
ISLAMIC STATE: IRAQ HOLDING MORE THAN 1,000 FOREIGN WIVES, CHILDREN OF SUSPECTED IS FIGHTERS

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Iraq is holding more than 1,000 family members of suspected Islamic State (IS) foreign fighters in a desert camp south of Mosul.

While the men have been taken away to be investigated, authorities are trying to determine the nationality of their families and whether they can be sent home.

Unprecedented situation

The Norwegian Refugee Council, which is supplying aid to the families, says they are in a precarious situation.

"It's a very difficult situation and to a large degree unprecedented", the NRC's Melany Markham said.

"With Iraqis who've fled some of the conflict areas [around] Mosul, they either return to their homes or they move on to displacement camps elsewhere in the country.

"But because these people are foreign nationals their current status is uncertain.

"It's uncertain whether they'll be repatriated or, if not, what happens to them if they stay in the country."

The women reflect the global pull of the IS project.

"They're people from other Middle Eastern countries, Central Asia, Russia, a large number of Turkish nationals and people from as far away as the Caribbean," Ms Markham said.

Wives, children face uncertain fate

While fighting for IS in Iraq can be punished with the death penalty, the women and children are not officially viewed the same way. But they are also not free to leave.

Two children holding bottles and biscuits stand in a doorway as a man holding a rifle walks behind them.

The NRC says they are being held at a militarised site in de facto detention while Iraqi officials and diplomats attempt to identify them.

"I know that there are efforts being made by various governments to negotiate about the status of their nationals but there's no certainty," Ms Markham said.

"There's no certainty about when the situation will be resolved and if in fact it will be resolved for all the people there."

While some of the women defend the rule of IS, Iraqi officials say others did not know and were tricked into travelling to the so-called caliphate, and a large number had no say in it at all.

"About two-thirds of people in this emergency site are actually children, so it's a very difficult and delicate situation and what they need is to be protected and their human rights upheld throughout this process," Ms Markham said.

French woman tricked into going to Iraq ... where her son was killed

"My mother doesn't even know where I am," a 27-year-old French woman of Algerian descent said.

She claimed she had been tricked by her husband to come with him via Turkey into Syria and then Iraq when he joined Islamic State last year.

"I had just given birth to this little girl three months before," she said, holding the infant and asking not to be named.

"He said, 'let's go for a week's holiday in Turkey'. He had already bought the plane tickets and the hotel."

After four months in Mosul, she ran away from her husband to Tal Afar in February.

She tearily recounted how her five-year-old son was killed in June by a rocket while playing in the streets.

"I don't understand why he did this to us," she said of her husband, who she said was killed fighting in Mosul.

"Dead or alive — I couldn't care less about him."

She and a few other families had walked for days to surrender at a Kurdish Peshmerga checkpoint beyond al-Ayadiyah, a town near Tal Afar where the militants took their last stand.

"We were getting bombed, shelled and shot at," she said.

Kaynak/Source: