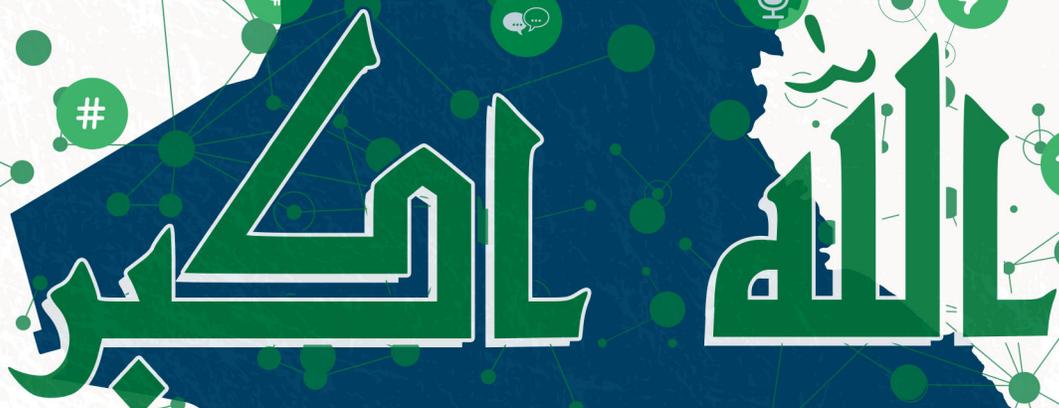


SOCIAL MEDIA AND CONFLICT IN IRAQ



الله أكبر

A LEXICON OF HATE SPEECH TERMS



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Better World Organization for Community Development is a humanitarian non-governmental organization established in 2017 in Kurdistan/Iraq. An independent non-profit, Better World works to advocate for peace and coexistence in the community and improve social, psychosocial and economic situation of people. The organization focuses on women through projects that ensure protection and empowerment for them. Moreover, the organization develops livelihood projects that support small business ideas. The board and management teams are young men and women who have experience in the humanitarian and civil society fields, and established this organization to stand up and call for women rights and peace to change the world to a better place. We believe that with hard work and together we could make a change, although the change will be very gradual, we have a hope that one day people in Kurdistan/Iraq and all over the world live in real peace.

Iraqi Network for Social Media (INSM) is the first & biggest Network of Bloggers and citizen journalists in Iraq founded in February 2012. Our mission is to report on people whose voices are rarely seen in mainstream media and Defend Our Blogger members and non- members to ensure free speech online, paying attention to legal, technical and physical threats to people using the internet and Empower by provides training and mentorship to local communities who want to tell their own stories using online tools. INSM worked with its local and international partners on campaigns at the local and international levels to withdraw and stop the legislation of the infamous Cybercrime Bill for what is considered a violation of freedom of expression.

Iraqi Alfourdous Organization, founded in 2003 and registered as civil society organization in 2004, works to promote participation of women and men in decision-making, peace-building and defending their rights. We work with international and local organizations and the United Nations on peacebuilding projects.

Youth Without Borders is a local non-governmental organization working to develop the capacities of Iraqi civil society, especially the youth category, rehabilitation and develop their skills, as well as relief for the internally displaced and refugees.

Dina Obaid is a specialist with over seven years of extensive experience in social media management, social media strategy, and building strategies for advocacy campaigns for Human Rights Organizations. She has worked on a projects to support women journalists and women's human rights activists (WHRD) to advance gender equality, to fight sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and to work towards a more diverse, inclusive society. In addition she has worked with many local and international NGOs and is currently focused on creating a peaceful environment of dialogue on social media and defending the digital rights of users on internet when it comes to freedom of expression. She has worked previously as a researcher at PeaceTech Lab and the PEN Center in Iraq and has a diploma from Lund University in Social Innovation in digital context in Sweden.



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Introduction

Since 2016, PeaceTech Lab has produced a series of lexicons to identify and analyze online hate speech in countries affected by conflict while also providing alternative words and phrases that can be used to counter this speech. PeaceTech Lab, working first with local groups in countries in Africa — and now in the Middle East — seeks to understand the dynamics of online hate speech and the connection between online hate speech and offline violent events. The Lab has developed a methodology to collect terms and data to contextualize inflammatory language that can lead to violence; this growing portfolio of hate speech lexicons helps guide monitoring software to better track who is using hate speech and how it spreads.

