[Template:Other uses](/wiki/Template:Other_uses" \o "Template:Other uses) [Template:Pp-semi-indef](/wiki/Template:Pp-semi-indef) [Template:Pp-move](/wiki/Template:Pp-move) [Template:Coord](/wiki/Template:Coord) [Template:Infobox country](/wiki/Template:Infobox_country) **Iraq** ([Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en), [Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en), or [Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en); [Template:Lang-ar](/wiki/Template:Lang-ar) [*Template:Transl*](/wiki/Template:Transl), [Kurdish](/wiki/Kurdish_language): *Êraq*), officially the **Republic of Iraq** (Arabic: [Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang) [*Template:Transl*](/wiki/Template:Transl); [Template:Lang-ku](/wiki/Template:Lang-ku) [*Template:Transl*](/wiki/Template:Transl)), is a country in [Western Asia](/wiki/Western_Asia). The country is bordered by [Turkey](/wiki/Turkey) to the north, [Iran](/wiki/Iran) to the east, [Kuwait](/wiki/Kuwait) to the southeast, [Saudi Arabia](/wiki/Saudi_Arabia) to the south, [Jordan](/wiki/Jordan) to the southwest, and [Syria](/wiki/Syria) to the west. The southern part of Iraq is within the [Arabian Peninsula](/wiki/Arabian_Peninsula). The capital, [Baghdad](/wiki/Baghdad), is in the centre of the country and its largest city. The largest ethnic groups in Iraq are [Arabs](/wiki/Arabs) and [Kurds](/wiki/Kurds). Other ethnic groups include [Assyrians](/wiki/Assyrian_people), [Turkmen](/wiki/Iraqi_Turkmens), [Shabakis](/wiki/Shabak_people), [Yazidis](/wiki/Yazidis), [Armenians](/wiki/Armenians_in_Iraq), [Mandeans](/wiki/Mandeans), [Circassians](/wiki/Circassians_in_Iraq), and [Kawliya](/wiki/Kawliya).[[1]](#cite_note-1) and then launched a 100-hour-long ground assault against Iraqi forces in Southern Iraq and those occupying Kuwait.

Iraq's armed forces were devastated during the war and shortly after it ended in 1991, [Shia](/wiki/Shia) and Kurdish Iraqis led [several uprisings](/wiki/1991_uprisings_in_Iraq) against [Saddam Hussein's](/wiki/Saddam_Hussein) regime, but these were successfully repressed using the Iraqi security forces and chemical weapons. It is estimated that as many as 100,000 people, including many civilians were killed.[[53]](#cite_note-53) During the uprisings the US, UK, France and Turkey, claiming authority under [UNSCR 688](/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council_Resolution_688), established the [Iraqi no-fly zones](/wiki/Iraqi_no-fly_zones) to protect Kurdish and Shiite populations from attacks by the Hussein regime's fixed-wing aircraft (but not helicopters).

[thumb|Saddam Hussein during the](/wiki/File:Saddam_Hussain_Iran-Iraqi_war_1980s.jpg) [Iran–Iraq War](/wiki/Iran–Iraq_War). Hussein ruled Iraq from 1979 until 2003.

Iraq was ordered to destroy its chemical and biological weapons and the UN attempted to compel Saddam Hussein's government to disarm and agree to a ceasefire by imposing additional sanctions on the country in addition to the initial sanctions imposed following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The Iraqi Government's failure to disarm and agree to a ceasefire resulted in [sanctions](/wiki/Iraq_sanctions) which remained in place until 2003. Studies dispute the effects of the sanctions on Iraqi civilians.[[54]](#cite_note-54)<ref name=Spagat>[Template:Cite journal](/wiki/Template:Cite_journal)</ref>[[55]](#cite_note-55) During the late 1990s, the UN considered relaxing the [Iraq sanctions](/wiki/Iraq_sanctions) because of the hardships suffered by ordinary Iraqis[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) and attacks on US aircraft patrolling the no-fly zones led to [US bombing of Iraq in December 1998](/wiki/Bombing_of_Iraq_(December_1998)).

Following the [9/11 terrorist attacks](/wiki/9/11_terrorist_attacks) the [George W. Bush administration](/wiki/Presidency_of_George_W._Bush) began planning the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's government and in October 2002, the US Congress passed the [Joint Resolution to Authorize the Use of United States Armed Forces Against Iraq](/wiki/Joint_Resolution_to_Authorize_the_Use_of_United_States_Armed_Forces_Against_Iraq). In November 2002 the UN Security Council passed [UNSCR 1441](/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council_Resolution_1441) and in March 2003 the US and its allies invaded Iraq.

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### 2003–2007[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[thumb|upright|right|float|The April 2003 toppling of](/wiki/File:SaddamStatue.jpg) [Saddam Hussein's](/wiki/Saddam_Hussein) statue in [Firdos Square](/wiki/Firdos_Square) in [Baghdad](/wiki/Baghdad) shortly after the [Iraq War](/wiki/Iraq_War) invasion. [Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) On March 20, 2003, a United States-organized coalition [invaded Iraq](/wiki/2003_invasion_of_Iraq), under the pretext that Iraq had failed to abandon its [weapons of mass destruction program](/wiki/Iraq_and_weapons_of_mass_destruction) in violation of [U.N. Resolution 687](/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council_Resolution_687). This claim was based on documents provided by the [CIA](/wiki/CIA) and British government[[56]](#cite_note-56) and were later [found to be unreliable](/wiki/Duelfer_Report).[[57]](#cite_note-57)[[58]](#cite_note-58) Following the invasion, the United States established the [Coalition Provisional Authority](/wiki/Coalition_Provisional_Authority) to govern Iraq. In May 2003 [L. Paul Bremer](/wiki/L._Paul_Bremer), the chief executive of the CPA, issued orders to [exclude Baath Party members](/wiki/De-Ba'athification) from the new Iraqi government (CPA Order 1) and to disband the Iraqi Army ([CPA Order 2](/wiki/Coalition_Provisional_Authority_Order_2)).[[59]](#cite_note-59) The decision dissolved the largely Sunni Iraqi Army[[60]](#cite_note-60) and excluded many of the country's former government officials from participating in the country's governance including 40,000 school teachers who had joined the Baath Party simply to keep their jobs,[[61]](#cite_note-61) helping to bring about a chaotic post-invasion environment.[[62]](#cite_note-62) [An insurgency](/wiki/Iraqi_insurgency_(2003–06)) against the [US-led coalition](/wiki/2003_invasion_of_Iraq)-rule of Iraq began in summer 2003 within elements of the former Iraqi secret police and army who formed guerilla units. In fall 2003, also self-entitled '[jihadist'](/wiki/Jihad) groups began targeting coalition forces. Various Sunni militias were created in 2003, for example [Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad](/wiki/Jama'at_al-Tawhid_wal-Jihad) led by [Abu Musab al-Zarqawi](/wiki/Abu_Musab_al-Zarqawi). The insurgency included intense inter-ethnic violence between Sunnis and Shias.[[63]](#cite_note-63) The [Abu Ghraib torture and prisoner abuse](/wiki/Abu_Ghraib_torture_and_prisoner_abuse) scandal came to light, late 2003 in reports by [Amnesty International](/wiki/Amnesty_International) and [Associated Press](/wiki/Associated_Press).

