective, gender-responsive solutions for rehabilitation and reintegration is a priority given the magnitude of the humanitarian, human rights and security challenges related to women associated with ISIS.[177] Determining the best course of action requires individual assessment of returning families, the threat they may pose and options for rehabilitation and reintegration. While many women may harbour extremist ideas, only a few can help prepare or carry out a terrorist act. What is certain, however, is that many suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.[178] Some women may feel that they are 'victims' or that they have fulfilled their duty as mothers or wives by supporting or covering up their relatives who were part of ISIS elements, or that they just worked at the disposal of the organization when it controlled the land without having any noteworthy loyalty to ISIS. Without a comprehensive, tailored, gender-responsive assessment, programmes will not be effective because they may overestimate the role of ideological drivers and neglect structural, material and other psychological factors.

Identifying and responding to the vulnerabilities of returnee women and children is the first priority. This can reduce risks and help alleviate pressures they face and open an opportunity to provide assistance adapted to actual needs. All cases need psychological rehabilitation and social reintegration. But in general, two main elements should be addressed in crystallizing any solution to the crisis of returning families, namely: regaining trust between them and their communities as a prelude to their return to their areas and reintegration, and abolishing extremist ideological ideas that may have been implanted in their minds. This work calls for male and female staff trained to conduct such assessments and to deal with the impact of the trauma that women and children may face as well as the threat they may pose. While assessment and action may be relatively feasible to pursue in countries with few returnees and sufficient resources, it poses enormous challenges in Iraq, which has greater flows of returnees, fewer resources and weaker health and social care systems. The situation calls for additional resources to fund such programmes.

Women affected by extremist ideas require three-dimensional programmes for rehabilitation and reintegration. These encourage gradual reintegration through the ideological dimension to delegitimize and refute extremist discourses and encourage women to reconcile with their past; the practical dimension to educate and train women on professions and help them find work, especially female breadwinners; and the psychological and emotional dimension to address addressing emotional and psychological needs and facilitate procedures for obtaining identity and proving the parentage of children.

As previously discussed, many families headed by women have different needs because women usually responsible for taking care of the children must now find a livelihood. Rehabilitation and integration programmes should provide work or training on skills that

are economically feasible and socially acceptable, or extend humanitarian assistance to women to meet family needs. The Government has an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil rights to an adequate standard of living, to work, to the education of children and to protection. Services provided to families perceived as associated with ISIS should match those provided to ISIS victims. Affected communities should not suffer from a sense of injustice and a belief that violence is rewarded.

The experience of violent extremism, whether as victims, perpetrators, supporters or bystanders, causes major trauma. Women and girls in particular face physical and psychological consequences of sexual violence and other gender aspects of their experience with violent extremism. These include pregnancy and maternity resulting from rape or forced marriage to ISIS members or security personnel during asylum or displacement. Subjecting women and girls to shame and stigma does not encourage them to return to Iraq or benefit from the rehabilitation programmes and services they need. If these women are left without support, the trauma can affect their families and children, be passed on to future generations and lead to future violence. To avoid the worst scenarios requires addressing grievances from the forced marriage of girls or rape by ISIS members, encouraging women to return voluntarily by ensuring their children can return with them and providing psychological rehabilitation programmes. This will pave the way for their reception by their local communities.

Establishing a local support system to meet the social, economic or psychological needs of returnees is an essential component of preventing their re-engagement in extremist activity. If returnees are confronted with hatred, social isolation and no job opportunities, they may be highly susceptible to adopting extremist ideas and sympathizing with an extremist organization that often invests in and inflames peoples' grievances. Work with communities and local authorities should broaden the admission base for returnees and provide services to enable them to reintegrate. A balance should be struck in communities with many needs. Giving opportunities to returning families alone can cause a violent reaction. Providing reparations to families affected by ISIS crimes should accompany training, job opportunities and other services to all members of society.

The media plays a key role in shaping societal awareness. The risk of families perceived as associated with ISIS is often exaggerated, with media reports describing returning children and even infants as threats due to concerns about their current or future indoctrination.[179] Evidence has proven for years that sensationalist media coverage of terrorism actually leads to calls for more violence.[180] The challenge for policymakers and practitioners is how to use media to raise public awareness and increase spaces for broader discourse to express and alleviate concerns and enhance community support for rehabilitation and reintegration.

Responsible journalism can facilitate informed and balanced public discussion

on families perceived as associated with ISIS, and the complexities of their situations and experiences. Media can also highlight the damage and deep risks of stigmatization.[181] In some cases, even if media coverage is balanced, it is not possible to reduce the intensity of public fears and anger, however. Threats of violence and death may be common against those who dare to propose moderate solutions or cast doubt on the effectiveness of strict security approaches. Media should develop alternative strategies, sometimes through using indirect language, to maintain pressure to achieve societal acceptance.

It is important to engage women in all rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, pay attention to the gender dynamics and recognize women as important community resources and leaders in local programmes. Mothers have major roles in influencing children and discouraging them from extremist ideas. In communities, women's activists are among the first to counter violent extremism and prevent its spread, and to address the issues of returning women because they have access to them and enjoy their trust. Making full use of the knowledge that local actors possess requires gender data and analysis of violent extremism and returnee groups.

Security Council resolution 2396 (2017) encourages Member States, as well as international, regional and subregional organizations, to ensure the participation and leadership of women in preparing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating strategies to address returning and mobile foreign terrorist militants and their families.[182] It stresses that "women and children associated with terrorist fighters... need special attention when developing customized prosecuting, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies."

Recommendations

The families returning from Al-Hol Camp represent a potential threat to Iraqi national security. Some are currently unassociated with ISIS and have not adopted violence as a behavior. But groups associated with the organization will recover, including those involved in crimes or that cooperated with ISISA or helped in some way. Some have extremist ideas. Psychological and intellectual rehabilitation remains an important matter.

Effective rehabilitation and reintegration depends on understanding and addressing the motives and underlying causes that prompted some people to join, cooperate or sympathize with a terrorist organization, as called for by the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. This also includes effective reintegration strategies that consider gender and human rights.

An open and honest dialogue with families willing to return from Al-Hol is imperative. If there is a reason to believe that a person has committed a crime, the authorities should be clear that they intend to prosecute them in accordance with Iraqi law. But if one

member of a family did not commit a crime or it is not possible to prove guilt, the authorities should do everything in their power to recover them from Al-Hol and rehabilitate and reintegrate them.

This first stage would ideally prioritize strengthening intelligence capabilities with a view to determining those willing to return. This stage should assess the danger individuals represent case-by-case, taking into account the risk of female extremism. Data generated through a qualitative assessment based on gender and other criteria can achieve greater understanding of what motivates (or forces) women and children to participate in extremist and terrorist groups, and what may help them to disengage. A distinction should be made between women and children, who are distinct groups that require multiple and uniquely tailored responses and considerations.

To achieve qualitative responses, reintegration programs should aim to address the individual, community and structural levels simultaneously, and factor in how each level can affect the others.

The distribution of responsibilities and tasks related to detection, investigation, dialogue, participation, rehabilitation and integration between central and local governments and non-governmental organizations (civil society, religious leaders, etc.) would provide extensive human and material resources to respond to families returning from Al-Hol.

There are problems related to efficiency. Those in charge of rehabilitation programmes are not always well trained. Many do not understand the gender dimensions of violent extremism or of rehabilitation and integration. International expertise would help in these areas. There is a need to adapt disengagement and rehabilitation programmes so they are more responsive to women and children.

It is important to raise societal awareness about the dangers of rejecting the return of people and of hatred and discrimination, as these could generate new grievances and create a nucleus for a new terrorist organization in the future. Local authorities should lead societal reconciliation with the help and participation of political, religious and social centres of power and civil society organizations. Educational and cultural bodies and the media should commit to the process as they are responsible for spreading human rights principles and instilling a sense of citizenship, and reducing the dangerously growing pattern of tribal intolerance.

Programmes have greater impact and legitimacy when they are developed by local communities and based on a local understanding of social norms, community relations and cultural traditions. Encouraging local authorities to work closely with clan leaders, community leaders, religious leaders and civil society organizations would help in gathering necessary information, building local reconciliation, properly reintegrating families and strengthening the bonds of trust. All of these are necessary to ensure the effective exchange of information among different stakeholders.

There is no doubt that children were the most affected victims of ISIS. Those returning from the camps face gaps in mental and psychological health and may suffer from disabilities due to the conflict. They also confront many social challenges that make reintegration difficult. The Iraqi Government, with the participation of local communities and psychologists, should assess each child's case individually and differentiate between children who can be rehabilitated through proper care and those where it is difficult to do so. Each group should be dealt with according to its situation. Clear, non-punitive rehabilitation policies for returning children may encourage more families to report missing children suspected of joining ISIS or of being abducted by it. This could facilitate returns.

While reintegration is the best solution, it requires huge resources, especially in Iraqi, where the numbers of internally displaced persons and detainees in Al-Hol Camp are very large. This requires increased funding by the Government, international organizations and donor countries. There is also a need to fortify returnee camps to protect them from retaliation by families of the victims of ISIS crimes or revenge by communities or even ISIS cells, and to protect workers in rehabilitation programmes.