This lexicon for Iraq investigates the online hate speech generated around Iraq's new and continuing challenges and faultlines:

The fight to dislodge the Islamic State was exacerbated by underlying sectarian tensions in Iraq among Sunni and Shiite groups, as well as tensions between Kurdish groups in the north and the central government in Baghdad, which intensified after the U.S. invasion in 2003 and the fall of Saddam Hussein. These tensions now threaten the stability of the new Iraqi government as it looks to rebuild the country and prevent a resurgence of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.¹

Iraq's 40 million people are diverse. While the vast majority are ethnically Arab, there is a large minority Kurdish population and several other smaller ethnic groups. Iraq is almost exclusively a Muslim country, with an estimated two-thirds Shia adherents and a third Sunni adherents, with very small numbers of Christians and other religious groups.² Although major conflict has ended, Iraq is still dealing with its impact. For example, some 2.6 million Iraqis remain displaced from their homes, largely from the inter-communal violence that lasted from 2006 to 2008. In addition, Iraq hosts more than 250,000 refugees from the conflict in Syria, as well as several thousand other refugees from the region. However, while Iraq has been one of the most fragile countries in the world over the last two decades, recent years have seen significant improvements in some of the pressures on the country.³ While Iraq ranked 120 of 189 countries in the most recent global survey of human development, there are signs that it has improved in this area in the last two years.⁴

In terms of telecommunications, Iraq was one of the last countries in the world to introduce cell phones and to provide access to the internet. This was largely due to Saddam Hussein's regime keeping the telecommunications sector under tight control.⁵ After the ouster of the Ba'ath Party regime, digital communications proliferated and online access grew; however, online debates continue to reflect the intense sectarian divides in Iraqi society.

This lexicon intends to serve as a resource to assist individuals and organizations involved in monitoring and countering hate speech in Iraq as well as to contribute generally to further understanding of this global problem.



The Lexicon

Background on Conflict in Iraq

Introduction

The Iraqi state as it exists today was formed in 1921 when British colonizers drew its borders and divided its land. Many actors refused to accept these demarcations as the divisions were made without consideration of local ethnic, political, and religious groupings. Despite the ensuing challenges, the country succeeded in creating a common national history among many of its people. After the establishment of the state in 1921, efforts to consolidate authority inside Iraq (especially during the reign of King Faisal I) began with the adoption of a policy to reduce Iraq's exposure to the conflicts of the region.⁶

One of the first actions of the new Iraqi state was to extinguish (in cooperation with the British) the spark of rebellion spreading in parts of the country — sometimes with extreme cruelty. Given the growing desire for independence from the British, accusations of collaboration with the occupiers and disloyalty to the nation also grew in the country as a sense of national identity emerged. At the same time, others pushed for autonomy from the new state, including Kurdish leaders and leaders of the Assyrian Christian community.

Military Coups in Iraq's Early Years

Shortly after independence from the British in 1932, Iraq witnessed the first military coup led by Officer Bakr Sedqi in 1936. This coup was the first of many that contributed to the militarization of society and the lack of democratic and accountable governance of the country.⁷ Not long after, in 1941, Iraq experienced another coup under the leadership of Rashid Aali Geilani as he exploited Iraqi resentment over British colonial rule. This was followed by a period of political instability and frequent changes in governance. In 1958, Abdul Karim Qassem led a military coup and declared the creation of the Republic of Iraq.

The Republic of Iraq had a bloody beginning with the killing of the king and members of the royal family. As the Republic attempted to establish itself, the number of armed militias in Iraq increased. Between 1958 and 1963, there were massacres in Kirkuk and Mosul and public executions in the streets, with newspapers and parties divided in their support for or condemnation of these events.⁸

On February 8, 1963, Abdel Salam Aref led a coup against his former friend Qassem. During this period, the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party formed the National Guard, which made arbitrary arrests of women and men, turned schools into detention centers, and launched wholesale prosecutions against all those accused of being communists. Iraq's society was boiling, and a bloody reaction ensued. On November 10 and 11, 1963, as part of Ba'athist factional divisions, President Aref ordered the Iraqi armed forces (accompanied by Iraqi tribesmen) to move against members of the National Guard.

The Beginning of the Ba'ath Era

After a shaky start and the ouster of most Ba'athist members of the government in 1963, Ba'ath Party leaders retook power in a coup in 1968. On July 17, the party declared Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr president. He aimed to end the Kurdish rebellion in 1969, which was exacerbating tensions with Iran. That crisis was resolved in March of 1970 with a peace plan that provided autonomy for the Kurds and the right to representation in government bodies. The Iraqi government nonetheless began implementing a program of "Arabization" of the oil-rich areas of Kirkuk by deporting and displacing Kurds. After the government in Baghdad overcame internal divisions and ended its isolation from the Arab world in April of 1972, and with continued Iranian military support to the Kurds, the second Iraqi-Kurdish war broke out in 1974. The conflict ended in 1975 with the signing of the Algiers agreement in which Iran committed to cease its support of the Kurdish militants and which ended the conflict on the maritime border between the two countries.