[thumb|](/wiki/File:US_Navy_031016-N-3236B-043_A_marine_patrols_the_streets_of_Al_Faw,_Iraq.jpg)[US Marines](/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps) patrol the streets of [Al Faw](/wiki/Al_Faw), October 2003. The [Mahdi Army](/wiki/Mahdi_Army)—a Shia militia created in the summer of 2003 by [Muqtada al-Sadr](/wiki/Muqtada_al-Sadr)[[64]](#cite_note-64)—began to fight Coalition forces in April 2004.<ref name=mehdi>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref> 2004 saw Sunni and Shia militants fighting against each other and against the new [Iraqi Interim Government](/wiki/Iraqi_Interim_Government) installed June 2004, and against Coalition forces, as well as the [First Battle of Fallujah](/wiki/First_Battle_of_Fallujah) in April and [Second Battle of Fallujah](/wiki/Second_Battle_of_Fallujah) in November. Sunni militia Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad became [Al-Qaeda in Iraq](/wiki/Al-Qaeda_in_Iraq) in October 2004 and targeted Coalition forces as well as civilians, mainly Shia Muslims, further exacerbating ethnic tensions.[[65]](#cite_note-65) In January 2005 the [first elections](/wiki/Iraqi_parliamentary_election,_January_2005) since the invasion took place and in October a [new Constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_Iraq) was approved which was followed by [parliamentary elections](/wiki/Iraqi_parliamentary_election,_December_2005) in December. Insurgent attacks were common however and increased to 34,131 in 2005 from 26,496 in 2004.[[66]](#cite_note-66) During 2006 fighting continued and reached its highest levels of violence, more [war crimes scandals](/wiki/Haditha_killings) were made public, [Abu Musab al-Zarqawi](/wiki/Abu_Musab_al-Zarqawi) the leader of [Al-Qaeda in Iraq](/wiki/Al-Qaeda_in_Iraq) was killed by US forces and Iraq's former dictator [Saddam Hussein](/wiki/Saddam_Hussein) was sentenced to death for [crimes against humanity](/wiki/Crimes_against_humanity) and hanged.[[67]](#cite_note-67)[[68]](#cite_note-68)[[69]](#cite_note-69)In late 2006 the US government's [Iraq Study Group](/wiki/Iraq_Study_Group) recommended that the US begin focusing on training Iraqi military personnel and in January 2007 US President George W. Bush announced a ["Surge"](/wiki/Iraq_War_troop_surge_of_2007) in the number of US troops deployed to the country.[[70]](#cite_note-70) In May 2007 Iraq's Parliament called on the United States to set a timetable for withdrawal[[71]](#cite_note-71) and US coalition partners such as the UK and Denmark began withdrawing their forces from the country.[[72]](#cite_note-72)[[73]](#cite_note-73) The war in Iraq has resulted in [between 151,000 and 1.2 million Iraqis being killed](/wiki/Casualties_of_the_Iraq_War).[[74]](#cite_note-74)[[75]](#cite_note-75)

### 2008–present[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) In 2008 [fighting continued](/wiki/Iraq_spring_fighting_of_2008) and Iraq's newly trained armed forces launched attacks against militants. The Iraqi government signed the [US–Iraq Status of Forces Agreement](/wiki/US–Iraq_Status_of_Forces_Agreement) which required US forces to withdraw from Iraqi cities by 30 June 2009 and to withdraw completely out of Iraq by 31 December 2011.

US troops handed over security duties to Iraqi forces in June 2009, though they continued to work with Iraqi forces after the pullout.[[76]](#cite_note-76) On the morning of 18 December 2011, the final contingent of US troops to be withdrawn ceremonially exited over the border to [Kuwait](/wiki/Kuwait).[[4]](#cite_note-4) Crime and violence initially spiked in the months following [the US withdrawal from cities in mid-2009](/wiki/U.S.–Iraq_Status_of_Forces_Agreement)[[77]](#cite_note-77)[[78]](#cite_note-78) but despite the initial increase in violence, in November 2009, Iraqi [Interior Ministry](/wiki/Ministry_of_Interior_(Iraq)) officials reported that the civilian death toll in Iraq fell to its lowest level since the 2003 invasion.[[79]](#cite_note-79) Following the [withdrawal of US troops](/wiki/Withdrawal_of_U.S._troops_from_Iraq) in 2011 the insurgency continued and Iraq suffered from political instability. In February 2011 the [Arab Spring](/wiki/Arab_Spring) protests [spread to Iraq](/wiki/2011_Iraqi_protests);[[80]](#cite_note-80) but the initial protests did not topple the government. The [Iraqi National Movement](/wiki/Iraqi_National_Movement), reportedly representing the majority of Iraqi Sunnis, boycotted Parliament for several weeks in late 2011 and early 2012, claiming that the Shiite-dominated government was striving to sideline Sunnis.

[thumb|240px|The current military situation,](/wiki/File:Syria_and_Iraq_2014-onward_War_map.png) [Template:#invoke:Iraq Syria map date](/wiki/Template:#invoke:Iraq_Syria_map_date):  
[Template:LegendTemplate:LegendTemplate:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend) In 2012 and 2013 levels of violence increased and armed groups inside Iraq were increasingly galvanised by the [Syrian Civil War](/wiki/Syrian_Civil_War). Both Sunnis and Shias crossed the border to fight in Syria.<ref name=Kurd-Shiite-Sunni-Split>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> In December 2012, mainly Sunni Arabs [protested](/wiki/2012–13_Iraqi_protests) against the government who they claimed marginalised them.[[81]](#cite_note-81)[[82]](#cite_note-82) During 2013 Sunni militant groups stepped up attacks targeting the Iraq's [Shia](/wiki/Shia_Islam_in_Iraq) population in an attempt to undermine confidence in the [Nouri al-Maliki](/wiki/Nouri_al-Maliki)-led government.<ref name=latimes2701>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref> In 2014 Sunni insurgents belonging to the [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant](/wiki/Islamic_State_of_Iraq_and_the_Levant) (ISIL) terrorist group seized control of large swathes of land including several major Iraqi cities, like [Tikrit](/wiki/Tikrit), [Fallujah](/wiki/Fallujah) and [Mosul](/wiki/Mosul) creating hundreds of thousands of [internally displaced persons](/wiki/Internally_displaced_persons) amid reports of atrocities by ISIL fighters.[[83]](#cite_note-83) After an inconclusive election in April 2014, [Nouri al-Maliki](/wiki/Nouri_al-Maliki) served as caretaker-Prime-Minister.<ref name=guar11-8-14>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

On 11 August, Iraq's highest court ruled that PM Maliki's bloc is biggest in parliament, meaning Maliki could stay Prime Minister.<ref name=guar11-8-14/> By 13 August, however, the Iraqi president had tasked [Haider al-Abadi](/wiki/Haider_al-Abadi) with forming a new government, and the United Nations, the United States, the European Union, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and some Iraqi politicians expressed their wish for a new leadership in Iraq, for example from [Haider al-Abadi](/wiki/Haider_al-Abadi).[[84]](#cite_note-84) Maliki on 14 August stepped down as PM, to support Mr al-Abadi and to "safeguard the high interests of the country". The US government welcomed this as "another major step forward" in uniting Iraq.[[85]](#cite_note-85)[[86]](#cite_note-86) On September 9, 2014, [Haider al-Abadi](/wiki/Haider_al-Abadi) had formed a new government and became the new prime minister.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) Intermittent conflict between Sunni, [Shiite](/wiki/Shiite) and Kurdish factions has led to increasing debate about the splitting of Iraq into three autonomous regions, including Kurdistan in the northeast, a [Sunnistan](/wiki/Sunnistan) in the west and a Shiastan in the southeast.[[87]](#cite_note-87)

## Geography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[Template:Unreferenced section](/wiki/Template:Unreferenced_section) [thumb|Satellite map of Iraq.](/wiki/File:Iraq.A2003060.0750.500m.jpg) [thumb|Iraq map of Köppen climate classification.](/wiki/File:Iraq_map_of_Köppen_climate_classification.svg) [Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Iraq lies between latitudes [29°](/wiki/29th_parallel_north) and [38° N](/wiki/38th_parallel_north), and longitudes [39°](/wiki/39th_meridian_east) and [49° E](/wiki/49th_meridian_east) (a small area lies west of 39°). Spanning [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), it is the 58th-largest country in the world. It is comparable in size to the US state of [California](/wiki/California), and somewhat larger than [Paraguay](/wiki/Paraguay).

Iraq mainly consists of [desert](/wiki/Desert), but near the two major rivers ([Euphrates](/wiki/Euphrates) and [Tigris](/wiki/Tigris)) are fertile [alluvial plains](/wiki/Alluvial_plains), as the rivers carry about [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) of [silt](/wiki/Silt) annually to the [delta](/wiki/River_delta). The north of the country is mostly composed of mountains; the highest point being at [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) point, unnamed on the map opposite, but known locally as [Cheekah Dar](/wiki/Cheekah_Dar) (black tent). Iraq has a small coastline measuring [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) along the [Persian Gulf](/wiki/Persian_Gulf). Close to the coast and along the [Shatt al-Arab](/wiki/Shatt_al-Arab) (known as *arvandrūd*: اروندرود among Iranians) there used to be marshlands, but many were drained in the 1990s.