Any strategy for rehabilitation and reintegration will only be valid if it addresses conditions conducive to extremism and terrorism, eradicates an environment that fosters extremist ideology, and builds the State's capacity to prevent and combat violent extremism and terrorism. This must be done with full respect for Iraq's obligations towards human rights and the rule of law. It can accompany a regional partnership strategy based on cooperation and information exchange in the security field, within the framework of the international anti-terrorism strategy.

CHAPTER 3:

VIOLENT EXTREMIST WOMEN AND GIRLS INSIDE IRAQI PRISONS: CHALLENGES TO REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION

UN and international directives on the rehabilitation and reintegration of women associated with terrorism

Developing the most effective and gender-responsive solutions for screening, prosecuting, rehabilitating and reintegrating returnees is a priority due to the scale of the humanitarian, human rights and security challenges related to women associated with ISIS.[183] The Security Council has issued resolutions on this issue, the most important of which are the following.

Security Council resolution 2396 (2017): It affirms that women "may have played many different roles, including as supporters, facilitators, or perpetrators of terrorist acts," which means that they "need special attention when developing tailored strategies for prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration." It "stresses the importance of providing assistance to women and children associated with foreign terrorist fighters who may be victims of terrorism, while taking into account gender and age considerations in doing so."[184]

The Addendum to Guidelines on Foreign Terrorist Fighters (2018),[185] issued by the Counter-Terrorism Committee, provides detailed guidance on a gender-sensitive approach to returnees. The guidelines include, among others, Guiding Principle 30, which calls on United Nations Member States, as part of a case-by-case approach, to implement strategies to deal with specific groups of returnees who are accused of engagement with terrorist groups, particularly minors, women, family members and other persons who may be vulnerable, and their engagement was through providing medical services and other humanitarian needs, and other similar returnees committing less serious crimes.

Other relevant United Nations guidelines include:

The Nelson Mandela Rules and the Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the 'Bangkok Rules') detail international standards, pursuant to international human rights law, for the treatment and conditions of women in detention.

continue

UN and international directives on the rehabilitation and reintegration of women associated with terrorism

In April 2019, the United Nations worked on the **Main Principles of Protection, Repatriation, Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Women and Children with Ties to Groups on the United Nations Terrorist Lists.** The principles aim to enhance the coherence of United Nations activities and assist Member States to design and implement policies and actions in accordance with international law, including international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law.

In May 2019, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime launched **The Handbook on Gender Dimensions of Criminal Justice Responses to Terrorism**, which provides comprehensive guidance on integrating gender perspectives into criminal justice responses to terrorism, in full compliance with international human rights law.[186]

In September 2019, UN Women published **a guidance paper on the principles, dimensions and priorities of gender inclusion to prevent violent extremism**, which contains a section on "Former Fighters, Returnees, Foreign Terrorist Fighters and their Families."

Research perspectives have been incorporated into a report issued by the Counter-Terrorism Committee; it listed the gender dimensions of the response to returned foreign terrorist fighters. A publication by UNDP and civil society, Invisible Women: Gender Dimensions of Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Returnees Violent Extremism, includes good practices and programmaticguidance.[187]

Summary of key points

➔ Addressing the rise of violent extremism in prisons is a difficult challenge for governments around the world, especially considering the possible return of foreign terrorist fighters from Iraq and Syria. Overall, deradicalization and prisoner rehabilitation programme depend on political will. Public policy and academic discussions on rehabilitation for radicalized prisoners focus on a number of key concepts, including methods of segregation versus inclusion,[188] the role of the community and family in prisoner rehabilitation, requirements for orderly and effective detention environments, specialized staff, reasonable prison conditions, and reliable supervision of the prison.[189]

➔ In some contexts, prison and corrections officials and other criminal justice practitioners who address violent extremism and other types of terrorist threats have developed experience in monitoring terrorist offenders in prison for signs of continuing violent extremism, potential recruitment activities, active escapes or plans for an attack. More attention has been paid to the gender dimensions of the rehabilitation and integration of violent extremists inside prisons and the identification of the needs of women inside prisons.

➔ The multi-agency approach to rehabilitation, which involves building trust and open communication, has proven its value in a number of countries, such as Belgium, Denmark, Germany and the United Kingdom. Professional psychologists have been able to play key roles in such approaches. Incorporating effective monitoring and evaluation tools into counter-extremism programmes is essential as is training prison staff to identify indicators of violent extremism. Several countries train all front-line prison staff on radicalization, countering violent extremism in prisons and preventive responses. Building capacity in this area would help prison staff recognize and understand individual behaviors and better communicate with individuals at risk of violent extremism.

➔ Effective rehabilitation and reintegration programmes can prevent the exacerbation of extremist activity within prisons and assist in post-prison rehabilitation. A pre-release risk assessment is vital. Tools used outside detention can also assess radicalization. Governments sometimes use post-custodial tools, including control orders, continuing detention orders and extended supervision orders. Probation orders generally monitor behaviour after release. Extended supervision orders impose more active, ongoing monitoring.

➔ While much attention goes to rehabilitation programmes inside prisons and the monitoring system outside them, community participation, public awareness and the rehabilitation of families to contribute to the reintegration of their detained relatives after imprisonment are also necessary for rehabilitation and reintegration to succeed and prevent a return to violent extremism.

➔ In Iraq, extremism inside prisons appears more complex for reasons related to fragile infrastructure, overcrowding and inhumane conditions, and the lack of a clear vision for the rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremists. This situation threatens to exacerbate extremism inside prisons and produce violent extremists who could pose a real threat to Iraq and the world in the future. The same applies to women's prisons. Quick interventions according to a clear and comprehensive plan could avoid the risks of increased extremism inside prisons and a repetition of the Bucca prison scenario, which generated ISIS. Women and girls imprisoned in terrorism cases need special rehabilitation and reintegration programmes on a case-by-case basis.

Conditions of female prisoners and risks of violent extremism inside prisons

Prisons and detention centres have represented some of the main environments for radicalizing men. This danger should also be considered in women's prisons. Women and girls represent the minority of prisoners[190] around the world, estimated at 2 to 9 percent of the prison population. Given their small share, they are subject to criminal justice systems set up for men that do not meet their specific needs.

The risk of extremism in women's prisons remains, however. Women and girls detained in terrorism cases can play a polarizing, indoctrinating and recruiting role in prisons, just as men do, and perhaps to the same degree that women affiliated with ISIS spread extremist ideology inside Al-Hol Camp.

In some cases, women's exposure to abuse or abuse in detention centres constitutes a motive for further extremism in prisons.

As in men's prisons, women's prisons in Iraq suffer from overcrowding,[191] poor infrastructure and services, and violations against female prisoners.[192] Most likely, foreign ISIS women inside Iraqi prisons have not been subjected to torture as the guards are very careful not to harm them. The situation is different for Iraqi women prisoners. Because the eyes of the world are directed to foreign women, Iraqi women are exposed to a range of violations, including physical abuse, torture and other forms of harm.[193]

Several Iraqi women have been prosecuted for terrorism-related offenses. Some have served their sentences, were released and returned to their areas. Many are still behind bars, however. The Iraqi Government says that women and girls accused of terrorism offenses enjoy legal guarantees, including access to legal aid, transparent trials, the right to appoint a lawyer to defend their rights in the investigation phases, the assignment of a lawyer, and the right to appeal decisions of the investigation court and the criminal court.[194] The reality seems different and perhaps more complex.

The risks of violent extremism inside prisons

The reasons for the proliferation of extremist ideology inside prisons are multiple and complex. Some are related to violence within the prison that generates a sense of injustice and desire for revenge. Others are related to overcrowding and how dangerous and extreme prisoners can influence other groups. Polarization often exploits psychological avenues. The criminal who feels remorse and seeks to repent may confront an extremist with no difficulty in making the case that extremist ideas offer salvation. False ideas about religion easily take root in a closed environment.[195]

Prison life frightens newcomers. New convicts often arrive feeling insecure, confused, unstable and afraid. Some imprisoned extremists capitalize on this confusion and anxiety by offering food, help, friendship, protection and spiritual guidance. Extremism in prisons generally begins through personal relationships rather than through fanatical extremist rhetoric and brainwashing of a large audience. The best potential for radicalization lies in a 'person-to-person' approach.[196]

There are numerous examples of extremist leaders at least partly radicalized within prison systems that are conducive to recruitment and indoctrination, restructuring of extremist networks, promotion of extremist ideology, and the exchange of ideas and learning from like-minded people.[197] Spending a term in prison is likely to accelerate radicalization as a result of isolation from mainstream society and through exposure to ideologies to which some people are highly susceptible. Prison administrations around the world face a problem: whether to separate violent extremist prisoners from ordinary criminals. Often prison authorities tend not to separate them because they fear keeping all extremists together.

