

# VIOLATIONS OF IRAQI CHILDREN RIGHTS UNDER THE AMERICAN OCCUPATION

Dr. Souad N. Al-Azzawi, Associate Professor in environmental Engineering



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## Violations of Iraqi Children Rights Under the American Occupation

**Dr. Souad N. Al-Azzawi, Associate Professor in Environmental  
Engineering (28 February 2010)**

For two decades, Iraqi children, along with all other elements of Iraqi society, have been subjected to grave violations of human rights.

These violations began with the destruction of all civil services and Iraqi civil infrastructure by the US/UK aggression on Iraq during the Gulf War of 1991, and were followed by the brutal economical sanctions which deprived the people of Iraq of food, clean water, health care, education and security.

As a result more than half a million Iraqi children under the age of 5 died during the nineties [1]. The thirteen years of suffering under embargo ended with the American invasion of Iraq in 2003.

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Another form of suffering was born in 2003 under the American occupation. As if the casualties of the excessive use of power during military operations were not enough, the invasion operations consisted of systematically burning and looting of civil services and infrastructure, health care centers, schools and universities, industrial compounds, etc. [2]. As stated in UNAMI's report of November 2006, Iraq can be described as “a nation that has been plunged into barbarism since the US-invasion in 2003” [3].

Under the American occupation, lack of security, sectarian violence, deterioration of health care systems, poverty, massive imprisonments, clean water shortages, limited or no electrical power, environmental pollution and lack of sanitation all contributed to grave violations to children's rights and a drastic increase in the child mortality rate. It has been reported that one out of eight children in Iraq die before their fifth birthday [4].

The American occupation forces, and the occupation-assigned Iraqi government, grossly failed to fulfill their most basic duties towards the children of Iraq in accordance with the UN/CRC Convention on the Rights of the Child, Resolution 25/Session 44, November 1989 [5]. The convention was ratified by 194 countries of the United Nations, except the USA and Somalia.

Principals of the CRC emphasized the need to protect children's rights' of life and physical, mental, moral, and spiritual development in a safe environment.

We will show that the American occupation violated children's rights on all levels, including health care, education, social security, family unity and the non separation of children from their parents through detention, imprisonment and exile.

In this report the status and violations of Iraqi children's rights under the American occupation is presented with special emphasis on the problems of the Iraqi children refugees in Syria.

## 1. Iraqi Children under the Economical Sanctions (1990-2003)

During the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq, the country was denied the right to import equipment, medicine, educational items, health care requirements, etc. The economic sanctions were imposed by US/UK administrations and enforced by UN resolution 661 in 1990. The sanctions committee in the UN was dominated by the USA and UK, who insisted on blocking most essentials related to human rights [6].

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The sanctions were war against the children of Iraq in the following ways:

1. According to the UNICEF, the mortality rate of children under five during the sanctions exceeded 4000/month [7]. This comprised double the mortality rate prior to the sanctions. A total of about half a million children under the age of 5 died from 1990 to 1998 [8].

UNICEF's survey of August, 1999 [9] claimed Iraq was facing a "humanitarian emergency" and other related reports showed that the major causes of increase of children mortality rates are:

- The blocking of vaccine shipments for Iraqi children against diphtheria and yellow fever;
  - Lack of sanitation and clean water due to the embargo of chemicals needed in for the water purification process;
  - Depriving the children of milk and quality food that helps build their immune system;
  - Bombing and destruction of major infrastructure related to civilian life like electrical power stations, communication networks, hospitals, sewage and water purification systems, etc. all have lead to the general deterioration of the standards of living [10].
2. Other assaults against Iraqi children during the sanctions were in the form of frequent bombing and killing as a result of the US/UK air raids on the civilian areas of the No Fly Zones, south and north of Iraq. Major attacks occurred from May 1998-2000, where the US air and the Navy forces carried out 36,000 sorties over southern Iraq, including 24,000 combat missions [11].
  3. Another atrocity against Iraqi children and civil society was the bombing of the Ameriyah Shelter in Baghdad on February 13, 1991 using the (then) new "Bunker Bombs" [12]. This resulted in the incineration of more than 300 children, sheltered inside the bunker to protect their lives.
  4. The contamination of Iraq with the use of radiological depleted uranium weaponry during the 1991 Gulf War. Exposure to these contaminants triggered certain diseases amongst children such as multiple malignances, child leukemia, congenital malformations, and more [13] [14]. Multifold increases of these diseases were registered amongst the population of Southern Iraq, American and Iraqi veterans.
  5. On September 26, 1995, the UN World Food Program (WFP) reported that 2.4 million Iraqi children under the age of five were at severe nutritional risk [15].