### Climate[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Most of Iraq has a hot [arid](/wiki/Arid) climate with [subtropical](/wiki/Subtropical) influence. Summer temperatures average above [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) for most of the country and frequently exceed [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). Winter temperatures infrequently exceed [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) with maxima roughly [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) and night-time lows [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). Typically precipitation is low; most places receive less than [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) annually, with maximum rainfall occurring during the winter months. Rainfall during the summer is extremely rare, except in the far north of the country. The northern mountainous regions have cold winters with occasional heavy snows, sometimes causing extensive flooding.

## Government and politics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|Baghdad Convention Center, the current meeting place of the](/wiki/File:Baghdad_Convention_Center_inside.jpg) [Council of Representatives of Iraq](/wiki/Council_of_Representatives_of_Iraq). The [federal government of Iraq](/wiki/Federal_government_of_Iraq) is defined under the current [Constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_Iraq) as a [democratic](/wiki/Representative_democracy), [federal](/wiki/Federation) [parliamentary](/wiki/Parliamentary_system) [Islamic republic](/wiki/Islamic_republic). The federal government is composed of the [executive](/wiki/Executive_branch), [legislative](/wiki/Legislative_branch), and [judicial](/wiki/Judicial_branch) branches, as well as numerous independent commissions. Aside from the federal government, there are regions (made of one or more governorates), governorates, and districts within Iraq with jurisdiction over various matters as defined by law.

The [National Alliance](/wiki/National_Alliance_(Iraq)) is the main Shia parliamentary bloc, and was established as a result of a merger of Prime Minister Nouri Maliki's [State of Law Coalition](/wiki/State_of_Law_Coalition) and the [Iraqi National Alliance](/wiki/Iraqi_National_Alliance).<ref name=bbc-gpi/> The [Iraqi National Movement](/wiki/Iraqi_National_Movement) is led by [Iyad Allawi](/wiki/Iyad_Allawi), a secular Shia widely supported by Sunnis. The party has a more consistent anti-sectarian perspective than most of its rivals.<ref name=bbc-gpi/> The [Kurdistan List](/wiki/Kurdistan_List) is dominated by two parties, the [Kurdistan Democratic Party](/wiki/Kurdistan_Democratic_Party_(Iraq)) led by [Masood Barzani](/wiki/Masood_Barzani) and the [Patriotic Union of Kurdistan](/wiki/Patriotic_Union_of_Kurdistan) headed by [Jalal Talabani](/wiki/Jalal_Talabani). Both parties are secular and enjoy close ties with the West.<ref name=bbc-gpi>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref>

In 2010, according to the [Failed States Index](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_Failed_States_Index), Iraq was the world's seventh most politically unstable country.[[88]](#cite_note-88)[[89]](#cite_note-89) The concentration of power in the hands of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and growing pressure on the opposition led to growing concern about the future of political rights in Iraq.<ref name=fh13>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> Nevertheless, progress was made and the country had risen to 11th place by 2013.[[90]](#cite_note-90) In August 2014 al-Maliki's reign came to an end. He announced on 14 August 2014 he would stand aside so [Haider Al-Abadi](/wiki/Haider_Al-Abadi), who had been nominated just days earlier by newly installed President [Fuad Masum](/wiki/Fuad_Masum), could take over. Until that point al-Maliki had clung to power even asking the federal court to veto the president's nomination describing it as a violation of the constitution.[[91]](#cite_note-91) Transparency International ranks Iraq's government as the eighth-most-corrupt government in the world. Government payroll have increased from 1 million employees under [Saddam Hussein](/wiki/Saddam_Hussein) to around 7 million employees in 2016. In combination with decreased oil prices, the government budget deficit is near 25% of GDP as of 2016.[[92]](#cite_note-92) Since the establishment of the [no–fly zones](/wiki/Iraqi_no-fly_zones) following the [Gulf War](/wiki/Gulf_War) of 1990–1991, the Kurds established their own [autonomous region](/wiki/Autonomous_area)..

### Law[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) In October 2005, the new [Constitution of Iraq](/wiki/Constitution_of_Iraq) was approved in a referendum with a 78% overall majority, although the percentage of support varying widely between the country's territories.[[93]](#cite_note-93) The new constitution was backed by the Shia and Kurdish communities, but was rejected by Arab Sunnis. Under the terms of the constitution, the country conducted [fresh nationwide parliamentary elections](/wiki/Iraqi_parliamentary_election,_December_2005) on December 15, 2005. All three major [ethnic groups in Iraq](/wiki/Ethnic_groups_in_Iraq) voted along ethnic lines, as did Assyrian and Turcoman minorities.

Law no. 188 of the year 1959 (Personal Status Law)[[94]](#cite_note-94) made polygamy extremely difficult, granted child custody to the mother in case of divorce, prohibited repudiation and marriage under the age of 16.[[95]](#cite_note-95) Article 1 of Civil Code also identifies Islamic law as a formal source of law.[[96]](#cite_note-96) Iraq had no Sharia courts but civil courts used Sharia for issues of personal status including marriage and divorce. In 1995 Iraq introduced Sharia punishment for certain types of criminal offences.[[97]](#cite_note-97) The code is based on French civil law as well as Sunni and Jafari (Shi’ite) interpretations of Sharia.[[98]](#cite_note-98) In 2004, the CFA chief executive L. Paul Bremer said he would veto any constitutional draft stating that sharia is the principal basis of law.[[99]](#cite_note-99) The declaration enraged many local Shia clerics,[[100]](#cite_note-100) and by 2005 the United States had relented, allowing a role for sharia in the constitution to help end a stalemate on the draft constitution.[[101]](#cite_note-101) The [Iraqi Penal Code](/wiki/Iraqi_Penal_Code) is the statutory law of Iraq.

### Military[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|right|An Iraqi Army BMP-1 on the move.](/wiki/File:BMP-1_Iraq_3.jpg) Iraqi security forces are composed of forces serving under the [Ministry of Interior](/wiki/Ministry_of_Interior) and the [Ministry of Defense](/wiki/Ministry_of_Defence_(Iraq)), as well as the Iraqi [Counter Terrorism Bureau](/wiki/Counter_Terrorism_Bureau), reporting directly to the [Prime Minister of Iraq](/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Iraq), which oversees the [Iraqi Special Operations Forces](/wiki/Iraqi_Special_Operations_Forces). Ministry of Defense forces include the [Iraqi Army](/wiki/Iraqi_Army), the [Iraqi Air Force](/wiki/Iraqi_Air_Force) and the [Iraqi Navy](/wiki/Iraqi_Navy). The [Peshmerga](/wiki/Peshmerga) are a separate armed force loyal to the [Kurdistan Regional Government](/wiki/Kurdistan_Regional_Government). The regional government and the central government disagree as to whether they are under Baghdad's authority and to what extent.[[102]](#cite_note-102) The [Iraqi Army](/wiki/Iraqi_Army) is an objective counter-insurgency force that as of November 2009 includes 14 divisions, each division consisting of 4 brigades.[[103]](#cite_note-103) It is described as the most important element of the counter-insurgency fight.[[104]](#cite_note-104) Light infantry brigades are equipped with small arms, machine guns, RPGs, body armour and light armoured vehicles. Mechanized infantry brigades are equipped with [T-54/55](/wiki/T-54/55) main battle tanks and [BMP-1](/wiki/BMP-1) infantry fighting vehicles.[[104]](#cite_note-104) As of mid-2008, logistical problems included a maintenance crisis and ongoing supply problems.[[105]](#cite_note-105) The [Iraqi Air Force](/wiki/Iraqi_Air_Force) is designed to support ground forces with surveillance, reconnaissance and troop lift. Two reconnaissance squadrons use light aircraft, three helicopter squadrons are used to move troops and one air transportation squadron uses C-130 transport aircraft to move troops, equipment, and supplies. It currently has 3,000 personnel. It is planned to increase to 18,000 personnel, with 550 aircraft by 2018.[[104]](#cite_note-104) The [Iraqi Navy](/wiki/Iraqi_Navy) is a small force with 1,500 sailors and officers, including 800 [Marines](/wiki/Marines_(military)), designed to protect shoreline and inland waterways from insurgent infiltration. The navy is also responsible for the security of offshore oil platforms. The navy will have coastal patrol squadrons, assault boat squadrons and a [marine](/wiki/Marines_(military)) battalion.[[104]](#cite_note-104) The force will consist of 2,000 to 2,500 sailors by year 2010.[[106]](#cite_note-106)

### Foreign relations[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|US President](/wiki/File:Barack_Obama_&_Jalal_Talabani_in_Baghdad_4-7-09.JPG) [Barack Obama](/wiki/Barack_Obama) speaking with [Iraqi President](/wiki/President_of_Iraq) [Jalal Talabani](/wiki/Jalal_Talabani) in 2009. [Template:Expand section](/wiki/Template:Expand_section) On November 17, 2008, the US and Iraq agreed to a [Status of Forces Agreement](/wiki/Status_of_Forces_Agreement),[[107]](#cite_note-107) as part of the broader [Strategic Framework Agreement](/wiki/Strategic_Framework_Agreement).[[108]](#cite_note-108) This agreement states "the Government of Iraq requests" US forces to temporarily remain in Iraq to "maintain security and stability," and that Iraq has jurisdiction over military contractors, and US personnel when not on US bases or on–duty.