There is not enough evidence, however, to prove whether it is better to separate extremists or integrate them with criminals. Experiences in a variety of prisons in different countries have shown the danger of combining common criminals with terrorists or insurgents. They learned from each other; ideologically motivated prisoners

succeeded in recruiting new members to their cause. This is especially the case when extremists with charisma communicate with ordinary prisoners. They know their grievances and they gradually update their extremist beliefs. Another case is when extremists are strong within a particular prison and ordinary prisoners are forced to join their cause through fear or because they need material assistance.

Some studies suggest that extremists in prison often take a leadership role in the same way that they may do in the wider community. They usually try to become representatives of other prisoners in one way or another. They do so by directly opposing prison authorities, and leading hunger strikes, riots and rebellions. They are careful to show other prisoners that they do not surrender under pressure. Some take a more indirect approach, living in a pious and modest fashion and seeking to radiate confidence, peace of mind and faith to persuade other prisoners whose beliefs have not yet been fixed. All these roles can be played by female prisoners. Violent extremists especially benefit from hostile and aggressive prison cultures where moderate sermons and tolerant messages are obscured amid respect for violence and moral force.

Studies on the risks of violent extremism in women's prisons are scarce but most likely, there is a potential danger. Overall, women have prominent roles in mobilizing support and recruiting individuals for terrorist groups. According to the 2015 report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), a worrying development is the increase in the number of women who take over the task of recruitment, as they radicalize and recruit women and girls to play a more effective role in the production, dissemination and support of violent messages and images on social media or in active support, such as being fighters, recruiters, collecting funds, carrying out logistical work or working as spies.[198] ISIS's involvement of women in its propaganda and recruitment measures was a key element of its strategy, embodying its recognition of the role of women in building its long-term State. The ability of women to mobilize and polarize is great in all environments, and perhaps reaches places of detention and prisons.

The situation of Iraqi women prisoners in terrorism cases inside prisons

The researcher could not get an official number of women currently serving prison sentences for terrorism-related offences, but during a visit to juveniles' rehabilitation prison we were informed that there are 47[199] girls under 22 years of age.[200] Iraqi law allows judicial rulings against ISIS-associated children and girls who are 9 years or older. The courts may be lenient with children between ages 9 and 13 but may also issue prison sentences on charges of affiliation with ISIS or for covering up its members and other cases classified as terrorism in Iraqi law.

The charges comprise affiliation with ISIS, protecting one of its members (mostly a husband), playing logistical roles for the organization (distributing salaries to members) and carrying weapons (an explosive belt). Sentences vary from 5 to 20 years. The charge of hiding a terrorist criminal was considered the most common among the people interviewed for this study. There is some lack of clarity regarding this charge, however, as the Iraqi Penal Code stipulates that close relatives of a person who has committed a crime

against national security (i.e., that person's spouse, ancestors, children or siblings) are exempt from punishment for providing aid, means of subsistence and shelter.

This exemption is not mentioned in counter-terrorism legislation. The Counter-Terrorism Law of 2005 (Article 4) provides life imprisonment for anyone who harbours and hides a terrorist. As a result, two different views have emerged regarding the applicability of exemption in terrorism cases for women who provided shelter to their husbands or close relatives alleged to be terrorists. While some judges have applied the exemption to these women, others have not on the pretext that this provision does not apply given the exceptional gravity of terrorist crimes and the omission of such cases in counter-terrorism legislation. Currently, several women are in prison for charges related to the disappearance of a close relative alleged to be a terrorist.[201]

The majority of female respondents denied the charges against them and considered them malicious for the purpose of revenge. Regarding a cover-up charge, one female respondent denied that her husband was a member of ISIS. Another asked what she could do other than cover up for her husband. Some reports indicate that women's prisons suffer from overcrowding, poor medical supplies, poor management, andsomeviolations[202]andill-treatment.[203]

Rehabilitation programmes in detention centres include religious rehabilitation (religious lectures) and psychological rehabilitation (social assistance) in addition to vocational training (sewing, knitting, hairdressing and handicrafts). Female inmates can complete their primary studies inside the centre. Intermediate education outside the centre is subject to certain conditions. Female inmates also benefit from training courses.

Girls detained in terrorism cases reside in the same places as foreign female fighters and minor female civil rights prisoners. Their education generally does not exceed the primary level. In talking with girls imprisoned because of terrorism, the predominant impression is that they are 'victims' of families who imposed an extremist lifestyle on them. Most were forced to marry ISIS members early, sometimes as young as 12 years old. All denied any organizational relationship or belief in its ideas. Some expressed their lack of knowledge of these ideas; others admitted that they studied in ISIS schools and received religious lessons inside mosques or through sermons transmitted over loudspeakers. Interviews with detention centre officials suggested that many girls have initially expressed some extremist ideas but over time their ideas became more moderate.

Girls expressed little in terms of a vision of the post-prison period. There are no clear programmes for their reintegration into society through job opportunities. Most girls described a desire to return to their areas of origin and complete their intermediate studies, although they are currently over 20 years old. A minority said that they would prefer to go to a new area or travel abroad. There is no government plan to reintegrate these girls, however. One girl returned for help a few days after leaving because her family was trying to push her again towards extremism. In addition to this danger, the reintegration of girls poses social and security challenges since most are widows after losing their husbands. Some also lost their families during the war on ISIS. Some have children, with no breadwinner except themselves or remaining relatives.

The risk of extremism and polarization among girls in rehabilitation centres is considered small, given their young age, the relatively small number convicted of terrorism and the fact that the majority feel disappointed that their parents pushed them towards extremism. This does not mean that they do not pose a potential threat, however. These girls have experienced extremism, war and imprisonment, and some bear a great sense of injustice and hatred, whether towards their parents or society, which they consider as having unfairly accused them of an affiliation to ISIS. These matters should be considered when designing prison rehabilitation and community reintegration programmes and when assessing potential risks.

This study attempted to reach some older female prisoners to determine their situation, needs and the extent to which they benefit from rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, but several administrative obstacles prevented visits.

The limited research on female violent extremists in prisons and the effectiveness of programmes that promote disengagement from violence poses challenges since Iraqi prisons are now housing a large number of women convicted in terrorism cases. In-depth studies on violent extremist women inside prisons need to define their circumstances and needs, and indicate the possibilities for their rehabilitation inside prisons and their reintegration into society.

Challenges of disengagement and rehabilitation inside prisons

It is not at all easy to address increased extremism and polarization inside prisons. Prisons hold and punish disgruntled and violent extremist individuals. They are often crowded, unsanitary and uncomfortable. Individuals in such places tend to accept ideologies that support anti-social and anti-State violence and provide simple but fanatical answers to their grievances.

Prisons can also provide opportunities for positive change, however,[204] and be places where violent extremism is reversed. Prisoners live in a controlled environment in which the previous negative influences that drove them toward terrorism can be reduced. They may be surrounded by workers, psychologists and religious guides who encourage them to follow more positive paths.[205]

Some governments attempt to reduce the risk of extremism inside prisons through programmes for rehabilitation and disengagement from violence. Countries with deradicalization and disengagement programmes include Afghanistan (before last return of Taliban), Jordan, Indonesia, Morocco, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Yemen. These programmes are roughly centred on the same principles for social reintegration, focusing on vocational training, psychosocial

rehabilitation and religious re-education. Often incentives such as early release or amnesty and/or financial assistance during and after imprisonment encourage prisoners to participate in these programmes and disengage from violent extremism. Resources allocated to each component of rehabilitation and reintegration programmes vary greatly depending on the specific capabilities and characteristics of each country.

In the United States, for example, where people convicted of terrorist acts generally serve long sentences, the potential for social reintegration programmes is not a priority. In Spain, where sentences are shorter, the majority of people convicted of terrorism-related acts are of foreign origin and are expelled once they have completed their sentence. As for individuals associated with ethno-national terrorist movements, upon release, they are reintegrated into their local communities. Protecting national security and preventing recidivism almost exclusively involve surveillance rather than social reintegration, disengagement and individual deradicalization.

Disengagement and deradicalization programs are defined as: "Any method, activity, or program to reduce individual or collective physical or ideological commitment to an organization, environment, or movement that is described as 'extremist' or 'violent radical'."[206] Whereas deradicalization programmes aim to ensure ideological and attitudinal changes, disengagement programmes focus more on behavioural transformations, namely, abandonment of the use of violence, without aiming at ideological abandonment. Therefore, the concept of deradicalization refers to measures that envision 'cognitive rehabilitation' to facilitate the abandonment of beliefs and ideals that legitimize violent extremist actions. Disengagement refers to a process where the sole aim is not to use violence as a framework for expressing opinion or belief. Scientific literature indicates that deradicalization is not a condition for a successful process of rehabilitation and reintegration into society.[207] In fact, extremists may abandon violence to express their beliefs but without abandoning the ideas that form the basis of their extremist commitment.

