

Survey Highlights Iraqi Misery

Author: [Safaa al-Mansoor](#)

Officials say there's an urgent need to improve job prospects, in order to stave off instability.

A new United Nations survey shows people are still living in misery two years after the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime.

Eighty-five per cent of Iraqis have an unstable power supply, 40 per cent use polluted water and almost a quarter of all children aged from six months to five years suffer from malnutrition, according to the survey conducted by the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, and the Iraqi planning ministry.

"The survey reflects a fierce contrast between the richest countries and the miserable conditions Iraqis endure," said Planning Minister Barham Saleh.

The poll was conducted last year and included more than 21,600 families living in Iraq's 18 governorates. The UN secretary-general's deputy special representative in Iraq, Staffan de Mistura, said the report highlights "the sufferings of the Iraqi people who are struggling for survival".

The survey asked Iraqis about housing issues, public services, infrastructure, the workforce, unemployment, health care, education, women's issues and family incomes.

Rawan Mohammed, who is in her last year of high school, said she is unable to study because the power keeps going out.

"I don't know what to do," said Mohammed. "We are preparing for exams but the electricity keeps cutting out."

Khayun Hassan Laibi, an engineer living just south of Baghdad, said the situation in his neighborhood is miserable because there is no sewage system.

"The smell is terrible and usually my children are sick because of the dirty water and the garbage," he said. "I don't know where the oil revenue goes."

The survey organisers noted that many of the problems facing Iraqis stem from years of neglect, corruption and wars under the Saddam Hussein regime.

Still Mahdi al-Allaq, head of the planning ministry's central agency for statistics, said the results reflected the "misuse of resources and abasing of Iraqi people" when the former dictator was in power.

In 2004, Iraq's population was estimated at 27.2 million, some 40 per cent of which are children aged under 15. The ratio of men to women is almost equal, although the population of men aged 35 to 49-years-old has decreased significantly because of the impact of the Iraq-Iran war.

Iraq's total workforce is some 6.7 million people, 18 per cent of whom are unemployed. And the jobs that exist rarely pay enough - ninety-three per cent of those in work said they had more than employer.

Planning Minister Saleh, in a statement to IWPR, said there was an urgent need to improve the employment prospects of ordinary Iraqis.

"The increase in unemployment has had a huge impact on stability in Iraq, and we should focus on fighting extremism through improving the economic situation of Iraqis," he said.

Many of those looking for work are increasingly losing hope. Mohammed Hassan al-Bahrani, 34, told IWPR that he has applied for many jobs in various government ministries but has yet to find work. Lately, he has been thinking of leaving Iraq because of his situation.

"I think bad luck is chasing me," al-Bahrani said. "I'm fully hopeful about [incoming prime minister Ibrahim] al-Ja'afari's government, which is the government I elected. But if they cannot eliminate unemployment, I will emigrate."

One of Saleh's priorities after reviewing the survey results is to focus on foreign investment and enhancing business relations with other countries.

"Our task is long and difficult and I don't have a magic wand," he said. "We will encourage investment in the private sector as we can't develop the country without it."

Safaa al-Mansoor is an IWPR trainee in Baghdad.

Location: Iraqi Kurdistan
Iraq
Iran

Source URL: <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/survey-highlights-iraqi-misery>