On 12 February 2009, Iraq officially became the 186th State Party to the [Chemical Weapons Convention](/wiki/Chemical_Weapons_Convention). Under the provisions of this [treaty](/wiki/Treaty), Iraq is considered a party with declared [stockpiles](/wiki/Stockpile) of [chemical weapons](/wiki/Chemical_weapons). Because of their late accession, Iraq is the only State Party exempt from the existing timeline for destruction of their chemical weapons. Specific criteria is in development to address the unique nature of Iraqi accession.[[109]](#cite_note-109) [Iran–Iraq relations](/wiki/Iran–Iraq_relations) have flourished since 2005 by the exchange of high level visits: Iraqi PM [Nouri al-Maliki](/wiki/Nouri_al-Maliki) made frequent visits to Iran, along with Jalal Talabani visiting numerous times, to help boost bilateral co-operation in all fields.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) A conflict occurred in December 2009, when Iraq accused Iran of seizing an oil well on the border.[[110]](#cite_note-110) [Relationships with Turkey](/wiki/Iraq–Turkey_relations) are tense, largely because of the [Kurdistan Regional Government](/wiki/Kurdistan_Regional_Government), as clashes between Turkey and the [PKK](/wiki/Kurdistan_Workers'_Party) continue.[[111]](#cite_note-111) In October 2011, the Turkish parliament renewed a law that gives Turkish forces the ability to pursue rebels over the border in Iraq."[[112]](#cite_note-112)

### Human rights[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Relations between Iraq and its [Kurdish population](/wiki/Iraqi_Kurdistan) have been sour in recent history, especially with [Saddam Hussein's genocidal campaign](/wiki/Al-Anfal_Campaign) against them in the 1980s. After [uprisings during the early 90s](/wiki/1991_uprisings_in_Iraq), many Kurds fled their homeland and [no-fly zones](/wiki/No-fly_zone) were established in northern Iraq to prevent more conflicts. Despite historically poor relations, some progress has been made, and Iraq elected its first Kurdish president, [Jalal Talabani](/wiki/Jalal_Talabani), in 2005. Furthermore, [Kurdish](/wiki/Kurdish_language) is now an official language of Iraq alongside [Arabic](/wiki/Arabic_language) according to Article 4 of the constitution.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

[LGBT rights in Iraq](/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Iraq) remain limited. Although [decriminalised](/wiki/Sodomy_law), [homosexuality](/wiki/Homosexuality) remains [stigmatised in Iraqi society](/wiki/Homophobia).[[113]](#cite_note-113) Targeting people because of their gender identity or sexual orientation is not uncommon and is usually carried out in the name of [family honour](/wiki/Honor_killing). People who dress in [emo](/wiki/Emo) style are mistakenly associated with homosexuality and may suffer the same fate.[[114]](#cite_note-114) A BBC article published in 2009, which includes interviews of homosexual and transgender Iraqis, suggests that LGBT people were less subject to violence under Hussein's regime.[[115]](#cite_note-115)

### Administrative divisions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [right|300px](/wiki/File:Iraq,_administrative_divisions_-_Nmbrs_-_colored.svg) Iraq is composed of nineteen [governorates](/wiki/Governorate) (or [provinces](/wiki/Province)) (Arabic: *muhafadhat* (singular *muhafadhah*); Kurdish: پارێزگا *Pârizgah*). The governorates are subdivided into [districts](/wiki/Districts_of_Iraq) (or *qadhas*), which are further divided into [sub-districts](/wiki/Nahiyah) (or *nawāḥī*). [Iraqi Kurdistan](/wiki/Iraqi_Kurdistan) ([Erbil](/wiki/Erbil_Governorate), [Dohuk](/wiki/Dohuk_Governorate), [Sulaymaniyah](/wiki/As_Sulaymaniyah_Governorate) and [Halabja](/wiki/Halabja_Governorate)) is the only legally defined region within Iraq, with its own [government](/wiki/Kurdistan_Regional_Government) and quasi-official army [Peshmerga](/wiki/Peshmerga).

[Template:Columns-list](/wiki/Template:Columns-list)

## Economy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|right|GNP per capita in Iraq from 1950 to 2008.|alt=Graph of Iraqi GNP, showing highest GNP in 1980](/wiki/File:Iraq_GDP_per_capita_1950-2008.png) [thumb|Global distribution of Iraqi exports in 2006.](/wiki/File:2006Iraqi_exports.PNG) Iraq's economy is dominated by the [oil](/wiki/Petroleum) sector, which has traditionally provided about 95% of foreign exchange earnings. The lack of development in other sectors has resulted in 18%–30% unemployed and a depressed per capita GDP of $4,000.<ref name=cia/> Public sector employment accounted for nearly 60% of full-time employment in 2011.<ref name=usaid11>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> The oil export industry, which dominates the Iraqi economy, generates very little employment.<ref name=usaid11/> Currently only a modest percentage of women (the highest estimate for 2011 was 22%) participate in the labour force.<ref name=usaid11/>

Prior to US occupation, Iraq's [centrally planned economy](/wiki/Centrally_planned_economy) prohibited foreign ownership of Iraqi businesses, ran most large industries as state-owned enterprises, and imposed large [tariffs](/wiki/Tariff) to keep out foreign goods.[[116]](#cite_note-116) After the [2003 Invasion of Iraq](/wiki/2003_Invasion_of_Iraq), the [Coalition Provisional Authority](/wiki/Coalition_Provisional_Authority) quickly began issuing many binding orders [privatising](/wiki/Privatisation) Iraq's economy and opening it up to [foreign investment](/wiki/Foreign_investment). [180px|thumb|Agriculture is the main occupation of the people.](/wiki/File:Iraqi_Kurdish_villagers_in_field_near_Turkish_border.jpg)

On November 20, 2004, the [Paris Club](/wiki/Paris_Club) of creditor nations agreed to write off 80% ($33 billion) of Iraq's $42 billion debt to Club members. Iraq's total external debt was around $120 billion at the time of the 2003 invasion, and had grown another $5 billion by 2004. The [debt relief](/wiki/Debt_relief) will be implemented in three stages: two of 30% each and one of 20%.[[117]](#cite_note-117) In February 2011, [Citigroup](/wiki/Citigroup) included Iraq in a group of countries which it described as ['Global Growth Generators'](/wiki/3G_(countries)), that it argued will enjoy significant economic growth in the future.[[118]](#cite_note-118) The official currency in Iraq is the [Iraqi dinar](/wiki/Iraqi_dinar). The [Coalition Provisional Authority](/wiki/Coalition_Provisional_Authority) issued new dinar coins and notes, with the notes printed by [De La Rue](/wiki/De_La_Rue) using modern anti-forgery techniques.[[119]](#cite_note-119) [Jim Cramer's](/wiki/Jim_Cramer) October 20, 2009 endorsement of the [Iraqi Dinar](/wiki/Iraqi_Dinar) on [CNBC](/wiki/CNBC) has further piqued interest in the investment.[[120]](#cite_note-120) Five years after the invasion, an estimated 2.4 million people were [internally displaced](/wiki/Internally_displaced_person) (with a further two million refugees outside Iraq), four million Iraqis were considered food-insecure (a quarter of children were chronically malnourished) and only a third of Iraqi children had access to safe drinking water.<ref name=ODI1>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