Hussein Regime

In 1979, Saddam Hussein, a Sunni Ba'athist from Tikrit, came to power. Domestically, Saddam and his allies brutally suppressed internal challengers while simultaneously launching an aggressive posture towards other countries in the region. In the same year that Hussein became Iraq's leader, Shiite-majority Iran ousted its Western-backed Shah and in September of 1980, Iraq invaded Iran. After initial territorial gains by Iraq, Iran regained ground, leading to a stalemate of several years. The war featured Iraqi chemical attacks against Iranian forces, Iranian "human waves" of soldiers martyring themselves against Iraqi fortifications, and a "war of the cities" in which each side launched rockets indiscriminately against urban populations. The countries of the region largely took sides based on the Sunni-Shia divide, with Syria supporting Iran and the Sunni Arab states supporting Iraq. By the time the UN brokered a peace deal in 1988,⁹ the brutal conflict had resulted in an estimated 1 to 2 million total casualties.

While the war was coming to a close, Saddam's regime turned its attention to internal challenges. In the spring of 1988, Saddam launched a genocidal campaign (which became known as Anfal) against the country's Kurdish population because the Kurds were considered by the regime to be allies of Iran. The regime directed attacks, the use of chemical weapons, the destruction of villages and farms, and forced population removal. Between 50,000 and 100,000 people, including many civilians, were killed.¹⁰

International Intervention, Post-Ba'ath, and Civil War

Throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s, Saddam's government held on to power despite international embargoes and sanctions, military containment, and diplomatic isolation — and all the while, the Iraqi people suffered through conflict, starvation, and disease. In 1990 and 1991, the US and coalition forces led a UN-approved military campaign against Hussein's forces which had invaded Kuwait. During this conflict, a mix of ethnic and religious activists, military mutineers, and militants rose up in an uncoordinated revolt against the regime, eventually capturing 14 of Iraq's 18 provinces in the war's power vacuum. Following the successful military campaign against Iraqi forces in Kuwait, much of the world was reluctant to intervene directly in Iraq. Nonetheless, in March 2003, the US and what was dubbed the "coalition of the willing" invaded Iraq to ostensibly rid it of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). In the end, WMDs were not found, but the invasion led to the removal of Saddam and the Ba'ath Party regime and to the de facto occupation of the country (including governance by a US pro-consul). This occupation, like that by the British in the previous century, incited resistance among Sunni and Shia communities. While the insurgents' main priority was to rid the country of Western forces, the political vacuum created competition for power and score-settling, with Sunni and Shia radicals targeting each other. Eventually, the coalition handed power over to Shia politician Iyad Allawi in June of 2004. Elections for a transitional assembly were held in January of 2005, with the Kurds forming a regional self-government. On October 15, 2005, voters approved a new Iraqi constitution which defined the political system and instituted a parliamentary governing system. By this point, however, the US had sought to suppress radical Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's militia and fought major battles against Sunni insurgents in Fallujah. In the wake of the bombing of the Shrine of al-Askari Imams in Samarra on March 15, 2006, civil war broke out and lasted for more than two years. During this period, tens of thousands were killed. Politicians and militia leaders escalated their rhetoric while media and new social networking platforms were mobilized along sectarian lines, fostering hateful rhetoric between communities.

A New Political System Amid Sectarian Strife

After 2003, the US invasion created a system of "sectarian quotas," so that positions in the government would be distributed on a sectarian basis. Under this system, the Council of Representatives, Iraq's parliament,¹¹ elected Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani as president in 2005. In April of 2006, Mahmoud Mashhadani, a Sunni, was chosen as Speaker of the Council and Nouri al-Maliki, a Shiite, was asked to serve as premier and form a government. Al-Maliki presided over one of the most difficult periods in Iraq's modern history as sectarian fighting killed tens of thousands of people (mostly in the southern and central provinces) while mosques and houses of worship were attacked in the Sunni areas in the north and west of the country. This period ended with a military campaign led by Prime Minister al-Maliki to fight the Shiite militias that dominated the center and south of Iraq and to restore government control over those provinces.¹² In 2010, al-Maliki did not win re-election outright, but retained power after a disputed election and months of negotiations.¹³ Shortly thereafter, the last US combat troops left Iraq.

Escalation of Conflict and the Emergence of Daesh

After the 2010 election, Iraq witnessed serious political escalation and marginalization and exclusion of Sunnis, which resulted in a popular uprising in the predominantly Sunni provinces against the policies of the Maliki government. The rebels issued a declaration of fourteen demands which included the release of Sunni detainees, the abolition of article four of the anti-terrorism law,¹⁴ and the creation of an autonomous Sunni region similar to the Kurdistan Region. Al-Maliki and his government's response was to characterize the rebels as "al-Qaeda headquarters" and to sweep the public squares of protest encampments. This resulted in deaths as well as arrests on charges of incitement, terrorism, and alleged threats to national security. This response helped to pave the way for the emergence of Daesh led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi under the pretext of defending the interests of the Sunnis.¹⁵ Declaring himself Caliph to the Muslims, al-Baghdadi sought to wrest control of one-third of the area of Iraq (which included the cities with Sunni majorities such as Mosul, Salah al-Din, Ramadi, and large parts of Diyala and Kirkuk) from the state's control.