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6. In October 1999, the UNICEF reported that as of April 1997, nearly the whole Iraqi population of young children were affected by a measurable shift in the nutritional status towards malnutrition that drove the Iraqi infant mortality rates to the highest in the world [16].
7. According to the UNICEF, in 1989, the literacy rate in Iraq was 95% and 93% of the population had free access to modern health facilities [17]. Parents were fined for failing to send their children to school. Iraq reached a level where the basic indications to measure the overall well being of human beings, including children, were some of the best in the world [18]. After the 1991 embargo, the educational system in Iraq deteriorated drastically due to a lack of supplies, school funds, and a difficulty in keeping up with international standards and curriculums.

When asked if the death of half a million Iraqi children under the age of five was a price worth paying, USA ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright answered "... We think the price is worth it" [19].

This answer concludes how desperate the US and UK are to control oil fields in Iraq and all over the world.





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## 2. Status of Iraqi Children under the Anglo-American Occupation of Iraq (2003 to date):

Thirteen years of suffering and the death of more than half a million children under five as a result of economic sanctions ended with the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq in 2003. Iraqi people and children have had to face the excessive use of power, shock and awe techniques, raids, the destruction of infrastructure, burning and looting of the civil services and cultural centers of Iraq, damage to health care centers and hospitals, and the sectarian killing staged by occupation intelligence [20].

Numerous violations to Iraqi children's rights have continuously and systematically been committed under the Anglo-American occupation of Iraq.

The children of Iraq have been major victims of the occupation as a result of the following:

1. Direct killing during the invasion military operations where civilians were targeted directly. Additional casualties amongst children have resulted from unexploded ordinances along military engagement routes [21].
2. The direct killing and abuse of children during American troop raids on civilian areas like Fallujah, Haditha, Mahmudia, Telafer, Anbar, Mosul, and most of the other Iraqi cities [22]. The Massacre of the children in Haditha in 2005 is a good example of "collateral damages" among civilians [23].



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3. Daily car bombs casualties, explosion of buildings and other terrorist attacks on civilians.
4. Detention and torture of Iraqi children in American and Iraqi governmental prisons. While in detention, the children are being brutalized, raped, and tortured [24]. American guards videotaped these brutal crimes in Abu Ghraib [25] and other prisons.
5. Poverty due to economic collapse and corruption caused acute malnutrition among Iraqi children [26]. As was reported by Oxfam in July 2007, up to eight million Iraqis required immediate emergency aid, with nearly half the population living in “absolute poverty” [27].
6. Starving whole cities as collective punishment by blocking the delivery of food, aid, and sustenance before raiding them increased the suffering of the young children and added more casualties among them [28].
7. Microbial pollution and lack of sanitation including drinking water shortages for up to 70% of the population [29] caused the death of “one in eight Iraqi children” before their fifth birthday. Death of young children in Iraq has been attributed to water borne diseases such as diarrhea, cholera, typhoid, hepatitis, etc. [30].
8. Contaminating and exposing other heavily populated cities to chemically toxic and radioactive ammunitions. Weapons like cluster bombs, Napalm, white phosphorous, and Depleted Uranium [31] all caused drastic increases of cancer incidences, deformations in children, multiple malignancies and child leukemia. Children in areas like Basrah, Baghdad, Nasriya, Samawa, Fallujah, Dewania and other cities have been having multifold increases of such diseases [32]. Over 24% of all children born in Fallujah in October 2009 had birth defects [33]. The Minister of Environment in Iraq called upon the international community to help Iraqi authorities in facing the huge increase of cancer cases in Iraq [34].
9. The deterioration of the health care system [35] and the intentional assassination of medical doctors [36] [37] have resulted in an increased number of casualties amongst children. It has been estimated that the mortality rate amongst the population of Iraq reached 650,000 from 2003 to 2006 [31] [38]. Another survey indicated that the total number of dead for the period of 2003-2007 is about one million [39]. Among other cases, the failures of the health care system were specified as one of the major causes.
10. Damage to the educational system. By 2004, it was estimated that two out of every three Iraqi children were dropping out of school [40]. Statistics released by the Ministry of Education in October 2006 indicated that only 30% of the 3.5 million students were actually attending schools. Prior to the US invasion, UNESCO indicated that school attendance was nearly 100% [41]. Assassination of educators and academics in Iraq drove their colleagues to leave the country. This brain drain and the intended destruction of schools and educational system is part of the well planned cultural cleansing of the Iraqi society and identity [42].