According to the [Overseas Development Institute](/wiki/Overseas_Development_Institute), [international NGOs](/wiki/International_NGO) face challenges in carrying out their mission, leaving their assistance "piecemeal and largely conducted undercover, hindered by insecurity, a lack of coordinated funding, limited operational capacity and patchy information".<ref name=ODI1/> International NGOs have been targeted and during the first 5 years, 94 aid workers were killed, 248 injured, 24 arrested or detained and 89 kidnapped or abducted.<ref name=ODI1/>

### Oil and energy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|Tankers at the](/wiki/File:Tankers_at_the_Iraqi_Al_Basra_Oil_Terminal_in_the_Northern_Arabian_Gulf.jpg) [Basra Oil Terminal](/wiki/Basra_Oil_Terminal). With its [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) of proved oil reserves, Iraq ranks second in the world behind [Saudi Arabia](/wiki/Saudi_Arabia) in the amount of [oil reserves](/wiki/Oil_reserves).[[121]](#cite_note-121)[[122]](#cite_note-122) Oil production levels reached 3.4 million barrels per day by December 2012.[[123]](#cite_note-123) Iraq intends to increase its production to 5 million barrels per day by 2014.[[124]](#cite_note-124) Only about 2,000 [oil wells](/wiki/Oil_well) have been drilled in Iraq, compared with about 1 million wells in [Texas](/wiki/Texas) alone.[[125]](#cite_note-125) Iraq was one of the founding members of [OPEC](/wiki/OPEC).[[126]](#cite_note-126)[[127]](#cite_note-127) [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), despite improved security and billions of dollars in oil revenue, Iraq still generates about half the electricity that customers demand, leading to protests during the hot summer months.[[128]](#cite_note-128) The [Iraq oil law](/wiki/Iraq_oil_law) is a proposed piece of legislation submitted to the [Iraqi Council of Representatives](/wiki/Iraqi_Council_of_Representatives) in May 2007.[[129]](#cite_note-129) The Iraqi government has yet to reach an agreement on the law.

According to a US Study from May 2007, between [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) and [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) of Iraq's declared oil production over the past four years could have been siphoned off through corruption or smuggling.[[130]](#cite_note-130) In 2008, Al Jazeera reported $13 billion of Iraqi oil revenues in US care was improperly accounted for, of which $2.6 billion is totally unaccounted for.[[131]](#cite_note-131) Some reports that the government has reduced corruption in public procurement of oil; however, reliable reports of bribery and kickbacks to government officials continue to persist.[[132]](#cite_note-132) In June 2008, the [Iraqi Oil Ministry](/wiki/Iraqi_Oil_Ministry) announced plans to go ahead with small one- or two-year [no-bid contracts](/wiki/No-bid_contracts) to [Exxon Mobil](/wiki/Exxon_Mobil), [Shell](/wiki/Royal_Dutch_Shell), [Total](/wiki/Total_S.A.) and [BP](/wiki/BP) — once partners in the [Iraq Petroleum Company](/wiki/Iraq_Petroleum_Company) — along with [Chevron](/wiki/Chevron_Corporation) and smaller firms to service Iraq's largest fields.[[133]](#cite_note-133) These plans were cancelled in September because negotiations had stalled for so long that the work could not be completed within the time frame, according to Iraqi oil minister [Hussain al-Shahristani](/wiki/Hussain_al-Shahristani). Several United States senators had also criticised the deal, arguing it was hindering efforts to pass the hydrocarbon law.[[134]](#cite_note-134) On June 30 and December 11, 2009, the [Iraqi ministry of oil](/wiki/Ministry_of_Oil_(Iraq)) awarded service contracts to international oil companies for some of Iraq's many oil fields.[[135]](#cite_note-135)[[136]](#cite_note-136) Oil fields contracted include the "super-giant" [Majnoon Field](/wiki/Majnoon_Field), [Halfaya Field](/wiki/Halfaya_Field), [West Qurna Field](/wiki/West_Qurna_Field) and [Rumaila Field](/wiki/Rumaila_oil_field).[[136]](#cite_note-136) [BP](/wiki/BP) and [China National Petroleum Corporation](/wiki/China_National_Petroleum_Corporation) won a deal to develop Rumaila, the largest Iraqi oil field.[[137]](#cite_note-137)[[138]](#cite_note-138) On March 14, 2014, the [International Energy Agency](/wiki/International_Energy_Agency) said Iraq's oil output jumped by half a million barrels a day in February to average 3.6 million barrels a day. The country hadn't pumped that much oil since 1979, when Saddam Hussein rose to power.[[139]](#cite_note-139) On July 14, 2014 however as sectarian strife had taken hold, [Kurdistan Regional Government](/wiki/Kurdistan_Regional_Government) forces seized control of the Bai Hassan and [Kirkuk](/wiki/Kirkuk_Field) oilfields in the north of the country, taking them from Iraq's control. Baghdad condemned the seizure and threatened "dire consequences" if the fields were not returned.[[140]](#cite_note-140)

### Water supply and sanitation[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

[thumb|a reservoir in the](/wiki/File:20160104-Lake_in_Samawa_desert_Iraq_0356.jpg) [Samawa](/wiki/Samawa) desert Southern Iraq [Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Water supply](/wiki/Water_supply) and [sanitation](/wiki/Sanitation) in Iraq is characterized by poor [water](/wiki/Water_quality) and service quality. Three decades of war, combined with limited environmental awareness, have destroyed Iraq's [water resources management](/wiki/Water_resources_management) system. Access to potable water differs significantly among governorates and between urban and rural areas. 91% of the entire population has access to potable water. But in rural areas, only 77% of the population has access to improved drinking water sources compared to 98% in urban areas.[[141]](#cite_note-141)Also, large amounts of water are wasted during production.[[141]](#cite_note-141)

### Infrastructure[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

[thumb|240px|](/wiki/File:Mosul_Dam_USACE_NWD.jpg)[Mosul Dam](/wiki/Mosul_Dam). Although many infrastructure projects are underway, Iraq remains in deep housing crisis, with the war-ravaged country likely to complete only 5 percent of the 2.5 million homes it needs to build by 2016 to keep up with demand, the Minister for Construction and Housing said in September 2013.[[142]](#cite_note-142)\* In 2009, the IBBC was established ([Iraq Britain Business Council](http://www.webuildiraq.org/)). The Council was established by [Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne](/wiki/Baroness_Nicholson_of_Winterbourne).

* In August 2009, two American firms reached a deal with the [Iraqi Government](/wiki/Iraqi_Government) to build [Basra Sports City](/wiki/Basra_Sports_City), a new sports complex. Basra Sports City will be the venue for the [2014 Gulf Cup of Nations](/wiki/2014_Gulf_Cup_of_Nations).
* In October 2012, the Emirati property firm, [Emaar Properties](/wiki/Emaar_Properties) reached a deal with the Iraqi Ministry of Construction and Housing to build and develop housing and commercial projects in Iraq.
* In January 2013, the Emirati property firm, [Nakheel Properties](/wiki/Nakheel_Properties) signed a deal to build Al Nakheel City, a future town in [Basra, Iraq](/wiki/Basra,_Iraq).

## Demographics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also)

[Template:Historical populations](/wiki/Template:Historical_populations) An April 2009 estimate of the total Iraqi population is 31,234,000.<ref name=imf2/> Iraq's population was estimated to be 2 million in 1878.[[143]](#cite_note-143) Iraq's population has reached 35 million amid a post-war population boom.[[144]](#cite_note-144)

### Ethnic groups[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]

[Arabs](/wiki/Arabs) form 75%–80% of the population.<ref name=cia/> 15% of Iraq's population are [Kurds](/wiki/Kurds). [Assyrians](/wiki/Assyrian_People), [Turkmen](/wiki/Iraqi_Turkmens) and other much smaller minorities such as [Mandeans](/wiki/Mandeans), [Armenians](/wiki/Armenian_people), [Circassians](/wiki/Circassians), [Iranians](/wiki/Iranian_people), [Shabakis](/wiki/Shabaki), [Yazidis](/wiki/Yazidis) and [Kawliya](/wiki/Kawliya) make up the remainder 5%-10% of the population.<ref name=cia/>[[145]](#cite_note-145) Around 20,000 [Marsh Arabs](/wiki/Marsh_Arabs) live in southern Iraq.[[146]](#cite_note-146) Iraq has a community of 2,500 [Chechens](/wiki/Chechen_people).[[147]](#cite_note-147) In southern Iraq [there is a community of Iraqis of African](/wiki/Afro_Iraqis) descent, a legacy of the [slavery](/wiki/Slavery) practised in the Islamic Caliphate beginning before the [Zanj Rebellion](/wiki/Zanj_Rebellion) of the 9th century, and [Basra's](/wiki/Basra) role as a key port.[[41]](#cite_note-41) It is the most populous country in the [Arabian Plate](/wiki/Arabian_Plate).[[148]](#cite_note-148)