Sectarian Conflict and Online Incitement and Recruitment

By the end of 2013, Iraq was in full-blown sectarian conflict, with the UN reporting more than 7,000 civilians killed. In the April 2014 parliamentary elections, al-Maliki's coalition won a plurality but was unable to form a government while Daesh's insurgency grew. In an attempt to limit Daesh's rise, in June of 2014 the government moved to block social media channels and shut down the internet in the five predominantly Sunni provinces that Daesh already controlled or sought to capture. The reported aim was to prevent rumors and propaganda, and to block news of any defeats of the government and armed forces. However, the internet was not centrally controlled in Iraq and so the government could not prevent all electronic communication. As such, Daesh was still able to communicate to some degree; however, community organizations were cut off and the Sunni communities believed that the government viewed the entire Sunni population as Daesh supporters, thus increasing polarization.^{16,17}

In the summer of 2014, Daesh broke out of Anbar province, capturing Mosul and other towns as well as surrounding Yazidi communities. Daesh killed an estimated 4,000 men and abducted around 10,000 women in what the UN would later deem genocidal attacks. Although the US had withdrawn combat troops in 2010 and all of its forces in 2011, it led Western forces in air attacks in August 2014 against Daesh; however, the US informed the Maliki government that it would not provide direct assistance until the government worked to reconcile the conflict between Sunni and Shia communities.¹⁸ In September of 2014, two major events occurred: a global coalition against Daesh was formed (eventually comprised of 67 countries) and Haider al-Abadi, a Shiite politician, formed a new broad-based government. Subsequently, Iraq's Kurds delayed a referendum on independence and instead signed an oil-sharing agreement with the government. Al-Abadi received widespread support locally and internationally, intensified the fight against Daesh, and ended many repressive tactics against Sunnis in the areas controlled by the government.

In spite of the progress against Daesh, many challenges persisted in Iraq and sectarianism remained prevalent. In late 2016, parliament approved the integration of the Popular Mobilization Units (consisting mostly of Shiite militias) into the army. While bolstering the armed forces, this had the effect of further aligning the military with the interests of the Shia community. By the end of 2017, Daesh had mostly been defeated in Iraq. Meanwhile, the Kurds voted for independence in a referendum and the government responded by launching an offensive against Kurdish forces. In the latest parliamentary elections in May 2018, which featured high levels of sectarian discourse, Moqtada al-Sadr's bloc won the most votes. Parliament subsequently

chose Kurdish politician Barham Salih as president who in turn appointed Adel Abdul Mahdi, a Shia former government minister, as premier.

Online Media and Politics in Iraq

Political Change and Internet Access

Iraq witnessed a technological revolution after 2003 with the change in its political system and its citizens' newfound access to the internet. This allowed the Iraqi people greater access to global affairs and — through public sites and blogs — greater participation in domestic politics and events. However, given the relative novelty of this medium, the country's ongoing sectarianism and polarization, and the lack of laws and norms around freedom of expression (to include restrictions on incitement and hate speech), internet access also exacerbated ethnic, religious, and sectarian discrimination thus posing a threat to local communities.

In 2000, Iraq had 12,500 internet users; today, nearly half of Iraq's 40 million people have access to the internet (although regular users make up a smaller percentage). Facebook is the most popular website used by Iraqis with a nearly 1:1 ratio of internet access to Facebook access.¹⁹ Given its pervasive presence for Iraqis, it is not surprising that offline issues and debates are present on Facebook as well. For example, when demonstrations and sit-ins were held in the cities of northern and western Iraq (which is populated by the Sunni majority), Facebook users from the center and south of the country accused residents of these cities of being co-opted by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and other foreign interests. The discourse escalated further after Daesh took control of Mosul, Salahuddin, Anbar, and Diyala, and online commenters accused the citizens of those provinces of supporting Daesh.

Impact of Online Hate and Incitement

In some instances, Iraqi politicians have been responsible for spreading hate speech in Iraq through community outreach platforms in order to cultivate sectarian rivalries and liquidate political rivalries. Clerics have also participated in these rivalries and exacerbated the problem given their authority and influence. Online hate speech in Iraq often touches on religion, sectarian differences, and nationalist sentiment — in some cases resulting in violence or, more specifically, an exodus of Christians, Yazidis, and Sabeen Mandaeans from their home cities in fear for their lives or property. Many settled in Kurdistan or migrated out of the country.

