

Perpetual War in Iraq? WILPF's Position

We at WILPF are deeply disturbed by the horrific crime that took place last Saturday in a crowded market at the center of Baghdad.

A lorry packed with explosives was detonated as families were shopping for the Eid celebration. The use of explosive weapons in highly populated areas is an all too common crime in Iraq and is yet to receive adequate attention under codified and customary international law. A research by WILPF on the impact of such weapons on women showed that when they are used in markets, an average of 93% of the casualties are civilians, most of which are women and girls.

These attacks are not happening in an otherwise safe society. The US-led invasion in 2003 and a series of subsequent failures by the occupying states, the international community and the Iraqi government left the Iraqi society exhausted by structural dysfunctions and sectarian tensions that gave rise to sectarian militias and made such crimes a daily agony for Iraqi civilians.

The impact of this notorious crime will go far beyond its 250 victims as survivors fail to receive adequate medical and psychosocial support and aid workers and services suffer immensely to cope with the exponential demand.

As the security situation worsens, women will suffer a great burden due to the absence of adequate health care services, the domination of discriminatory laws and legal practices and the proliferation of small arms that reaffirm patriarchal hierarchies of power, strengthen harmful traditional practices and limit the freedom of movement of women. In addition, women who are fleeing scores of brutality by ISIS and other militias cannot obtain legal identification in the absence of a male family member which increases their vulnerability to violence and discrimination.

We at WILPF reiterate our full support to our Iraqi partners who work around the clock to bring freedom, peace and equality to the devastated Iraqi community. We call on the Iraqi government and the international community to take clear and active measures to protect and support the Iraqi civil society, particularly women-led organisations, and put them at the heart of the planning and implementation of response strategies as they are in the best position to bring into the process the needs and concerns of all people affected by the crisis and ensure appropriate and effective response and prevention measures.