It is not possible to disengage and reintegrate all terrorism prisoners, but it is feasible for some of them, especially those who show a desire to benefit from disengagement and deradicalization programmes. The question facing prison officials is whether it is possible to persuade violent extremist prisoners to disengage from violence or not, and if that is possible, which interventions can achieve disengagement. Any effort to understand the factors that drive or facilitate a particular person's disengagement from violent extremism will necessarily be based on, or derived from, that person's individual situation. In some cases, political and ideological contexts may be very different, but it is very possible that social and psychological processes involved are similar or at least comparable.[208]

There is no single model for disengagement that applies to everyone; interventions cannot simply be transferred from one country to another or even from one region to another in the same country.[209] For efforts to be effective, they should be carefully designed according to each region, the nature of the violent extremist group to which the person belongs, the causes and motives for extremism for each individual, the length of the sentence and the environment to which the prisoner will return after the end of the sentence. Interventions should focus on

social and psychological processes that can decrease or increase an individual's commitment to or involvement in violent extremism and take these into consideration to measure risks and prevent re-engagement in violent activity after imprisonment. Attitudes, beliefs and perceptions that drive violent extremism should also be considered. The reintegration plan should provide opportunities to learn professions, skills and coping mechanisms, and extend social and economic integration opportunities after imprisonment.

Challenges of disengaging from violence, rehabilitation and reintegration

Among the challenges posed by programmes for rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremists, whether in detention or open environments, is the need to intervene in various social, political, economic, emotional, cognitive and religious dimensions, and the extent to which the targeted persons feel injustice, humiliation or persecution. The transformation to violent extremism results from the interplay of a set of causes and a variety of push and pull factors. Rehabilitation must consider all of these factors and their collective and individual dimensions.

There are about 26 central prisons in Iraq, accommodating more than 50,000 prisoners, half of whom are sentenced to death.[210] The Iraqi Human Rights Commission refers, on a continuous basis, to the problems and violations in these prisons, including overcrowding, weak health care and the inability to resolve accusations and complaints of torture. The last is due to complicated and unproductive procedures, although Iraq has endorsed the Convention against Torture. Prison administrations and detention centres often face sharp criticism due to the spread of infectious diseases and the lack of health supplies. Weak treatment services are among the main causes of deaths among inmates, including from malnutrition, kidney failure and diabetes.[211] The Iraqi Government says that it intends to build more prisons due to overcrowding,[212] in conjunction with reports confirming continued violations such as crimes of torture, extortion of confessions by force, imprisonment without trial and deliberately delaying the release of inmates despite the expiry of their sentences.

Overcrowding may turn prisons into fertile ground for the growth of extremist ideology. This makes it difficult for authorities to isolate prisoners according to their crimes,[213] resulting in the intermingling of violent extremists with those arrested for other criminal offenses. In this case, the Iraqi Government faces the dual challenges of rehabilitating violent extremists and stopping further radicalization among other prisoners.

Steps taken to address these issues seem unrealistic. Young men and women who grew up in an environment marked by conflict, were involved to varying degrees in violent extremism and experienced prison with all its harsh conditions may eventually explode. Some have completed their sentences and returned to their area of origin or another one loaded with feelings of frustration and hatred and perhaps stricter ideas than when they were imprisoned, even as they have no clear opportunity for social reintegration. Some are still serving their sentences, suffer violations and may be subjected to polarization. The Government is moving towards the idea of separating prisoners who have committed terrorist

crimes from other prisoners but this solution is also not risk free, as shown by Camp Bucca.

In addition to the danger of extremism inside prisons, there is great concern over attempts to break into prisons and allow the mass escape of prisoners, which happened in Iraq during years of rebellion and sectarian violence after the United States invasion in 2003. Hundreds of Al-Qaeda fighters, including foreigners, escaped from prison. This happened more recently in Ghweran Prison in Al-Hasakah in Syria, where more than 100 ISIS militants launched an attack on the prison. It is the largest among several facilities run by the Syrian Democratic Forces and holds about 5,000 of the most dangerous former ISIS militants.

ISIS's adoption of the idea of breaking into prisons comes through a well-established doctrine under various names, including the 'strategy of demolishing the walls' or 'releasing the prisoner', all of which revolve around smuggling terrorist elements from inside prisons. The doctrine was formulated a long time ago through Salafi jihadist currents, the Islamic Group in Egypt, jihadi organizations and Al-Qaeda, ending with ISIS. The ideological discourse of ISIS is based directly on liberating its fighters from prisons, in a kind of challenge and explicit confrontation with regular forces.

Before his death in October 2019, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, published an audio recording in which he called for 'rescuing' the organization's fighters and their families detained in prisons and camps, vowing to 'revenge' them. Because of this rhetoric, many prisoners, especially long-term prisoners, including women, who have no hope of getting out of prison tend to insist on their extremist ideas. They try to spread them on a larger scale, impose their laws and rebel against prison workers while rejecting rehabilitation programmes, if any, in the belief that there is no salvation except the success of the organization in smuggling them out of prison.

One challenge posed by rehabilitation and reintegration programmes in prisons is the selection of appropriate interventions and criteria to define expected outcomes and measure success and failure. A carefully considered selection of rehabilitation methods is key for success. Experts in psychology, religion, psychiatry and sociology can help determine indicators of results.

The chances of success increase if programmes are safe, based on acceptance and trust, have sufficient resources and operate within a practical framework and according to a clear legal and procedural basis. Programmes should comply with the principles of human rights and international law obligations. Relevant institutions and agencies should be defined along with their roles, responsibilities and powers, and coordination mechanisms put in place. It is important to establish a clear definition of goals and objectives.[214]

The process of rehabilitation and integration requires time and effort. Programmes need to be long lasting and sustainable to remove psychological trauma and extremist ideas. Overall, dealing with people who express continued ideological attachment will be more complex and difficult than those who indicate remorse.

Women and girls require special attention when developing programmes.[215] They can join violent extremist groups either voluntarily or by force. Some are subordinate to a man or are victims of

coercion who become participants in violent extremism. Women's complex relationships to violent extremism make the distinction between voluntary and forced recruitment very difficult, complicating the identification of appropriate rehabilitation responses.

Many women inside prisons believe that their roles as wives and mothers of ISIS fighters, without participation in violence, mean that they have not committed a crime and that they do not pose a threat. In fact, when evaluating whether their claim is valid, Iraqi law should precisely define the meaning of violent extremism and the crimes associated with it. In general, some definitions indicate that radicalization is "a process in which individuals, individually or as part of a group, start to be exposed to and then accept extremist ideologies."[216] It is legally possible not to consider women who did not participate in violent activity as 'terrorists'. Accepting ISIS's ideology and supporting illegal acts to serve its political ideology, however, indicates extremism.

While the commitment to violent extremism, for some women, is ideologically motivated, for others it can be for economic, political, sectarian reasons or just due to subordination to men. These inmates have varying needs. The role played by a woman or girl as an instigator, affiliate, cooperator, implementer, etc. as well as the reasons that prompted her to participate with or support the organization all constitute important elements to consider in programmes for disengagement, rehabilitation and integration. It is not possible to have a single model. General political, social and economic drivers may also be in play, making it necessary for people managing programmes to understand how to adapt to problems that cannot be changed overnight.

The situation becomes more complicated for girls. It is difficult to consider any recruitment process for underage girls to be voluntary, given their still developing cognitive abilities and capacities to make decisions, their spontaneous choices in the event of conflict, and their exposure to various forms of coercion, including subordination to parents' decisions and forced marriage to ISIS fighters. Such concerns should be taken into account in designing rehabilitation and reintegration programmes and assessing risks. Biologically, the trauma that comes from living and fighting in a war zone can affect the structure of the brain. Criminology research indicates that child extremists and minors are at particular risk of committing crimes later. Proactively addressing this danger calls for all girls in juvenile centres to go through rehabilitation and reintegration programmes based on a comprehensive assessment prepared by qualified specialists and trainers. Through this process, the girls' psychological and social eligibility can be determined, along with individual needs, as part of comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration.

Among the practical difficulties faced by workers in prisons and places of detention is the lack of reliable tools to identify indicators of extremism and assess its risks,[217] and to distinguish between extremism and freedom of expression or personality, or religious or political beliefs. For many female prisoners, religiosity, for example, can be a coping strategy for the prison environment. It is important not to confuse female prisoners who display some manifestations of intense religiosity with those who adhere to extreme religious views. A weak or incorrect assessment of a person's radicalization in prison can increase

stigma and grievances and affect attitudes and decisions.

The return to terrorism constitutes the most used statistic in judging the success of rehabilitation programmes in prisons. Despite the importance of this indicator, its precise determination remains restricted. Although various assessment tools have been developed in recent years at the international level, none have, for example, assessed the potential for the return to violent extremism among inmates who have previously benefited from rehabilitation programmes. It is difficult to identify and evaluate the causes for a return to violent extremism.[218] In many cases, it is difficult to re-arrest all those who have been released from prison and returned to violent extremism. Further, States may lose track of individuals who have participated in prison rehabilitation programmes.

Proposed measures for the rehabilitation of women and girls associated with terrorism inside prisons

Ten years ago, the Iraqi Government emphasized the rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremists, particularly foreigners. It realized that fighters would be a problem and had to be dealt with on a global level. As a result, several countries met between 2011 and 2012 and agreed on the Rome Memorandum of Good Practices for the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Criminals. It includes 25 best practices, recognizing that no single solution applies to all cases.[219] Instead, it presents a methodology that can be adapted.