“Electronic Armies” and Efforts to Address Online Incitement

The term “electronic armies” refers to groups of people working online to create and manage fake accounts in order to accomplish a special agenda for political parties or groups.²⁰ The Iraqi Media House, in its 40th report,²¹ noted the rise of the phenomenon of “electronic armies” in Iraq. In the Iraq context, these entities have been mobilized by politicians to spread hate speech or disinformation in order to incite hatred or to foster division to accomplish political aims. Alarming, these “electronic armies” often have not hesitated to reveal their backgrounds and supporters, suggesting that they do not fear restrictions or penalties. Hundreds of their webpages have begun to affect public opinion by promoting false views and hatred, and often by targeting public figures and individuals. These pages often contain fake documents and fabricated images in order to deceive and accuse opponents. These publications — whether written documents, still images, or video — often receive wide interaction from online audiences who disseminate them further, thus increasing the credibility of the information. Politicians have also cited such documents in their statements to the media, providing further false authentication. The webpages of the “electronic armies” have disseminated information on local crises such as

bombings and kidnappings as well as on diplomatic visits to the country. Some posts include verbal attacks against politicians to blame them for a crisis, while others create fake crises to divert public attention away from more serious issues.

The government of Iraq has warned social networking platforms about the actions of some clerical leaders in promoting sectarian and inflammatory speech, as well as about the actions of some governmental and media institutions that lack impartiality. According to a report from the Media Observatory in North Africa and the Middle East, the average Iraqi citizen reads, views, or listens to six instances of hate speech daily from media institutions. The same report also notes that parliamentarians and political parties were the most common sources of hatred in 2014.²² In addition, a review of official Facebook pages for Iraqi television channels found an average of 10 fake posts per site. In terms of civil society efforts to counter such activity, the Iraqi Network for Social Media (INSM) seeks to implement a code of ethical conduct that requires bloggers to abstain from sectarian incitement or defamation and to respect the dignity of others and their right to express their beliefs and opinions online. However, more efforts to counter this problem are needed from both civil society and government actors in Iraq.

PLEASE NOTE: The sample posts and quoted comments from online posts may contain offensive, inflammatory, or obscene terms.

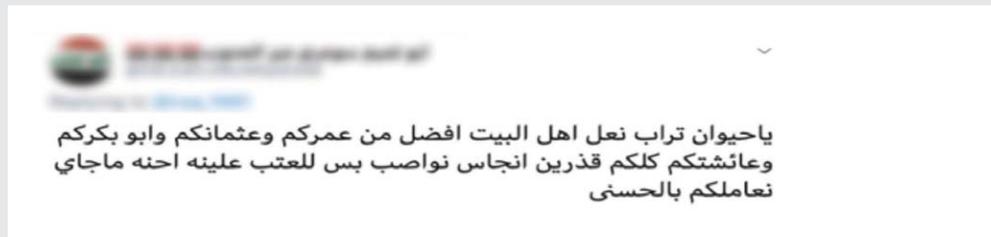
Words and Phrases That Are Offensive and Inflammatory

The following list of words and phrases is organized in order of “most inflammatory and most prevalent” to “least inflammatory and least prevalent,” according to survey respondents as well as participants in the focus groups. As this ranking is determined from a consensus based on this input, it is subjective and should not be taken as a definitive hierarchy.

1. النواصب / Al-Nawasib (Those Who Have Hatred)

Other spellings and related references: ناصبي / *Nasibi (singular)*; نواصب / *Nawasib (plural)*; خوارج / *Khawarij*²³

Sample Posts:



English translation: “You’re animal, the dust of slippers of Ahl al-Bayt better than your omar, your abuBakir, your Othman and your Aisha, all of you impurity, Nawasib, But all culpable on us, we’re not treating you well.”



Center for Strategic Studies and Policy

الوهابيه و النواصب من فجروا و ذبحوا شيعة العراق ما علقوا على
شي
هذا الانبطاح الدولي من نسكت على الحق

English translation: “Wahabia and Nawasib when they bomb and slaughtered Shia of Iraq, they didn’t comment, this is when the international lie down, when we are silent about the truth.”

Definition: النواصب / Al-Nawasib (plural) or ناصبي / Nasibi (singular) is a derogatory term for “someone who hates Ali” (Ali bin Abi Talib, first cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad) and his followers. This is a historical term used to describe people who are considered or accused of being enemies of the Prophet’s family.²⁴ The position of Ali bin Abi Talib and his relationship with the companions of the Prophet is the subject of a historical and ideological dispute between the different Islamic groups. The difference of belief about Ali is the original cause of the historical conflict between Sunnis and Shiites. Today the term is used by most Shiites to refer to the Salafi sect. And it is also used by Sunnis to characterize the beliefs of Shiites. However, the majority of the sects agree that al-Nawasib is a group that departed from the general rules of the Islamic religion. In the perspective of Sunnis, the “al-Nawasib” hurt the family of Prophet Muhamed (Ahl al-Bayt)²⁵ through words and deeds, whereas for Shiites it is not characteristic of a specific sect, but is characterized by anyone who shows hostility to the Prophet Muhammad or his family.