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11. Total collapse of Iraq's economy, the sectarian violence, American troop raids on civilians, the killing of a dear family member have all deprived the children in Iraq of an innocent, carefree childhood that is the right of any child. They have to deal with family breakdowns, poverty, and a complete and total lack of security. Iraqi children are being forced to assume income generating roles because their families are suffering from hunger and poverty. They are leaving schools and having to deal with adult problems such as unemployment, manual labor, etc. [43]. This situation exposed them to hardship, and many forms of abuse. Exposure to violence on a daily basis has affected their psychological development and behavior as well.
12. The drastic increase in the number of orphans in Iraq. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs estimated the number of Iraqi orphans to be around 4.5 million [44]. Other estimates put them at around 5 million. About 500,000 of those orphans live on the streets without any home or family or specialized institutions to take care of them. Among these orphans, 700 are in Iraqi prisons and another 100 in American prisons [45].
13. The problems of families who were forced to migrate and the impact on their children. Since the invasion of Iraq, there have been about 2.2 million internally displaced people who were forced to migrate due to sectarian violence, American violence, etc. Well over two million other Iraqis were driven out of Iraq [46]. On November 20, 2007 UNESCO reports indicated



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that the number Iraqi children taking refuge in Syria alone was around 300,000 [47]. The problems of children who have been forced to migrate by force represent a real humanitarian crisis where a large number of families have no shelter, no finances, no health care, no education, and no security of any kind.

Tens of international refugee agencies and NGO's have been calling for international help to solve this crisis. Section 4 of this report presents some of the problems the children of the Iraqi refugees in Syria have to deal with.



### 3. Deterioration of the Living Conditions of Displaced Iraqi Children

This case study was conducted by the author with the help of the Iraqi Women Will body (IWW), an Iraqi NGO fighting for Iraqi women's rights inside and outside of Iraq.

The author and her assistant conducted door to door visits to the families who answered the questionnaire.

In October 2009, around 300 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to Iraqi families within the Yarmouk refugee area of Damascus, Syria. The researchers visited these families to ensure the accuracy of the answers and to conduct personal interviews.



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Of the 300 distributed questionnaires, only 120 were answered as many families were fearful of giving detailed information such as the names and address of their children in fear of being exposed to further assault by sectarian militias or the security forces of the occupation assigned government.

Of the 120 answered questionnaires, 94 of them were completely analyzed with full information regarding the names and addresses of the children who answered the questionnaires.

The age range of the studied child population varied from 2 years of age to 18 years of age. The number of girls was 44, or 46.8% of the research population, while the boys numbered 50, or 53.2% of the population.

The questionnaire shown in (Appendix-1) covered the following aspects:

1. Personal identification of the child, including the name, age, sex and place of birth.
2. Social status of the child's family members.
3. Educational status of the children interviewed.
4. Financial status of the families of the children.
5. Health status of the children.



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Analyses of the questionnaire results showed the below:

**Table-1:** places of birth of the children included in this study:

Place of Birth	Baghdad	Basra	Saladin	Refused to Reveal	Syria
No. of Children	52	7	4	29	2

As we can see most of the displaced children within the studied group are from the city Baghdad, which faced the highest rates of raids, killing, and sectarian violence under the occupation.

**Table-2** Causes of the parent(s) death of the studied children population:

No. of dead parent(s)	Causes	Rate
29	Killed by sectarian militias and death squads	67.4
6	Killed by gangs and criminals	13.9
4	Killed by car explosions	9
3	Direct killing by American forces	6.9
1	Direct killing by Iraqi security forces	2.8
<b>Total</b>	43	-
		%100

From Table 2, and answers from the rest of the members of the studied group, we can conclude the below:

- 43.6% of the children's families in the studied group left Iraq in fear for their lives after the killing of members of their immediate family and/or the illegal arrest of others by the occupation forces.
- 12.8% of the children's families in the studied group were forced to leave their residential areas.
- 11.7% of the children in the studied group left the country due to a lack of services, security, and law enforcement.
- In other words 75.5% of the children in the studied group were forced to migrate from their living areas in Iraq.