The Iraqi Government is making some rehabilitation efforts based on changing the beliefs of prisoners who have converted to extremist ideology coupled with professional training. These efforts need to be further developed while addressing some key questions. First, what are the desired goals and objectives of a rehabilitation programme? The main objective should be to reintegrate violent extremists into society.[220] This should not entail forcing an individual to abandon his or her political beliefs but should encourage them to understand that violence is not the solution to achieving their goals. Second, how can violent extremism be prevented in prisons? Third, what are the different roles of the various actors? Fourth, what is the Government's responsibility towards violent extremists, youth and women who suffer from potential vulnerabilities?[221] Fifth, what is the role of local communities in social reintegration to avoid a return to extremism? After answering these inquiries, several measures can be taken as follows.

The situation of prisons and prisoners in Iraq greatly affects the efficacy of rehabilitation and reintegration programmes inside prisons. There is an urgent need to improve humanitarian and living conditions and develop programmes responsive to the large number of violent extremist prisoners, including women, and the types of potential threats they represent.

Building the capacity of prison staff is essential, especially in dealing with violent extremist prisoners.[222] International standards call for training staff prior to work in prisons, through pre-service 'induction' training, and throughout their careers in prison management with in-service 'refresher'

training.[223] Good practices involve providing additional training to staff before they start working in prisons that hold violent extremist prisoners. While prisons are incubators of violent extremism, detention officials often have limited knowledge about the pathways of extremism and how to recognize its signs. They are not able to intervene quickly and inform stakeholders about countering violent extremism. This is especially true for those who deal directly with individuals at risk of polarization.

Introductory educational modules could be provided on topics such as managing violent extremists in prisons, identifying and diagnosing extremism conducive to violence in prisons, and gender dimensions of violent extremism for workers in women's and juvenile prisons. Training should foster better understanding of extremism leading to violence, such as by deconstructing some stereotypes or enhancing understanding of the complexities of this problem. It should also distinguish between signs of extremism leading to violence and legitimate expressions of faith, ideology and political opinions, and provide guidance on assessing whether an intervention is appropriate ornot.[224]

It is particularly important that front-line prison staff understand and accurately adapt to the process of disengagement and reintegration, even if they are not directly responsible for its implementation. Staff should avoid taking measures that undermine the process and should possess a comprehensive understanding and appreciation of their important role in supporting it.

Women and men prisoners face different situations. Women prisoners require special attention as many suffer from untreated psychological and health issues as well as sexual abuse. The impact of imprisonment on their lives may vary. Increasing knowledge of their backgrounds, characteristics and reintegration needs is an important first step for policymakers and practitioners towards reviewing and amending laws and policies in a gender-responsive manner. Treating female criminals and prisoners differently is not unfair or discriminatory; it recognizes varying needs.[225] In most cases, women assume major responsibilities for the family, especially when there are children, which can lead to dire consequences during imprisonment. In contrast, when the father is sent to prison, the mother is generally the one who takes care of the children. Special measures should ensure that female prisoners can maintain contact with their children, with additional consideration for newborns and young children.[226]

Rehabilitation programmes may take a different approach to women sentenced to long prison terms. Programmes may be useful for those with a light or medium sentence of 5 to 10 years. The prison administration may exercise discretion for those sentenced to a longer period of 15 years to life. Prison administrations can assess women prisoners' backgrounds, causes of radicalization, behaviour in prison and the length of their sentences to determine which individuals are suitable for rehabilitation or not and which are willing to benefit from rehabilitation or not. Programmes are more successful when beneficiaries voluntarily agree to them.

Where prisons take disengagement measures, all those involved, including scholars, religious leaders, front-line staff and civil society organizations, need capacity-building to understand a range of issues. These include the measures taken, the aims and objectives

of the programme, the type of violent extremist prisoners they deal with, the need to distinguish between the needs of women and men and how to manage crises when they arise.

Psychologists can play a key role in disengagement and should be fully integrated into interventions to achieve this goal.[227] It is also important to include appropriate religious professionals. A number of extremist prisoners who use religion to justify their actions may have a superficial knowledge of their faith. In this case, religious scholars trained for this purpose should engage in a comprehensive religious dialogue and question extremist views and interpretations that permit the use of violence. They can build alternative religious perceptions that reject violence and call for tolerance, diversity and acceptance of others.

Parties involved in religious rehabilitation programmes in prisons should provide carefully selected religious scholars with specialized training before they start this work. They will need training on how to work in prisons, deal specifically with women and girls, and transition from the traditional missionary role to one based on more awareness and spiritual guidance in the special context of prisons. Training on prison psychology and the gender dimensions of violent extremism is also important.

The Government should require religious scholars involved in rehabilitation to go through security, intelligence and knowledge checks to ensure that their knowledge and opinions are acceptable and consistent with therapeutic goals and will not be counterproductive. Materials used by religious scholars admitted to prisons should be examined to ensure that they support rehabilitation and do not condone or encourage extremist ideology.[228]

Effective rehabilitation applies a multidisciplinary approach that considers the specifics of each case. These include an individual's age, psychological and family background, cognitive abilities, ideological background, and the social, political and economic context before and after imprisonment. Reasons for sympathizing or participating in violent extremist acts should be understood, along with how this has affected thinking and views of others. For girls in particular, the right environment often helps their young minds turn away from corrupt ideas.[229]

In many cases, after women prisoners' sentences end, they will return to their areas. This warrants testing whether society will accept or punish them. In general, reintegration into society is a key factor for the success of rehabilitation programmes started in prisons. Most women will not find a supporter after their release, which makes economic reintegration essential, including through job opportunities linked to skills they acquired in prison.

Establishing a link between rehabilitation and reintegration programmes and law enforcement and intelligence services performing follow-up, monitoring and risk assessment reduces risks from the possible return of some former prisoners to violent extremism. Risk assessment is necessary not only at the reception stage but also in later stages given the possibility of a person returning to extremism or becoming more radical. Measures should be in place to track when programme participants are re-arrested for the same crimes, whether they constitute a negative influence on others in persuading them to join the terrorist cause and the extent of the success of their reintegration into society.[230]

Recommendations

A properly managed prison that operates in accordance with principles of good governance and respect for human rights, and with effective programmes and policies, provides a unique opportunity for authorities to work with violent extremists (women and men) to positively influence their future behaviors.

In addition to following established principles of criminal justice, a successful rehabilitation and reintegration process relies on training prison staff to use appropriate tools to assess risks, provide psychological support and engage with families and community leaders.

With large number of Iraqi women prisoners convicted in terrorism cases, programmes should account for the gender dimensions of violent extremism and rehabilitation and reintegration. Policymakers and prison staff should avoid falling into the trap of gender stereotypes that women and girls are 'weak' or 'naive'. These women experienced violence, some supported and cooperated with it, and some sympathized with it. Some are actually victims but others made conscious and deliberate choices. Rehabilitation and disengagement programmes should be provided in prisons to women convicted of terrorism along with follow-up after the completion of their sentences.

Prison staff and supervisors of female prisoners should understand the gender dimensions of violent extremism and the complex roles that women play in terrorism, bearing in mind that those who completely deny that they are extremists or have committed a mistake, or who seek to justify or normalize what they have done, are an ongoing threat.

Understanding why women and girls turn to violent extremism is critical to designing rehabilitation programmes and integral to monitoring and assessment. Careful and continuous assessment of women's risks and needs is an important element.[231]

Some girls and women confess the mistakes that led them to prison. This does not mean they should be forced to give up their opinions and ideas or even their entire ideology. Rather, confession reflects their rejection of violence and willingness to work within the framework of society's laws. Educating them in democratic values, moderate Islamic teachings and practical skills is critical in rehabilitation.

Programmes for countering violent extremism should provide tools for social reintegration of former extremist women and girls. They should offer solid services, including, in some special cases, alternatives to imprisonment and, after release, the creation of suitable job opportunities.

Strengthening prospects for the social reintegration of female extremist prisoners, especially girls, encompasses establishing follow-up care and supervision after release and ensuring community participation in facilitating their reintegration. Mothers in particular are among the few sources capable of detecting signs of extremism among children and can influence them to avoid returning to extremism.

Serious efforts should seek adequate funding for rehabilitation programmes in prisons as they are severely underfunded.

SUMMARY

The issue of families perceived as associated with ISIS is complex, with challenges and risks that could affect the security of Iraq and the stability of the Arab region and the wider world. A comprehensive solution to this issue requires political will and a clear vision and drive to dismantle the many official and unofficial obstacles preventing the return of thousands of women and children, and to mitigate problems faced by those who do return. A legal, administrative and coordination framework among various relevant actors needs to be in place. Societal awareness of the challenges and risks associated with the continued rejection of the return of families or their stigmatization and exclusion is imperative. Front-line practitioners need cognitive skills and capacity-building to respond effectively and appropriately to such issues.

The failure to find sustainable solutions and comprehensively address the conditions of these families otherwise threatens to create new grievances with potentially catastrophic repercussions.