Why it’s offensive and inflammatory: The term “al-nawasib” (those who have hatred) is used by extremist Shiite groups, militias, or “electronic armies”²⁶ to instigate murder and foment conflict. The use of the term “al-nawasib” to refer to those of Sunni or Shia faith is considered to be very offensive. The term commonly appears in political and religious debates and is especially inflammatory when used to target a whole range of sects and not just individuals. Given the importance of the family of the Prophet Muhamed to Muslims, accusing someone of having these beliefs implies that they are seen as a danger to society. One of the participants in a focus group from Baghdad said the term is offensive because it causes hatred and sectarianism among people. A participant in the workshop in Mosul said that, in general, the word “Al-Nawasib” is provocative and often used by political groups and parties. These ideas were propagated during the Daesh era, but are less prevalent today.

Since “al-nawasib” are seen as hating the family of the Prophet Muhamed, the use of this term is inflammatory and likely to incite violence; the faithful will want to defend the honor of the family of Prophet Muhamed and those targeted will want to defend their honor. Such an accusation can provoke intense suspicion and put someone at risk of being ostracized or even attacked if the community sees the person as an existential threat to their well-being. Such people are sometimes referred to as Kharijis.²⁷

Non-offensive alternative terms: Opponents of the rule of Imam Ali.

2. الروافض / al-Rawafidh (Rejector)

Other spellings and related references: رافضي / *Rafidi* (rejector, singular); روافض / *Rawafidh* or *al-Rafidha* / الروافض (rejectors, plural); *al-majus* (fire worshiper, singular)

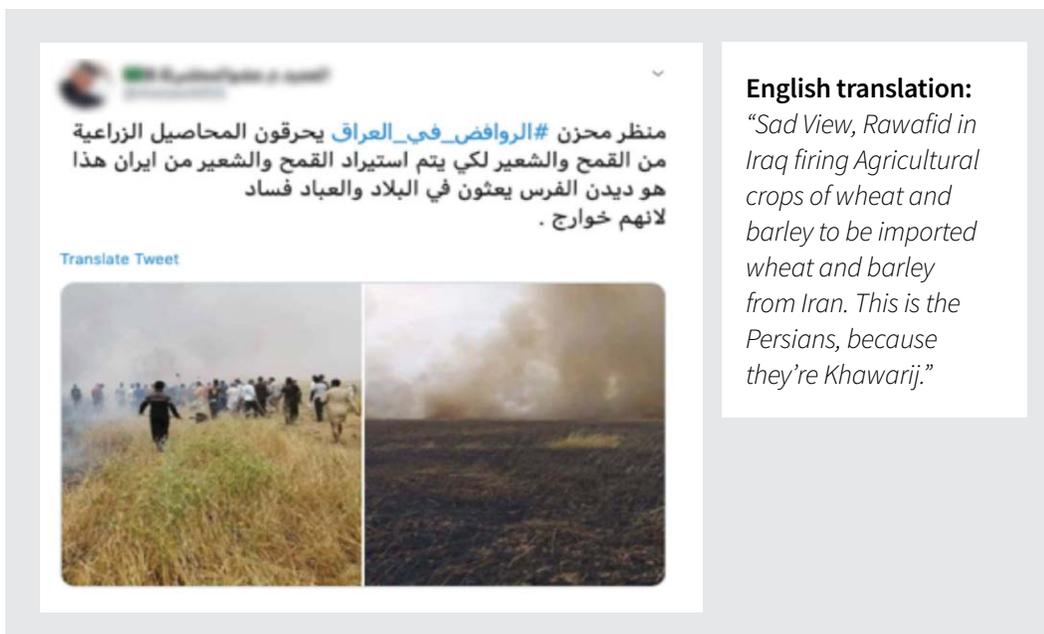
Sample Posts:

A screenshot of a tweet. The text reads: "حفظ الله العراق وأرض العراق من المجوس وكلابهم الروافض وورزقهم من هو أشرس من صدام حسين عليهم". Below the text is a "Translate Tweet" button and a quote box containing the text: "عندما أموت ستعرفون لماذا كنت أقمع الشيعة إنهم قوم لاوطنية ولا إنتماء لهم، إنهم كالسرطان يقتلوننا في صمت. #صدام_حسين". Below the quote box is a photograph of Saddam Hussein.

English translation: “God Save Iraq and the land of Iraq from Majus and their dogs, Rafida, god sent who fiercer than Saddam Hussein on themselves.”

