
IRAQ IS ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS PLACES FOR CHILDREN TO LIVE'

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In a report published in June, Unicef noted that violence and loss of income are forcing more families to send their children to work. The report estimated that more than 575,000 Iraqi children have been put to work, double the number from 1990.

In an interview with Al Jazeera, Maulid Warfa, a regional officer for Unicef, said: Today, Iraq is one of the most dangerous places for children to live □ not exactly the country where you wish to be a child.

Iraqi children are exposed to danger from a very early age □ as early as seven or eight years old, added Warfa. They work in chemical factories or in garbage collection sites without any kind of protection. They work for long hours, and you can see them exhausted * [This] is destroying their future, and □ as all they want is to play, go to school, and be loved and protected by their families - we still cant imagine what will happen to them.

Raad Aldahlaki, a member of the parliamentary committee on human rights in Iraq, blames the government. Politicians and state institutions are doing nothing when it comes to dealing with social problems caused by the conflict, and the people are left with no clear strategy from the government on how it will help them, he told Al Jazeera.

Meanwhile, Iraqs labour minister, Mohammed Shayaa al-Sudani, acknowledged the dramatic increase in child labour amid the countrys ongoing conflict, noting that the government has been working closely with international organisations in an effort to reintegrate working children into school. The government also passed a law restricting the age at which children can legally work, he told Al Jazeera.