The challenges seem even greater when it comes to families returning from Al-Hol Camp, given the possible security risks associated with their return, in addition to social and economic challenges and the difficulties associated with sustainable rehabilitation and integration. Any comprehensive treatment of returnees from Al-Hol requires a vision and comprehensive plan for return, rehabilitation and social integration. Comprehensive interventions should be grounded in the collection of and follow-up on information about families who have returned or have not yet been able to return; the specific experiences of returning women, girls and children, including in terms of degrees of extremism and trauma, and mental health status; the level of ideological indoctrination, disillusionment with or adherence to the ideas of ISIS; motives for return; risks; immediate and long-term needs; and the roles of concerned treatment agencies, families and communities in the rehabilitation and reintegration process. Those who show some vulnerability need long-term psychological support. Lack of mental health support, in the long term, increases the likelihood of recurrence of fear and trauma months or years later.

The current study shows that returnees from Al-Hol and internally displaced persons are often excluded and stigmatized by their communities. Local communities greatly affected by ISIS crimes, in most cases, still reject returns. It seems very difficult to provide a reliable environment, a no-trauma zone, and establish bonds of trust between local communities and families perceived to be associated with ISIS, in a manner that would ensure safe and sustainable returns. If families have weak or no social bonds, at a time when they are suffering from difficult economic and living conditions and serious psychological problems, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, the crisis will deepen, exacerbate risks and hinder the success of any rehabilitation and reintegration attempts.

The most urgent solution appears to be holding comprehensive local reconciliation sessions convening various social actors (clan leaders, clerics, community leaders, civil society, media,

intellectuals, etc.), local authorities and security agencies, supported by relevant international organizations. Reconciliation and obtaining the support of local communities would go far in addressing the issues of families perceived as associated with ISIS. This would spare Iraq a worst-case scenario if these families remain in their current situation.

Remedying the harm caused to communities affected by ISIS crimes, completion of relevant compensation payments and the provision of a stable lifestyle through education, health care, work, decent housing, infrastructure, etc. underpins the success of local reconciliation initiatives.

Rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for women perceived as associated with ISIS require significant financial resources, multiple psychological support centres, qualified clerics and trained and qualified practitioners equipped to operate within the framework of a broad and sustainable rehabilitation and reintegration process. A complicating factor is the large number of people who need long follow-up and multiple interventions.

Successfully reintegrating women and children requires rehabilitation programmes and social and psychological treatment as well as other interventions to settle their administrative, living and economic conditions. Social reintegration requires the involvement of all active components of society, including women, youth, families, local authorities, health and mental health professionals, police, public servants, clerics, civil society organizations and the media. Early and comprehensive interventions that start inside camps or prisons and extend to local communities in a coordinated and parallel manner constitute a key success factor for rehabilitation and community integration.

Weak funding can pose a barrier to return and reintegration plans. Insufficient human resources, reflected in the lack of staff in rehabilitation programmes, especially psychiatrists, can also hinder rehabilitation. Other challenges stem from the lack of coordination among various actors and limited exchanges of information.

Priorities include providing necessary resources for rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, building the capacities of staff, and increasing coordination to determine what should be done and by whom. Stable structures should be established and entrusted with long-term planning, direction, advice, follow-up and assessment. It is also important to recognize that rehabilitation and reintegration processes require effort, a long time and careful follow-up. Even then, they are not risk-free.

ANNEX 1: SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCES

Muhalabiya area: tribal reconciliation and safe returns

Al Muhalabiya is located 35 km to the west of Mosul, a the largest district of Mosul in Ninewa Governorate. Residents include 40,000 Iraqis spread in approximately fifty surrounding villages. Historically, the people of Al Muhalabiya are distinguished by their cultural, religious and ethnic diversity.

Most of the people of Muhalabiya sub-district depend for their livelihood on the cultivation of two crops, wheat and barley, in addition to other crops including cotton, rye, yellow corn, sunflower, vegetables, legumes, fodder, and oilseeds. The land used for farming is either owned by farmers or rented from the Iraqi government. In addition, some people depend on grazing and livestock such as sheep, cows and poultry.

During the occupation of ISIL, some residents of the area joined the terrorist organization, and others lost their relatives and homes, forcing them to flee. Only 10% of the original community members remained in Muhalabiya. After liberation from ISIL in 2017, the families who fled from ISIL returned to find huge destruction in the whole area of Muhalabiya.Since then, UNDP Iraq has been working to rehabilitate basic infrastructure, rebuild homes, and support community initiatives to enhance community cohesion. This comprehensive approach ensures the rehabilitation of area buildings to restore basic services, including support to the West Mosul Local Peace Committee to facilitate the peaceful return and reintegration of families.[232]

The Muhalabiya Local Peace Committee, in cooperation with the security forces, tribal chiefs, the United Nations Development Programme and some international organizations, worked to return the displaced persons perceived to be associated with ISIL, and to reintegrate them back into society to encourage social cohesion. To facilitate this process, a number of meetings were held in the Muhalabiya district and some of its villages, in the presence of the director of the Muhalabiya district, security forces, tribal leaders, mukhtars, and dignitaries of the district, in order to agree on a plan of action for the return of the displaced families.

Meetings were held in the Muhalabiya sub-district, the office of the district director, the village of Tal Asmir, the village of Adaiya, the village of Twaim, the village of Tal Zalat, and the village of Abu Shuwaiha. Afterwards, a meeting was held in Mosul in order to discuss the concepts of peaceful coexistence and combatting terrorist ideology in Muhalabiya district and its villages. All participants in these meetings agreed on the need for families to return to their areas of residence.[233] In order to come up with a document that guarantees everyone's rights and protection for the returning families, these meetings culminated in the Muhalabiya Local Peace Conference, which was held on

October 14, 2020, and 1,200 families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL were returned to their areas of residence in the district center and its villages.

This conference was held with the support of the United Nations Development Programme and under the supervision of the Governor of Ninawa, Najm al-Jubbouri, and in the presence of the Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali-Ahmad, the mayor of Mosul, Zuhair al-Araji, a representative of the Prime Minister, many officers and officials, the head of the Local Peace Committee, and a large gathering of tribal leaders, notables, and the Mayor of Muhalabiya.

Families not only returned to their areas and villages, but effort was also made to reintegrate them back into the community. Abd al-Rahman al-Dawla, the Mayor of Muhalabiya, stated: "We must show mercy to all the displaced, including the families whose members belonged to ISIL, and allow them to return to their homes. We now have hundreds of families living in our area whose sons had belonged to ISIL. There are no problems. I call for tolerance and for the rest of the families to be fully received, accommodated and returned. Everyone must be allowed to return, we want to secure the future for generations tocome."[234]

The local community in Muhalabiya, as well as the returning families, benefit from reintegration programmes that include livelihood support, psychological and social support, as well as reconstruction and rehabilitation of damaged homes. UNDP rehabilitated the District Agricultural Building Directorate, the Governor's Office, the Primary and Secondary School, Civil Status Building, Police and National Security Directorate and Center and Agricultural Store Buildings, and is currently rehabilitating 175 homes in the area.

As part of the reintegration process, in August 2021, UNDP implemented a capacity building program for community leaders in areas of return, including Muhalabiya. The program included practical applications of mediation, conflict resolution techniques and the role of moderate religious discourse. The goal of this type of programme is to provide community leaders with the tools and skills to prevent any potential societal tensions arising from families returning to their communities. UNDP held another programme for members of the local government, security officers and other officials to build their capacities in the field of reintegration, community readiness, and acceptance of return.

Residents of the Muhalabiya area welcomed all returning families, regardless of their background. The people have expressed that they belong to a tolerant environment that accepts diversity, as well as their appreciation for society and the importance of social integration. According to one resident, "we have been always known sa a peaceful society. We cannot punish people for decisions made by members of their families that are out of their control. They have been equally affected by the conflict. I am happy to see how we welcome the returning families with open arms." He adds, "I am also very happy to see the restoration of basic services, such as electricity and access to the civil status building where I renewed my citizenship."

The experience in Muhalabiya is a best practice, prompting the University of Mosul to hold a panel discussion entitled: "Al Muhalabiya as a pioneer in managing coexistence and conflict resolution."[235] The hope is that this

experience will be expanded to include all areas of Iraq affected by conflict, in order to improve social reconciliation and comprehensively close the file of families perceived to be linked to ISIL, in a way that guarantees the security of Iraq and all Iraqis.

Source: According to the statements of Ayser Salim, a resident of the Mosul area who contributed to facilitating and following up the meetings that led to the UNDP-Iraq peace conference.

Mahlabiya with an open heart welcome the returning families

Muhalabiya welcomes returning families with an open heart:

https://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/ar/home/stories/2021-stories/11/Muhalabiya_Welcomes_Returning_Families.html

Covenant of Honor for the Local Peace Conference in Muhalabiya district and its affiliated villages

Preamble:

We, the sheikhs, dignitaries of clans and community leaders in the Muhalabiya district of Mosul district in Ninewa Governorate, unanimously agree on this document of honor as an affirmation of our faith and commitment to coexistence among all components in the Muhalabiya district in order to consolidate the pillars of community peace and enhance community cohesion, in order to avoid the scourge of strife of division and dispersal through which extremism and terrorism have occurred.