A screenshot of a tweet. The text reads: "#اعتصاب_طفل_وامه_في_الموصل #العراق اخرجوا الروافض من العراق تعيشون بسلام امنين ايران سبب الخراب". Below the text is a "Translate Tweet" button and a photograph of a billboard for the 'Al-Nasr' group. The billboard features a portrait of a man and the text 'الناصر' and 'سبب الخراب'.

English translation: “Child raped and his mom too in mosul, take rawafid out from Iraq then you can live in peace, Iran caused ruin.”



Definition: “Al-Rawafidh” means “rejector” in English.²⁸ In the contemporary context, the term of “rejector” (rawafidh) is used to denigrate Iraqi Shiites, referring to the fact that Shiites do not recognize the Caliphs Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, Omar ibn al-Khattab, and Uthman ibn Affan as legitimate successors of the Prophet Muhammad. The term has been used extensively by some conservative political Islamic movements such as the Wahhabi and Salafist movements against Iraqi Shiites. The term is also frequently used in promotional propaganda for the organization of Daesh.

Why it’s offensive and inflammatory: “Al-rawafidh” is an offensive and inflammatory term because it suggests that Iraqi Shiites are not true Muslims. It is generally used by radical Sunnis to denigrate the beliefs of Shiites. It portrays a whole group and whole sect as “unfaithful” which is used as motivation for Sunni extremists to attack and kill individuals of the Shia faith.

The term spread in the years after the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq, when power struggles erupted between political parties.²⁹ These dynamics were further exacerbated by the use and spread of this term on social media. More recently, it has been used by extremists groups, militia, and “electronic armies” to foment discord in online debates among political and religious fanatics. According to a focus group participant in Nineveh province, the term is considered offensive to Shiites and was used frequently during Daesh’s occupation. Another participant said that the word was also used in the city of Tal Afar “with the intent to harm.”

Non-offensive alternative terms: Those who do not recognize the Caliphs Abu Bakr al-Siddiq and Omar ibn al-Khattab as the successors of the Prophet Muhammad.

3. ارهابي / Irhabi / ارهاب al-Irhab (Terrorist / Terrorism)

Other spellings and related references: ارهابي; Irhabi / al-Irhab (terrorists, plural); الارهاب / Daesh; داعش or Dawaesh; al-Qaeda; انتحاري، انتحاري (suicidal)

Sample Posts:



English translation: “The people of Mosul are overwhelmed because they are demanding their rights. They are terrorists in the eyes of the central government.”



English translation: “The people of Mosul do not have people in them unless you are a terrorist like them.”

Definition: The term “irhabi” means “terrorist” or “terrorism” in English and refers to the use of violence to arouse terror among civilian populations in order to achieve a religious or political goal.³⁰ In the Iraqi context, it is used to refer to violence during peacetime or attacks against non-combatants, as well as violence that is intended to coerce the international community. It aims to create an atmosphere of fear directed against either religious and political followers, or to achieve an ideological goal, which involves the deliberate targeting or disregard for the safety of civilians.

Why it’s offensive and inflammatory: This term is normally used to refer to groups or individuals that are affiliated with Daesh or al-Qaeda. It becomes inflammatory when used to label people who are not actually committed to or associated with any violent actors, but rather who may be opposed to the political or religious party to which the speaker belongs. The target of this term is thus being accused of terrorism because they have a different political or religious opinion. For example, this term has been used to label families living in Mosul governorate simply because they were living in a place that was under occupation of Daesh, implying that they were sympathetic and supportive of Daesh and their associated crimes against humanity such as murder, forced displacement, and rape. Some extremists in Iraq have described all Sunni extremists as “Irhabis” or “Daeshi” (terrorists or advocates of Daesh), ascribing the views of a minority of extremists to a whole segment of Iraqi society. One of the workshop participants in Mosul stated that this phrase was uncommon in Baghdad but that in Nineveh it was prevalent.

Non-offensive alternative terms: Political opponents; residents of Mosul.

4. المرتد /al-Murtadd (Apostate)

Other spellings and related references: الردة / Al- Riddah (Apostasy); المرتدون / murtaddun (apostates, plural); مرتد / murtadd (apostate, singular); لاديني / laddini (atheist)

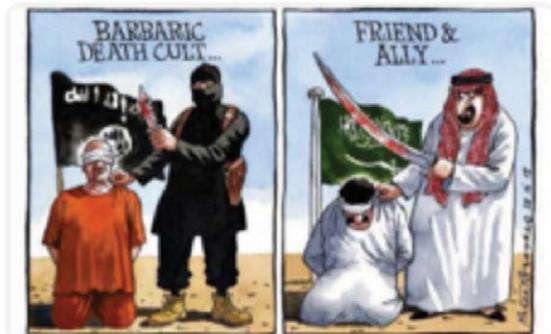
Sample Posts:

وليد الشامي مغني عراقي مجرد غنى وية السعودية صار مرتد
زين اشو ضميتوا روسكم ومن راح تاج راسكم تلسيد وضرب
تشريب وياهم
لو هذا تلسيد ربه وُحد
كبر

English translation: “Waleed Alshami, Iraqi Singer, because he sing for Saudi, become turncoat (Murtad). But you hide your heads when your sayed went their and eat with them, this sayed had special god, ha?”