### Languages[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Children_puppy_sulaimania.jpg)[Kurdish](/wiki/Kurdish_people) children in [Sulaymaniyah](/wiki/Sulaymaniyah). [Arabic](/wiki/Arabic_language) is the majority language; [Kurdish](/wiki/Kurdish_language) is spoken by approximately 10–15% of the population; and [Turkmen](/wiki/Azerbaijani_language),[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) the [Neo-Aramaic](/wiki/Neo-Aramaic) language of the [Assyrians](/wiki/Assyrians) and others, by 5%.<ref name=cia/> Other smaller minority languages include [Mandaic](/wiki/Mandaic_language), [Shabaki](/wiki/Shabaki_language), [Armenian](/wiki/Armenian_language), [Circassian](/wiki/Circassian_language) and [Persian](/wiki/Persian_language). Arabic, Kurdish, Persian, and South Azeri are written with versions of the [Arabic script](/wiki/Arabic_script), the Neo-Aramaic languages in the [Syriac script](/wiki/Syriac_script) and Armenian is written in the [Armenian script](/wiki/Armenian_script).

Prior to the invasion in 2003, [Arabic](/wiki/Arabic_language) was the sole official language. Since the new [Constitution of Iraq](/wiki/Constitution_of_Iraq) approved in June 2004, both Arabic and [Kurdish](/wiki/Kurdish_language) are official languages,[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) while [Assyrian Neo-Aramaic](/wiki/Assyrian_Neo-Aramaic) and [Turkmen language](/wiki/Turkmen_language) (referred to as respectively "Syriac" and "Turkmen" in the constitution) are recognised regional languages.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) In addition, any region or province may declare other languages official if a majority of the population approves in a general referendum.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

According to the [Iraqi constitution](/wiki/Iraqi_constitution): "The Arabic language and the Kurdish language are the two official languages of Iraq. The right of Iraqis to educate their children in their mother tongue, such as Turkmen, Assyrian, and Armenian shall be guaranteed in government educational institutions in accordance with educational guidelines, or in any other language in private educational institutions".[[149]](#cite_note-149)

### Urban areas[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

[Template:Largest cities of Iraq](/wiki/Template:Largest_cities_of_Iraq)

### Religion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=27)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:Pie chart](/wiki/Template:Pie_chart) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:ImamAliMosqueNajafIraq.JPG)[Imam Ali Mosque](/wiki/Imam_Ali_Mosque) in Najaf. Iraq is a Muslim-majority country; [Islam](/wiki/Islam) accounts for an estimated 95% of the population, while non-Muslims (mainly [Assyrian Christians](/wiki/Assyrian_Christians)) account for just 5%.[[150]](#cite_note-150) It has a mixed Shia and Sunni population. The CIA Factbook estimate that around 65% of Muslims in Iraq are [Shia](/wiki/Shia), and around 35% are [Sunni](/wiki/Sunni).[[150]](#cite_note-150) A 2011 Pew Research Center estimates that 51% of Muslims in Iraq are Shia, 42% are Sunni, while 5% identify themselves as "Just a Muslim".[[151]](#cite_note-151) The [Sunni](/wiki/Sunni) population complains of facing discrimination in almost all aspects of life by the government. However, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki denied it.[[152]](#cite_note-152)[Christians](/wiki/Iraqi_Christians) have lived in the area for about 2,000 years, and many descend from the *pre-Arab* ancient [Mesopotamians](/wiki/Mesopotamians)-[Assyrians](/wiki/Assyrians).[[153]](#cite_note-153) They numbered over 1.4 million in 1987 or 8% of the estimate population of 16.3 million and 550,000 in 1947 or 12% of the population.[[154]](#cite_note-154) Indigenous [Neo Aramaic](/wiki/Neo_Aramaic) speaking [Assyrians](/wiki/Assyrian_people), most of whom are adherents of the [Chaldean Catholic Church](/wiki/Chaldean_Catholic_Church), [Assyrian Church of the East](/wiki/Assyrian_Church_of_the_East), [Assyrian Pentecostal Church](/wiki/Assyrian_Pentecostal_Church) and [Syriac Orthodox Church](/wiki/Syriac_Orthodox_Church) account for most of the Christian population. Estimates for the numbers of Christians suggest a decline from 8–12% in the mid-20th century to 5% in 2008. More than half of [Iraqi Christians](/wiki/Iraqi_Christians) have fled to neighbouring countries since the start of the war, and many have not returned, although a number are migrating back to the traditional [Assyrian homeland](/wiki/Assyrian_homeland) in the Kurdish Autonomous region.[[155]](#cite_note-155)[[156]](#cite_note-156) There are also small [ethno-religious](/wiki/Ethno-religious) minority populations of [Mandaeans](/wiki/Mandaeanism), [Shabaks](/wiki/Shabaks), [Yarsan](/wiki/Yarsan) and [Yezidis](/wiki/Yezidi). The [Iraqi Jewish](/wiki/Iraqi_Jewish) community, numbering around 150,000 in 1941, has almost entirely left the country.[[157]](#cite_note-157) Iraq is home to two of the world's holiest places among [Shias](/wiki/Shia_Islam): [Najaf](/wiki/Najaf) and [Karbala](/wiki/Karbala).[[158]](#cite_note-158)

### Diaspora and refugees[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=28)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|Iraqi refugees in](/wiki/File:Iraqi_Refugees,_Damascus,_Syria.jpg) [Damascus](/wiki/Damascus), Syria. The dispersion of native Iraqis to other countries is known as the [Iraqi diaspora](/wiki/Iraqi_diaspora). The [UN High Commission for Refugees](/wiki/UN_High_Commission_for_Refugees) has estimated that nearly two million Iraqis have fled the country after the [Multi-National](/wiki/Multi-National_Force_–_Iraq) invasion of Iraq in 2003, mostly to [Syria](/wiki/Syria) and [Jordan](/wiki/Jordan).[[159]](#cite_note-159) The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre estimates an additional 1.9 million are currently displaced within the country.[[160]](#cite_note-160) In 2007, the U.N. said that about 40% of Iraq's middle class is believed to have fled and that most are fleeing systematic persecution and have no desire to return.[[161]](#cite_note-161) Refugees are mired in poverty as they are generally barred from working in their host countries.[[162]](#cite_note-162)[[163]](#cite_note-163)In recent years the diaspora seems to be returning with the increased security; the Iraqi government claimed that 46,000 refugees have returned to their homes in October 2007 alone.[[164]](#cite_note-164) [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), nearly 3 million Iraqis have been displaced, with 1.3 million within the Iraq and 1.6 million in neighbouring countries, mainly Jordan and Syria.[[165]](#cite_note-165) More than half of [Iraqi Christians](/wiki/Iraqi_Christians) have fled the country since the 2003 US-led invasion.[[166]](#cite_note-166)[[167]](#cite_note-167) According to official [United States Citizenship and Immigration Services](/wiki/United_States_Citizenship_and_Immigration_Services) statistics, 58,811 Iraqis have been granted refugee-status citizenship as of May 25, 2011.[[168]](#cite_note-168) To escape the civil war, over 160,000 [Syrian refugees](/wiki/Refugees_of_the_Syrian_civil_war) of varying ethnicities have fled to Iraq since 2012.[[169]](#cite_note-169) Increasing violence during the [Syrian civil war](/wiki/Syrian_civil_war) led to an increasing numbers of Iraqis returning to their native country.[[170]](#cite_note-170)

### Health[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=29)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) In 2010, spending on healthcare accounted for 6.84% of the country's GDP. In 2008, there were 6.96 physicians and 13.92 nurses per 10,000 inhabitants.[[171]](#cite_note-171) The life expectancy at birth was 68.49 years in 2010, or 65.13 years for males and 72.01 years for females.[[172]](#cite_note-172) This is down from a peak life expectancy of 71.31 years in 1996.[[173]](#cite_note-173) Iraq had developed a centralised free health care system in the 1970s using a hospital based, capital-intensive model of [curative care](/wiki/Curative_care). The country depended on large-scale imports of medicines, medical equipment and even nurses, paid for with oil export income, according to a "Watching Brief" report issued jointly by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in July 2003. Unlike other poorer countries, which focused on mass health care using primary care practitioners, Iraq developed a Westernized system of sophisticated hospitals with advanced medical procedures, provided by specialist physicians. The UNICEF/WHO report noted that prior to 1990, 97% of the urban dwellers and 71% of the rural population had access to free primary health care; just 2% of hospital beds were privately managed. <ref name=corpwatch>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