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## Sources of Family Income:

**Table-3:** The Financial Status of the Families of the Studied Children

No. of families	Financial responsibilities	Rate %
21	Retirement pension of one of the parents	22.3
24	Women's responsibility + UN support fees	25.5
17	Only UN support fees	18.1
7	All the above	7.5
4	Fathers responsibility with UN support fees	4.2
21	UN Support + children working + selling personal belongings	22.4
94	total	%100

Table 3 shows that the families of the children have no steady income. Most of the families sold their homes and other belongings in Iraq to begin a life in refuge. Later, it became very hard to maintain supporting the children without jobs and any kind of financial security. Some of the families receive a retirement pension ranging between \$200 - \$400 a month for the parent, or grandparent if they are living with them.

Another source of income for some families is UN financial support of about \$100 / month plus \$10 additional per child.

For the above reasons, many children within the studied group have to work to help sustain their families.

As can be seen from Table 3, the financial status of most of these families is much below the average standard of living, even though the majority of the children's parents are university level degree holders (i.e. teachers, engineers, etc.).

We can also conclude that most of these families cannot afford the most basic of necessities like quality food, medical care, and a safe, healthy residence.

## Educational Status of the Children:

As most of the children within the studied group are from educated families with proper degrees, the survey indicated that in spite of financial struggles, these families attempted to maintain a fair education for their children. Table 4 shows the educational status of the children within the studied group.

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**Table-4: Educational status of the children in the studied group**

No. of children	Educational level	Rate %
50	Elementary school	53.2
17	Primary high schools	18
6	High schools	6.4
21	Left school to work or family cannot afford their expenses	22.4
94	Total	%100

As can be seen, 22.4% of the children could not maintain their education due to extreme financial difficulties which resulted in parents being unable to afford even the free education being offered for all Iraqi refugees in Syria. (i.e. parents could not afford the very basic supplies, transportation fees, etc.). Other children were forced into labor in order to help their families survive.

For many Iraqi refugee families, we can see that continuing the education of their children is a luxury that cannot be afforded with the day to day struggle to feed and clothe children with very limited financial aid.

### Health and Medical Care Status:

Along with the educational and financial issues these families face, the survey indicated serious health problems amongst the studied child population.

Table 5 below shows the health status of the studied population.

**Table-5: Health Status of the Children within the Studied Group**

No. of children	Health problems	Rate
5	Congenital malformations	5.3
5	Children leukemia and respiratory problems	5.3
2	Disabilities caused by military operation injuries	2.2
32	Mental and psychological diseases	34
44	Total	46.8

**Table 5** clearly indicates that 46.8% of the studied children face serious health issues. The highest numbers of disabilities are the psychological and mental disorders these children face. The major cause of these issues is the result of occupation force violence, raids, deaths and killings of family members, sometimes in front of the children. Another cause of mental instability is drastic change in the standard of living of these children.

The survey also revealed that only 21 of the 44 health issues faced by the population under study received any form of medical treatment by the Iraqi Red Crescent,



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UNICEF, and free Syrian healthcare hospitals. In all other cases, medical treatment could not be afforded and was not offered.

## Final Remarks:

For two decades, the US administration and its allies have been committing genocide amongst the Iraqi population, including the children [48] [49]. The planned genocide began with imposing brutal economic sanctions that crippled a growing nation, and ended with the occupation of Iraq. During this period, intentional, criminal acts against humanity have been committed repeatedly and purposely by the American administration against the Iraqi people.

Crimes against civilians included even the children of Iraq. These crimes included the destruction of the essentials of civilian infrastructure, exposing children to hunger, famines, pollution of the environment with radiological and persistent toxicants, initiating and promoting sectarian massacres, the killing and torture committed by occupation forces, and forcefully displacing over five million Iraqis.

The excessive and unnecessary use of power against the civilian population, and the intentional targeting of even unborn children, due to the use of chemical weapons, is an indication of a premeditated plan to depopulate Iraq. Depopulating Iraq works in favor of some of the pro-occupation minorities such as the Kurds. Under the protection of the anglo-American occupation and Israeli Mossad stationed in Iraqi Kurdistan since 1991, the Kurds are extending their territories through daily killing, bombing and kidnapping Arabs, Turkmen, Christians, Assyrians, and Yazidis in the neighboring territories of Kirkuk, Dialah, Kut, Mosul and other areas within the plan of Kurdish territorial expansion. Children in these areas live in an environment of total chaos, violence and terror.

Of course, depopulation of Third World countries known to have high population growth rates is an active agenda of American Foreign Policy, as was stated by Dr. Henry Kissinger, who wrote: “Depopulation should be the highest priority of US Foreign Policy towards the Third World [50]”.

