

WITHHOLDING OF FOOD

- Relatives who do not report deserters may lose their ration cards for purchasing government-controlled food supplies, be evicted from their residences, or face the arrest of other family members. The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq reported in October and December 1999 that authorities denied food ration cards to families that failed to send their young sons to the "Saddam's Cubs" compulsory weapons training camps.⁴³

CRIMES AGAINST MUSLIMS

- The Government consistently politicizes and interferes with religious pilgrimages, both of Iraqi Muslims who wish to make the Hajj to Mecca and Medina and of Iraqi and non-Iraqi Muslim pilgrims who travel to holy sites within the country. For example, in 1998 the UN Sanctions Committee offered to disburse vouchers for travel and expenses to pilgrims making the Hajj; however, the Government rejected this offer. In 1999 the Sanctions Committee offered to disburse funds to cover Hajj-related expenses via a neutral third party; the Government again rejected the offer. Following the December 1999 passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1284, the Sanctions Committee again sought to devise a protocol to facilitate the payment for individuals making the journey. The Sanctions Committee proposed to issue \$250 in cash and \$1,750 in travelers checks to each individual pilgrim to be distributed at the U.N. office in Baghdad in the presence of both U.N. and Iraqi officials. The Government again declined and, consequently, no Iraqi pilgrims were able to take advantage of the available funds or, in 2000, of the permitted flights. The Government continued to insist that these funds would be accepted only if they were paid in cash to the government-controlled central bank, not to the Hajj pilgrims.⁴⁴

More than 95 percent of the population of Iraq are Muslim. The (predominantly Arab) Shi'a Muslims constitute a 60 to 65 percent majority:

- The Iraqi government has for decades conducted a brutal campaign of murder, summary execution, and protracted arbitrary arrest against the religious leaders and followers of the majority Shi'a Muslim population. Despite nominal legal protection of religious equality, the Government has repressed severely the Shi'a clergy and those who follow the Shi'a faith.⁴⁵
- Forces from the Mukhabarat, General Security (Amn Al-Amm), the Military Bureau, Saddam's Commandos (Fedayeen Saddam), and the Ba'th Party have killed senior Shi'a clerics, desecrated Shi'a mosques and holy sites, and interfered with Shi'a religious education. Security agents reportedly are stationed at all the major Shi'a mosques and shrines, where they search, harass, and arbitrarily arrest worshipers.⁴⁶

⁴³ Page 8, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Iraq*, March 4, 2002; US Department of State; www.state.gov

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Page 11-12

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Page 11

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Page 11