### Education[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=30)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|Students at the college of medicine of the](/wiki/File:Iraqi_medical_students_at_Basra_University_College_of_Medicine_(2010).JPG) [University of Basrah](/wiki/University_of_Basrah), 2010. The CIA World Factbook estimates that in 2000 the adult [literacy rate](/wiki/Literacy_rate) was 84% for males and 64% for females, with UN figures suggesting a small fall in literacy of Iraqis aged 15–24 between 2000 and 2008, from 84.8% to 82.4%.[[174]](#cite_note-174) The [Coalition Provisional Authority](/wiki/Coalition_Provisional_Authority) undertook a complete reform of Iraq's education system: [Baathist](/wiki/Baathist) ideology was removed from curricula and there were substantial increases in teacher salaries and training programs, which the [Hussein](/wiki/Saddam_Hussein) regime neglected in the 1990s.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) In 2003 an estimated 80% of Iraq's 15,000 school buildings needed rehabilitation and lacked basic sanitary facilities, and most schools lacked libraries and laboratories.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Education is mandatory only through the sixth grade, after which a national examination determines the possibility of continuing into the upper grades.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) Although a vocational track is available to those who do not pass the exam, few students elect that option because of its poor quality.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) Boys and girls generally attend separate schools beginning with seventh grade.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

In 2005 obstacles to further reform were poor security conditions in many areas, a centralised system that lacked accountability for teachers and administrators, and the isolation in which the system functioned for the previous 30 years.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) Few private schools exist.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) Prior to the invasion of 2003, some 240,000 persons were enrolled in institutions of [higher education](/wiki/Higher_education).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

According to the [Webometrics Ranking of World Universities](/wiki/Webometrics_Ranking_of_World_Universities), the top-ranking universities in the country are the [University of Dohuk](/wiki/University_of_Dohuk) (1717th worldwide), the [University of Baghdad](/wiki/University_of_Baghdad) (3160th) and [Babylon University](/wiki/Babylon_University) (3946th).[[175]](#cite_note-175)

## Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=31)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [Public holidays in Iraq](/wiki/Public_holidays_in_Iraq) include [Republic Day](/wiki/Republic_Day) on July 14 and the [National Day](/wiki/National_Day) on October 3.

### Music[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=32)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|upright|Iraqi](/wiki/File:Al-Qubanchi.jpg) [maqam](/wiki/Maqam_al-iraqi) performer Muhammad al-Qubbanchi. Iraq is known primarily for its rich [maqam](/wiki/Arabian_maqam) heritage which has been passed down orally by the masters of the maqam in an unbroken chain of transmission leading up to the present. The [maqam al-Iraqi](/wiki/Maqam_al-Iraqi) is considered to be the most noble and perfect form of maqam. Al-maqam al-Iraqi is the collection of sung poems written either in one of the sixteen meters of classical Arabic or in Iraqi dialect (Zuhayri).[[176]](#cite_note-176) This form of art is recognised by UNESCO as "an intangible heritage of humanity".[[177]](#cite_note-177) Early in the 20th century, many of the most prominent musicians in Iraq were [Jewish](/wiki/Jew).[[178]](#cite_note-178) In 1936, [Iraq Radio](/wiki/Iraq_Radio) was established with an ensemble made up entirely of [Jews](/wiki/Jews), with the exception of the percussion player. At the nightclubs of Baghdad, ensembles consisted of oud, qanun and two percussionists, while the same format with a [ney](/wiki/Ney) and [cello](/wiki/Cello) were used on the radio.[[178]](#cite_note-178) The most famous singer of the 1930s–1940s was perhaps the Jew [Salima Pasha](/wiki/Salima_Pasha) (later Salima Murad).[[178]](#cite_note-178)[[179]](#cite_note-179) The respect and adoration for Pasha were unusual at the time since public performance by women was considered shameful, and most female singers were recruited from brothels.[[178]](#cite_note-178) The most famous early composer from Iraq was [Ezra Aharon](/wiki/Ezra_Aharon), an [oud](/wiki/Oud) player, while the most prominent instrumentalist was [Daoud Al-Kuwaiti](/wiki/Saleh_and_Daoud_Al-Kuwaity).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) Daoud and his brother [Saleh](/wiki/Saleh_and_Daoud_Al-Kuwaity) formed the official ensemble for the Iraqi radio station and were responsible for introducing the cello and ney into the traditional ensemble.[[178]](#cite_note-178)

### Art and architecture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=33)]

[thumb|The](/wiki/File:Ancient_ziggurat_at_Ali_Air_Base_Iraq_2005.jpg) [Great Ziggurat of Ur](/wiki/Great_Ziggurat_of_Ur) near [Nasiriyah](/wiki/Nasiriyah). [Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Important cultural institutions in the capital include the [Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra](/wiki/Iraqi_National_Symphony_Orchestra) – rehearsals and performances were briefly interrupted during the [Occupation of Iraq](/wiki/History_of_Iraq_(2003–2011)) but have since returned to normal. The National Theatre of Iraq was looted during the 2003 invasion, but efforts are underway to restore it. The live theatre scene received a boost during the 1990s when UN sanctions limited the import of foreign films. As many as 30 cinemas were reported to have been converted to live stages, producing a wide range of comedies and dramatic productions.

Institutions offering cultural education in Baghdad include the Academy of Music, Institute of Fine Arts and the [Music and Ballet school Baghdad](/wiki/Music_and_Ballet_school_Baghdad). Baghdad also features a number of museums including the [National Museum of Iraq](/wiki/National_Museum_of_Iraq) – which houses the world's largest and finest collection of artefacts and relics of [Ancient Iraqi](/wiki/Ancient_Iraq) civilisations; some of which were [stolen](/wiki/Archaeological_looting_in_Iraq) during the [Occupation of Iraq](/wiki/History_of_Iraq_(2003–2011)).

The capital, Ninus or [Nineveh](/wiki/Nineveh), was taken by the [Medes](/wiki/Medes) under [Cyaxares](/wiki/Cyaxares), and some 200 years after [Xenophon](/wiki/Xenophon) passed over its site, then mere mounds of earth. It remained buried until 1845, when Botta and Layard discovered the ruins of the Assyrian cities. The principal remains are those of [Khorsabad](/wiki/Khorsabad), [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) N.E. of [Mosul](/wiki/Mosul); of Nimroud, supposed to be the ancient Calah; and of Kouyunjik, in all probability the ancient Nineveh. In these cities are found fragments of several great buildings which seem to have been palace-temples. They were constructed chiefly of [sun-dried bricks](/wiki/Mudbrick), and all that remains of them is the lower part of the walls, decorated with sculpture and paintings, portions of the pavements, a few indications of the elevation, and some interesting works connected with the drainage.

### Media[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=34)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) After the end of the full state control in 2003, there were a period of significant growth in the broadcast media in Iraq. Immediately, and the ban on satellite dishes is no longer in place, and by mid-2003, according to a [BBC](/wiki/BBC) report, there were 20 radio stations from 0.15 to 17 television stations owned by Iraqis, and 200 Iraqi newspapers owned and operated. Significantly, there have been many of these newspapers in numbers disproportionate to the population of their locations. For example, in [Najaf](/wiki/Najaf), which has a population of 300,000, is being published more than 30 newspapers and distributed.