God grants success.

Document Terms:

1. Rejection of ISIL and all criminal terrorist organizations and of every participant in acts of murder, displacement, kidnapping, incitement, threats, looting of money from citizens and all crimes against the law.
2. Solidarity with the families of the victims of terrorism and those affected by the crimes of terrorist organizations and recognizing their rights.
3. Working on the education of the community in the Muhalabiya district and its villages, especially the youth, against extremism in all its forms through awareness programs, seminars, workshops, and media.
4. Working to strengthen social peace in the region, rejecting all forms of violence and extremism, committing to moderate discourse, and cooperating with international and governmental institutions and organizations to establish social and community peace.
5. Supporting and strengthening the rule of law and enabling the judicial authorities to achieve justice and retribution against criminals belonging to terrorist organizations and to report criminals to serve justice and security.

6. The heads of clans and sub-families of each clan pledge with the village chiefs to report to the authorities about those from their clans involved with ISIL to the security authorities so that justice may be served.
7. The Local Peace Committee in West Ninewa, along with the Local Peace Committee in Muhalabiya, in cooperation with the district administration, tribal sheikhs, and relevant government and security agencies, with organizations supporting peace, adopt the work of returning the remaining displaced families and solving the problems left by ISIL terrorists with wisdom and dialogue between individuals and groups and ensuring the rule of law.
8. The Local Peace Committee in West Ninewa, along with the Local Peace Committee in Muhalabiya, in cooperation with the district administration, tribal sheikhs, and relevant government and security agencies, encourage and support the return of the displaced, including those who have been proven innocent of joining the terrorist organization "ISIL", and not to blame children and women for crimes committed by their relatives if they reject these crimes.
9. The committee calls for addressing malicious cases, holding accountable anyone who accuses innocent people for personal or political purposes, and holding those accountable by the competent security and judicial authorities.
10. Renouncing the extremist religious, political and media discourse, and emphasizing the imams and preachers of mosques to adhere to the moderate discourse calling for unity, mercy, tolerance and living in peace, and rejecting all forms of division and extremism.

Signed by:

➔ Governor of Ninewa

➔ Mayor of Mosul District

➔ Muhalabiya district manager

➔ Chairman of the Local Peace Committee

➔ Muhalabiya Local Peace Committee

➔ Some of the sheikhs, notables, and the chosen ones of the district and its villages

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ENDNOTES

1 In January 2017, UNDP began a five-year partnership with the National Reconciliation Implementation and Follow-up Committee in the Iraqi Government to support integrated reconciliation. In the implementation of the programme in 2020, 4,000 ISIS-affiliated families were contacted to secure their voluntary return to Nineveh and Anbar governorates, with more families to follow over the next two years. In October 2020, organized by the Local Peace Committee and supported by UNDP, and in the presence of members of the local community in the Mahlabiya district, official figures, clan leaders, community notables and members of the returning families, the United Nations announced the signing of a charter of honour requiring the return of 1,100 ISIS families to their original areas in the city of Mosul in northern Iraq.

2 See also Human Rights Watch 2019a.

3 In early June 2014, the Shiite religious authority, Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani, issued a religious ruling that calls on everyone able to bear arms to volunteer in the security forces to fight ISIS militants, and permits popular mobilization to ward off the danger of this organization, which is described in Islamic jurisprudence as 'sufficiency jihad'. Immediately after the announcement of this religious ruling, the Iraqi Government began placing these forces in an official framework that institutionalizes them by declaring the establishment of the Popular Mobilization Directorate to recruit those able to bear arms from all Iraqi governorates. The Popular Mobilization Forces act officially as any institution of the Iraqi State protected by law during the performance of combat duties.

4 That is, the governorates liberated from ISIS.

5 According to the statements of a judge in the Court Specialized in Terrorism Cases, who spoke on condition of anonymity to a media source.

6 These documents are known inside Iraq as the 'golden square'; they include the ID card, the citizenship certificate, the housing card and the ration card.

7 According to estimates by Iraqi officials.

8 According to official figures.

9 According to what was viewed during the visit to the camp for the purpose of this study.

10 CTED 2019.

11 Vidino 2014.

12 UNICEF and International Alert 2016.

13 The New York Times 2017.

14 OCHA 2018b, p. 5.

15 OCHA July 2018a.

16 Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons 2020.

17 OCHA 2021.

18 Human Rights Watch 2019a.

19 Kao and Revkin 2020.

20 Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons 2020.

21 International reports have estimated that by July 2018, the number of foreign militants who joined ISIS reached over 41,480 people from 80 countries, in addition to increasing numbers of women, minors and infants born in conflict areas. Some figures indicate that 10-13 percent of foreigners who joined ISIS in 2013-2018 were women and 9-12 percent were children. Between 6,797 and 6,902 women travelled to conflict areas in the Arab States. According to recent research, the return of 609 women or 9 percent of female travellers has been registered. This rate of return is much lower than the rate of return of men and children.

22 CTED; Gender dimensions of the response to returning foreign terrorist fighters: Research perspectives – February 2019.

23 ICRC 2009.

24 UNODC 2013.

25 Committee on Population 1998, p. 13.

26 Based on the Merriam-Webster's definition at: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/camp.

27 IOM 2015, p. 9.

28 UNDP 2020, pp. 9-10.

29 The Brookings Institution-Bern Project on Internal Displacement 2011.

30 Kahn and Lucchi 2009.

31 Journal of Eliminating Extremism 2017.

32 See Security Council resolution 2242 (2015).

33 U.N; Operational Guide to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS), 2010.

34 See DETC 2018.

35 Koehler 2017, p. 62.

36 Horgan 2009.

37 Bravo-Baumann 2000.

38 576,000 displaced families returned to freed areas between 2017 and the beginning of 2021.

39 UNAMI 2014.

40 IOM 2014.

41 USAID 2015.

42 REACH 2015.

43 IDMC Iraq 2020.

44 OCHA 2021.

45 Hassan and Al-Jubouri 2016.

46 UNHCR 2021.

47 IOM; «Iraq Master List Report 116.»

48 According to a statement by Iraqi Minister of Immigration Evan Faiq to the Iraqi News Agency in December 2021.

49 IOM 2019, 2020.

50 According to the classification of the researcher in the affairs of extremist groups, Hisham Al-Hashimi.

51 UNDP 2021b.

52 Human Rights Watch 2021.

53 OCHA 2021.

54 According to a statement by the spokesperson for the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, Ali Jahangir, to Anadolu Agency on 29 January 2021.

55 OCHA 2021.

56 Rudaw 2018.

57 Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons 2020.

58 According to the testimonies of women interviewed for this study.

59 IDMC 2021.

60 According to the Higher Humanitarian Cell for Camp Coordination and Camp Management in Iraq.

61 International Crisis Group interviews with international humanitarian workers, Erbil, December 2019.

62 This is integrated military and security leadership in Anbar.

63 Human Rights Watch 2021.

64 According to the statements of the Minister of Migration and Displacement Evan Faeq Jabro.

65 Sanad for Peacebuilding, Social Inquiry and the Government of Canada 2018.

66 According to statements by respondents in this study.

67 Sanad for Peacebuilding 2018.

68 According to the testimonies of some civil society representatives in meetings with UNDP in 2021.

69 According to media reports.

70 According to the testimony of one of the displaced women in this study.

71 According to the statements of some people interviewed for this study and the testimonies of some representatives of civil society in meetings with UNDP in 2021.

72 International Crisis Group 2020.

73 The Right to Education in Iraq. Part One: The Legacy of ISIL Territorial Control on Access to Education, February 2020, pp. 11–12.

74 Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons 2020.

75 According to the statements of some displaced women interviewed for this study.

76 Norwegian Refugee Council 2019a, 2019b.

77 Gebeily 2019.

78 International Crisis Group 2020.

79 According to the statement of a women interviewed for this study.

80 According to the statements of displaced women for this study.

81 According to the statement of a displaced women for this study.

82 According to statements by a displaced women inside Al-Jada 5 Camp for this study.

83 The United Nations contributes to the reconstruction of Iraq through UNDP. A stabilization project is implementing 1,208 projects in 23 cities, more than a quarter of them in Mosul. This project works in cooperation with the Iraqi Government to set priorities for restoring stability to the affected areas. It focuses on restarting public services and creating conditions for people to return home with dignity. Despite these and other efforts, there are still many problems associated with reconstruction.

84 OCHA 2019b.

85 IDMC and Norwegian Refugee Council 2018. Zmkan and Skelton 2020.

86 According to the testimony of a displaced woman for this study.

87 The fifth periodic report submitted by Iraq in 2021 under Articles 16 and 17 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

88 Baudot 2018.

89 Center for Civilians in Conflict 2017.

90 The National 2020.

91 Based on interviews conducted by a group of international humanitarian organizations in 2018.

92 Ibid.

93 Based on interviews conducted for this study.

94 Respond policy brief; Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Iraq: Conditions and Challenges, 2011/11.

95 Reach 2020.

96 According to interviews conducted for this study with families returning to their areas of origin. See also Human Rights Watch 2016b.