The direct and indirect killing of about three million Iraqis [51] [52] since 1991 to control its resources and initiate major demographic changes is a criminal act. The international community is urged to stop this genocide.

The genocide will stop only when the American occupying forces leave Iraq to mend the destruction and terror they’ve been cultivating for the last two decades [53].

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# VIOLATIONS OF IRAQI CHILDREN RIGHTS UNDER THE AMERICAN OCCUPATION



Dr. Souad N. Al-Azzawi, Associate Professor in environmental Engineering

- A survey published by the BRussells Tribunal, February 2010 -

## Annex 1/Questionnaire

### Dear citizens

The questioner in your hands aims to define the effects of the occupation on the Iraqi children in the following aspects: economical, sociological, educational, health and psychological. Also it assesses the role of the Governmental, the International Humanitarian Organizations, and the NGOs in solving the Iraqi children crises after more than five years of occupation...We plea your cooperation in filling in the required information honestly and sincerely. We would like to assure you that this information will only be used for the purposes of this scientific research .

**Note:** please mark (X) next to the correct answer and you can also mark more than one answer at the same time if needed.

### First: Personal Identity:

1. The child's full name :
2. The mothers name (optional):
3. Year of birth :
4. Gender of the child : male  female
5. Place of birth: inside Iraq  mention the province   
Outside Iraq  mention the country and province

### Seconed: The social status:

6. Are the child's parents alive? yes  No
7. If the answer is No, has the child lost: the mother?  The Father?  Or both?
8. What are the causes of death: Natural cause?  Killing and assassination?
9. If the death was by a natural cause ,was it caused by :  
Aging  illness (diabetes, blood pressure, heart conditions)  cancer   
Undiagnosed disease because of the poor health conditions  accidents
10. If death was caused by killing , was the reason :  
Death by random explosions  killing by the occupation forces   
Killing by the government forces  killing by militias   
Killing by abduction and criminal gangs
11. Was this killing the reason behind the immigration of the family? Yes  No
12. If the answer is No ,what were the reasons behind the immigration : forced displacement   
Lack of security and law enforcement  personal threat  other   
reasons
13. Was there an attempt from any organization to provide medical treatment before the death from nonviolence causes : Public health  The Red Cresce   
Organization  
Humanitarian health organizations in the country of residence  UN organizations

Others:

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### Third: The Economical Status :

14. Who is the current supporter of the family : The mother  The father   
One or more of the children  a relative  state who:

15. What is the family income source : selling a house and other properties   
Pension of one of the parents or both  Humanitarian aids from the UN  
organizations

Humanitarian aids from NGOs  special aid  work of one or more of the family members

16. In the case where one of the family members work ,is this work paid by :  
On a daily basis  Weekly basis  Monthly salary  private business

17. Do the children work to provide income for the family : Yes  No

18. If the answer is Yes ,please explain how :

19. Does the family in its current status have a steady income :Yes  No

20. Does the income ,in spite the source, cover the minimal requirements for a decent  
life :

Yes  No

### Fourth: The Educational Status

21. Are the children continuing their education : Yes  No

22. If the answer is Yes ,please state the educational levels : Primary  Elementary   
 Secondary

23. If the answer is No ,what is the reason behind dropping out of school :

Continuous failure caused by inability to concentrate

The difference between the educational system in Iraq and the refuge country

The family's inability to provide educational expenses

The child's work to help support the family

To take care of a sick or handicap member of the family

The child has health problems caused by defect or illness

Other reasons please mention:

### Fifth: The Health Status:

24. Does the child suffer from physical health problems : Yes  No

25. What is the nature of the illness : Birth defect  permanent illness (Diabetes  
,Asthma)

Blood diseases and cancer

Fractures, burns and illnesses caused by the military operations of the occupation  
forces and the government forces and rand  explosions

Psychological and neural diseases caused by explosions, raids and bloody killing  
scenes

26. When did the child get sick : before the occupation  After the occupation

27. Is a medical care center helping provide medical treatment: Yes  No

28. If the answer is yes, state the institute type providing the medical treatment :

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Local Public Hospitals  Iraqi Red Crescent  the UNICEF   
Public hospitals in the country of refuge  The Red Crescent in the country of  
refuge

- Other International NGOs  Others please mention:
29. Are the mentioned medical treatments and services compatible with the diagnosed health conditions of the children s  No
30. If the answer is No, what do you think the reason is:

Thank you. Accept our deepest appreciation and regards