Iraqi media expert and author of a number of reports on this subject, Ibrahim Al Marashi, identifies four stages of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 where they had been taking the steps that have significant effects on the way for the later of the Iraqi media since then. Stages are: pre-invasion preparation, and the war and the actual choice of targets, the first post-war period, and a growing insurgency and hand over power to the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) and Prime Minister [Iyad Allawi](/wiki/Iyad_Allawi).[[180]](#cite_note-180)[Template:Page needed](/wiki/Template:Page_needed)

### Cuisine[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=35)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Masgouf,_an_Iraqi_tradition_-_Flickr_-_Al_Jazeera_English.jpg)[Masgouf](/wiki/Masgouf). Iraqi cuisine has a long history going back some 10,000 years – to the [Sumerians](/wiki/Sumer), [Akkadians](/wiki/Akkadian_Empire), [Babylonians](/wiki/Babylonia), [Assyrians](/wiki/Assyria) and [Ancient Persians](/wiki/Achaemenid_Empire).[[181]](#cite_note-181) [Tablets](/wiki/Clay_tablet) found in ancient ruins in Iraq show recipes prepared in the temples during religious festivals – the first cookbooks in the world.[[181]](#cite_note-181) [Ancient Iraq](/wiki/Ancient_Iraq), or [*Mesopotamia*](/wiki/Mesopotamia), was home to many sophisticated and highly advanced civilisations, in all fields of knowledge – including the culinary arts.[[181]](#cite_note-181) However, it was in the [medieval era](/wiki/Islamic_Golden_Age) when Baghdad was the capital of the [Abbasid Caliphate](/wiki/Abbasid_Caliphate) that the Iraqi kitchen reached its zenith.[[181]](#cite_note-181) Today the cuisine of Iraq reflects this rich inheritance as well as strong influences from the culinary traditions of neighbouring [Turkey](/wiki/Turkey), [Iran](/wiki/Iran) and the [Greater Syria](/wiki/Greater_Syria) area.[[181]](#cite_note-181) Some characteristic ingredients of Iraqi cuisine include – vegetables such as [aubergine](/wiki/Aubergine), [tomato](/wiki/Tomato), [okra](/wiki/Okra), [onion](/wiki/Onion), [potato](/wiki/Potato), [courgette](/wiki/Courgette), [garlic](/wiki/Garlic), [peppers](/wiki/Bell_pepper) and [chilli](/wiki/Chili_pepper), cereals such as [rice](/wiki/Rice), [bulgur](/wiki/Bulgur) [wheat](/wiki/Wheat) and [barley](/wiki/Barley), pulses and legumes such as [lentils](/wiki/Lentils), [chickpeas](/wiki/Chickpeas) and [cannellini](/wiki/Cannellini#White_beans), fruits such as [dates](/wiki/Date_Palm#Dates), [raisins](/wiki/Raisin), [apricots](/wiki/Apricot), [figs](/wiki/Common_fig), [grapes](/wiki/Grape), [melon](/wiki/Melon), [pomegranate](/wiki/Pomegranate) and [citrus fruits](/wiki/Citrus), especially [lemon](/wiki/Lemon) and [lime](/wiki/Lime_(fruit)).[[181]](#cite_note-181) Similarly with other countries of [Western Asia](/wiki/Western_Asia), chicken and especially lamb are the favourite meats. Most dishes are served with rice – usually [Basmati](/wiki/Basmati), grown in the [marshes](/wiki/Mesopotamian_Marshes) of southern Iraq.[[181]](#cite_note-181) [Bulgur](/wiki/Bulgur) [wheat](/wiki/Wheat) is used in many dishes – having been a staple in the country since the days of the [Ancient Assyrians](/wiki/Assyria).[[181]](#cite_note-181)

### Sport[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=36)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Football](/wiki/Association_football) is the most popular sport in Iraq. Football is a considerable uniting factor in Iraq following years of war and unrest. [Basketball](/wiki/Basketball), [swimming](/wiki/Swimming_(sport)), [weightlifting](/wiki/Olympic_weightlifting), [bodybuilding](/wiki/Bodybuilding), [boxing](/wiki/Boxing), [kick boxing](/wiki/Kick_boxing) and [tennis](/wiki/Tennis) are also popular sports.

The [Iraqi Football Association](/wiki/Iraqi_Football_Association) is the governing body of football in Iraq, controlling the [Iraqi National Team](/wiki/Iraq_national_football_team) and the [Iraqi Premier League](/wiki/Iraqi_Premier_League) (also known as [Dawri Al-Nokba](/wiki/Dawri_Al-Nokba)). It was founded in 1948, and has been a member of [FIFA](/wiki/FIFA) since 1950 and the [Asian Football Confederation](/wiki/Asian_Football_Confederation) since 1971. The biggest club in Iraq is [Al Shorta](/wiki/Al_Shorta_SC), who won back-to-back league titles in 2013 and 2014 and were the first ever winners of the [Arab Champions League](/wiki/Arab_Champions_League). The Iraqi National Football Team were the [2007 AFC Asian Cup](/wiki/2007_AFC_Asian_Cup) champions after defeating [Saudi Arabia](/wiki/Saudi_Arabia) in the final by 1-0 thanks to a goal by captain [Younis Mahmoud](/wiki/Younis_Mahmoud) and they have participated in two [FIFA](/wiki/FIFA) competitions (the [1986 FIFA World Cup](/wiki/1986_FIFA_World_Cup) and the [2009 FIFA Confederations Cup](/wiki/2009_FIFA_Confederations_Cup)).

## Technology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=37)]

### Mobile phones[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=38)]

Despite having mobile phones in the middle east since 1995, Iraqis were only able to use mobile phones in 2003. Mobile phones were banned under Saddam's rule. Currently upwards to 78% of Iraqis own a mobile phone.[[182]](#cite_note-182)

### Satellite[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=39)]

According to Iraqi Ministry of Communication, Iraq is now in the second phase of building and launching a multipurpose strategic satellite.[[183]](#cite_note-183) A project which expected to cost $600 million is ongoing in co-operation with market leaders such as [Astrium](/wiki/Astrium) and [Arianespace](/wiki/Arianespace).

### Undersea cable[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=40)]

On the 18th January 2012 Iraq was connected to the undersea communications network for the first time.[[184]](#cite_note-184) This had an immense impact on internet speed, availability and usage in Iraq.

On 2 October 2013, the Iraqi Minister for Communication ordered the internet prices to be lowered by a third. This is an attempt to boost usage and comes as a result of significant improvements in Internet infrastructure in the country.[[185]](#cite_note-185)

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=41)]

* [Outline of Iraq](/wiki/Outline_of_Iraq)
* [Index of Iraq-related articles](/wiki/Index_of_Iraq-related_articles)

[Template:Portal bar](/wiki/Template:Portal_bar)

## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=42)]

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## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=44)]

[Template:Sister project links](/wiki/Template:Sister_project_links)

Government

* [Presidency of Iraq](http://www.iraqipresidency.net/)
* [Cabinet of Iraq](http://www.cabinet.iq/default.aspx)

General information

* [Template:CIA World Factbook link](/wiki/Template:CIA_World_Factbook_link)
* [Iraq Corruption Profile](http://www.business-anti-corruption.com/country-profiles/middle-east-north-africa/iraq/snapshot.aspx) from the [Business Anti-Corruption Portal](/wiki/Business-Anti-Corruption_Portal)
* [Template:GovPubs](/wiki/Template:GovPubs)
* [Template:Dmoz](/wiki/Template:Dmoz)
* [Iraq profile](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14542954) from the [BBC News](/wiki/BBC_News)

[Template:Geographic location](/wiki/Template:Geographic_location) [Template:Iraq topics](/wiki/Template:Iraq_topics) [Template:Navboxes](/wiki/Template:Navboxes) [Template:Navboxes](/wiki/Template:Navboxes)

[Template:Authority control](/wiki/Template:Authority_control)

[Category:Iraq](/wiki/Category:Iraq) [Category:Arabic-speaking countries and territories](/wiki/Category:Arabic-speaking_countries_and_territories) [Category:Federal republics](/wiki/Category:Federal_republics) [Category:Member states of OPEC](/wiki/Category:Member_states_of_OPEC) [Category:Member states of the Arab League](/wiki/Category:Member_states_of_the_Arab_League) [Category:Member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation](/wiki/Category:Member_states_of_the_Organisation_of_Islamic_Cooperation) [Category:Member states of the United Nations](/wiki/Category:Member_states_of_the_United_Nations) [Category:Middle Eastern countries](/wiki/Category:Middle_Eastern_countries) [Category:Muslim-majority countries](/wiki/Category:Muslim-majority_countries) [Category:Near Eastern countries](/wiki/Category:Near_Eastern_countries) [Category:States and territories established in 1932](/wiki/Category:States_and_territories_established_in_1932) [Category:Western Asia](/wiki/Category:Western_Asia) [Category:Western Asian countries](/wiki/Category:Western_Asian_countries)