97 Human Rights Watch 2019a.

98 Based on interviews conducted for this study.

99 Issa and Salim, 2019.

100 According to interviews conducted for this study.

101 Based on statements by displaced women for this study.

102 Amnesty International 2018.

103 Ibid.

104 Hassan 2020.

105 St Thomas King and Ardis. Identity Crisis? Documentation for the Displaced in Iraq", October 2015.

106 WHO 2018.

107 Human Rights Watch 2016a.

108 Analytical Summary of the Executive Directorate for Counter-Terrorism; Returning Children Associated with ISIS.

109 IOM DTM 2020.

110 IDMC 2020.

111 OCHA 2021.

112 United Nations 2021.

113 Mawazin News 2020.

114 UNDP 2021a.

115 Ibid.

116 Ibid.

117 Respond policy brief; Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Iraq: Conditions and Challenges – 2011/11.

118 Mercy Corps 2015.

119 Ibid.

120 "Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi meets with representatives of the clans and dignitaries of Nineveh Governorate," Prime Minister's Office, 20 June 2020; "Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi visits Mar Adi Church in Hamdaniya District and meets with the Chaldean Diocese Pastor in Mosul," Prime Minister's Office, 20 June 2020.

121 Abdul-Zahra 2020.

122 Ban Arab 2016, p. 41.

123 Kasiski 2016.

124 The Phenomenon of Black Widows that Appeared in Iraq after 2006.

125 Sundy 2020, p. 156.

126 Diakumar et al. 2015.

127 International Crisis Group 2020.

128 CIVIC 2019.

129 UNDP 2017.

130 UNDP 2021b.

131 Al-Hol Camp, The Last Refuge for ISIS Fighters and Women, BBC Arabic, at the following link: https://bbc.in/2RF9HWq

132 In Anticipation of New Waves of Refugees, the United Nations is Preparing the "Al-Hol" Camp in Al-Hasakah, Sham News Network, at the following link: https://bit.ly/3enRN3U

133 United Nations 2021.

134 United Nations Security Council 2019; Saad 2020.

135 As reported by Sherwan Khalil, (a pseudonym), an independent media activist in the Syrian Democratic Forces areas. The interview was conducted on 12 April 2020.

136 According to Iraqi security sources.

137 According to official figures issued by the national security adviser at the Tamayuz Centre.

138 According to statements by Iraqi security officials.

139 According to some testimonies in this study.

140 CTED 2019.

141 CTED 2018.

142 UNDP 2022.

143 Saleh 2021.

144 United Nations 2021.

145 The Wall Street Journal 2021.

146 Washington Post 2019.

147 Saleh 2021.

148 Ibid.

149 The Wall Street Journal 2021.

150 United Nations 2021.

151 Kose 2019.

152 Ibid.

153 In a few cases, the community's reaction is positive. For example, Yazidi community leaders espoused returning girls, providing a model for acceptance, dispelling the stigma of sexual violence and protecting girls from so-called 'honour' crimes. They worked to provide the girls with health care and advice, including arranging for some to travel to Germany for specialized treatment.

154 According to the statements of the head of the Department of Foreign Relations in the Autonomous Administration, Abdel Karim Omar, for "Al-Sharq al-Awsat" on 4 October 2021.

155 According to the statements of a security official for this study.

156 The number of male returnees is 631, the number of women is 852. Over age 18, the number of males is 143 and of females 422. Under age 18, the number of males is 486 and of females 432. Figures are according to the National Security Adviser at the Tamayuz Centre.

157 According to the statements of Iraqi citizens from Nineveh governorate.

158 See the first chapter of this study.

159 Sky News Arabia 2021.

160 Al-Awsat 2021.

161 Ibid.

162 According to what was reported by Iraqi news agencies linked to the Popular Mobilization security sources.

163 Washington and Yousafzai 2018.

164 UNDP 2021b.

165 Briggs Obe and Silverman 2014.

166 According to the testimonies of multiple returnees from Al-Hol for this study.

167 IOM and USAID 2021.

168 According to the statements of a security official in The New Arab, 2 June 2021.

169 According to the testimony of some residents of Al-Jada camp for this study.

170 IOM and USAID 2021.

171 UNDP and the International Network for Civil Society Action 2019.

172 The RAN Declaration of Good Practices for Engagement with Foreign Fighters for Prevention Outreach, Rehabilitation and Reintegration, Radicalization Awareness Network, Nov 2013.

173 Excerpt from the Global Solutions Sharing Platform 2017.

174 See UNDP 2022.

175 UNDP and the International Network for Civil Society Action 2019..

176 Speech delivered by Dr. Mia Bloom, Professor of Communications at Georgia State University, at the Global Platform for Solutions Sharing Workshop held in Oslo, Norway, on 26-27 April 2018.

177 Analytical briefing of the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate: Returning ISIS-Associated Women.

178 UNDP 2021b.

179 UNICEF and International Alert 2016

180 The Atlantic 2017.

181 UNDP and the International Network for Civil Society Action 2019.

182 Security Council resolution 2396 (2017), paragraph 39.

183 Analytical Briefing of the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate: Repatriation of Women Associated with ISIS.

184 Security Council resolution 2396 (2017), paragraph 31.

185 S/2018/177

186 The handbook is available on the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime website.

187 The full reports are available on the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Management website and the UNDP website

188 Jones and Morales 2012.

189 UNODC 2016.

190 The term 'prisoner' refers to all persons detained or imprisoned for, or pursuant to an allegation of, any criminal offence, including pretrial detainees, those on trial, those found guilty and those sentenced.

191 According to photos published by the Iraqi Observatory for Human Rights in February 2021.

192 According to the statements of a researcher at Harvard University, Vera Myronova, about the conditions of prisoners in Iraqi prisons, to media sites. See: https://inp.plus/news/97808.

193 Ibid.

194 The fifth periodic report submitted by Iraq in 2021 under Articles 16 and 17 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

195 Sundy 2020, p. 146.

196 La Radicalisation en Détention, La Revue de l'association des Services de Réhabilitation Sociale du Québec, vol XXXI, N° 2, 2019.

197 UNODC 2016.

198 Bakker and Leede 2015.

199 According to official figures.

200 According to the statements of the director of the Juvenile Correction Directorate, Women's Rehabilitation Department.

201 This information is based on an exchange of views between judges in Iraq and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

202 According to the statements of a researcher at Harvard University, Vera Myronova, about the conditions of prisoners in Iraqi prisons, to media sites. See: https://inp.plus/news/97808.

203 Human Rights Watch 2019b.

204 Jones 2014.

205 See in this regard the Rome Memorandum of Good Practice for the Rehabilitation and Inclusion of Violent Extremist Offenders.

206 Koehler 2017, p. 62.

207 Horgan 2009.

208 Criminal Justice Handbook Series "Managing Violent Extremist Prisoners and Preventing Extremism Conducive to Violence in Prisons" pp. 55-57.

209 Ibid., pp. 67-68.

210 According to a statement issued by the Iraqi Ministry of Justice on 7 September 2021.

211 According to media reports.

212 According to the statements of the spokesman for the Iraqi Ministry of Justice, Ahmed Luaibi.

213 According to media statements by the Iraqi expert in security affairs, Hisham Al-Hashimi.

214 Criminal Justice Handbook Series "Managing Violent Extremist Prisoners and Preventing Extremism Conducive to Violence in Prisons" pp. 67-68.

215 See Security Council resolutions 2178 (2014), 2349 (2017) and 2396 (2017).

216 Quoted in Cottee 2019.

217 Van der Heide, 2019.

218 UNODC 2016.

219 de Kerchove et al. 2015.

220 El Difraoui and M. Uhlmann 2015.

221 de Kerchove et al. 2015.

222 UNODC 2016.

223 See Rules 75 and 76 of the Nelson Mandela Rules and Rules 29 and 33 of the Bangkok Rules.

224 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the committee of the Regions on preventing radicalization to terrorism and violent extremism: Strengthening the EU's response 2014, paragraph 2.4.

225 Consider the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment, Principle 5(2).

226 Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, Rule 23.

227 Hedayah and the International Center for Counterterrorism 2013.

228 Ibid.

229 Athie 2018.

230 See Good Practice No. 2 of the Rome Memorandum of Good Practice for the Rehabilitation and Inclusion of Violent Extremist Offenders.

231 Rome Memorandum of Good Practice for the Rehabilitation and Integration of Violent Extremist Offenders.

232 UNDP Iraq: https://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/ar/home/stories/2021-stories/11/Muhalabiya_Welcomes_Returning_Families.html

233 According to the statements of Ayser Salim, a resident of the Mosul area who contributed to facilitating and following up the meetings that led to the peace conference.

234 UNDP Iraq: https://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/ar/home/stories/2021-stories/11/Muhalabiya_Welcomes_Returning_Families.html

235 UNDP Iraq: https://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/ar/home/stories/2021-stories/11/Muhalabiya_Welcomes_Returning_Families.html

AFFILIATED WITH ISIS:

CHALLENGES FOR THE RETURN AND REINTEGRATION OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

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