



IENE 6



Contemporary large migration waves into Europe: Enabling health workers to provide psychological support to migrants and refugees and develop strategies for dealing with their own emotional needs

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Intellectual Output 8

Bitesized Learning Tool No 5: Ethnohistory of Iraq

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The Ethnohistory of Iraq

Learning Objectives

To raise awareness and knowledge about factors which influence the culture and refugeedom of the Iraqi people whom healthcare workers and volunteers may provide services to.

Geography

- Iraq is in western Asia and shares borders with Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Syria
- Iraq has a coastline measuring 58 km (36 miles) on the northern Persian Gulf and encompasses the Mesopotamian Alluvial Plain, the north-western end of the Zagros mountain range and the eastern part of the Syrian Desert.
- Two major rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, run south through Iraq and into the Shatt al-Arab near the Persian Gulf. These rivers provide Iraq with significant amounts of fertile land.
- Its capital is Baghdad
- The climate is mostly dry with mild winters and hot summers. However, the countries mountainous regions have very cold winters and mild summers
- There is a growing economy in Iraq which is dependent on the development of oil. The main industries today are petroleum, chemicals, textiles and leather
- Its main exports are oil and Iraq has the second largest oil reserves in the Middle East.

Population

- Just over 37 million (2016 estimate)

Ethnic groups

- Arabs 75-80%, whilst 15% are Kurds, Assyrians, Iraqi Turkmen/TurkomanKurdish.

Languages

- Arabic and Kurdish are the official languages in Iraq. Some also speak Turkmen, Assynain and Armenian.

Religions

- Islam is the most widely practised religion, with 64% being Shia Muslims and 31% are Sunni.

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- There are also small minorities such as Christians, Yazidis, Yarsanis, Shabaks and others making up 5-6% of the total population.

Civilisation and history

- The region between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, historically known as **Mesopotamia**, is often referred to as the **cradle of civilisation**. It was here that mankind first began to read, write, create laws and live in cities under an organised government—notably Uruk, from which "Iraq" is derived.
- The area has been home to successive civilisations since the 6th millennium BC.
- Between 65,000 BC and 35,000 BC northern Iraq was home to a Neanderthal culture, archaeological remains of which have been discovered at Shanidar Cave. This same region is also the location of a number of pre-Neolithic cemeteries, dating from approximately 11,000 BC (Ralph et al 2004).

Current Politics and Economy

The BBC reports the following key dates in Iraq's history:

1534-1918 - Ottoman rule.

1917 - Britain seizes control, creates state of Iraq.

1932 - Independence, followed by coups.

1979 - Saddam Hussein becomes president.

1980-1988 - Iran-Iraq war.

1990 - Iraq invades Kuwait, putting it on a collision course with the international community.

1991 - Iraq subjected to sanctions, weapons inspections and no-fly zones.

2003 - US-led coalition invades, starting years of guerrilla warfare and instability.

2014 - The armed Islamic State group emerges as a major force in the region and seizes large parts of Iraq, which it holds until a government offensive drives it out in 2016.

- The country's current President is **Fuad Masum** and the Prime Minister is **Haider al-Abadi**

● **In 2015 the UNHCR reported the following figures:**

Total Iraqi refugees and people in refugee like situations = **264,094**

Internally Displaced People protected/ assisted by UNHCR, incl. people in IDP-like situations = **4,403,287**

<http://www.unhcr.org/afr/statistics/country/59b294387/unhcr-statistical-yearbook-2015-15th-edition.html>

- The majority of the Iraqi refugees live in:
 - 1) Syria, Germany, 3) Jordan, 4) Sweden, 5) Netherlands, 6) Turkey with many more countries have much smaller numbers.

ACTIVITY: QUIZ

1. Historically what was the region of Mesopotamia (the current Iraq) referred to?
2. What is the capital of Iraq?
3. What are the official languages of Iraq?

Answers at the end of this tool.

Reflections: use this space to write down your reflections about the topic of this learning tool

References and useful resources

Ralph S. Solecki, Rose L. Solecki, and Anagnostis P. Agelarakis (2004). **The Proto-Neolithic Cemetery in Shanidar Cave**. Texas A&M University Press. pp. 3–5. ISBN 9781585442720.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraq>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14542954>

Bitesized Learning Tool No 5: Ethnohistory of Iraq



<http://www.unhcr.org/afr/statistics/country/59b294387/unhcr-statistical-yearbook-2015-15th-edition.html>

Answers to the quiz: 1 = Cradle of civilisation, 2= Baghdad, 3= Arabic and Kurdish