السعودية ترى كل سني موالى لارض العراق مرتد...!! او كما يسموه
سنة ايران اووو الخ فقط الداعشي سني بنظرهم...!! 🙄
#تمزيق_جسد_سني_عراقي_واكل_لحمه

Translate Tweet



English translation:

“Saudi, every Sunni have loyalty to Iraq Land went murtad!! And as they name it (Iranian Sunni) or ... etc. only Daashi, real Sunni in their perspective!!”

Definition: “Al-Murtadd,” which means “apostate” in English, is somebody who renounces a religious belief. In the Iraqi context, the term is used to refer to somebody who renounced or abandoned Islam. This may include the act of converting to another religion or the non-acceptance of faith by a person who was either born into a Muslim family or who had previously accepted Islam but who subsequently leaves the faith. He or she is then considered a “laddini” (atheist). Defining apostasy (“al-Ridda”) in Islam — whether the person should be punished and, if so, how the punishment should be handled — raises controversial topics and scholars of Islam differ in their views on these questions.

Most modern Islamic jurists still consider apostasy a crime punishable by death. Some Muslims consider apostasy a form of religious crime while others do not. As of 2018, the laws in various

Muslim-majority countries included the punishment of apostates ranging from non-criminal penalties to imprisonment and even execution.³¹

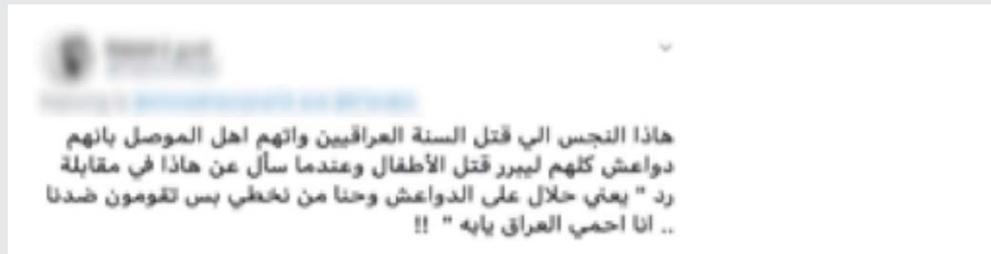
Why it's offensive and inflammatory: The term “al-Murtadd” (apostate) is offensive and inflammatory because, in the Iraqi context, it implies that the person is morally and religiously “wrong.” If a person is labeled as such by religious authorities, it provides legitimacy for being discriminated against or attacked, thus putting the targeted person and their family in danger. Some label anybody who opposes them as “apostates” with the intention of causing them harm. This term was used extensively on social networking sites when Daesh was in power, but now it has begun to disappear. Its use is now commonly seen as abusive with the potential to incite violence. In Iraq’s Muslim society, someone who is an apostate is, at minimum, an outcast.

Non-offensive alternative terms: None.

5. داعشي / Daeshi (Member of Daesh)

Other spellings and related references: داعش / Daesh or دواعش Daeshi; البغدادي / Baghdadi; قطري / Qatari; سعودي / Saudi; / Irhabi (terrorist); حواضن / Hawaadan (incubator)

Sample Posts:



English translation: “This person “Najis” who killed Iraqi Sunnis, and he accused people of Mosul all are ISIS, all that so he can kill the children. And when they asked him in an interview about that, he said “halal for ISIS, and when we act, you stand against us! I protect Iraq.”



English translation: “Is this a threat, Sheikh? We know that Mosul like a dirty dog, not clean yet. You stayed Dawaish, some of you work with Kurds for Israel, and some of you work for Gulf Countries and specifically Saudi Wahabism.”

مو الكل من اهل السنة دواعش هذا تعميم خاطئ ... نعم حصل
 ترحيب أرعن بداعش من قبل بعض أهل الموصل لكن هذا مو
 مبرر للتعميم لأنه أنا من الناس فجر داعش بيتي في الانبار ولو لان
 داعش أبويه يذبحه
 مو بس الابيزدية اتأذوا !

English translation: “Not all Sunnis are Dawaish, that’s wrong promulgation. Yes, a welcoming happened to Dawaish from some of Mosul’s people but that not an accuse. Because I am one of people, my home bombed by ISIS in Alanbar, and if I catch one of them, my father will He slaughters him. Not only Izzidi hurt.”



English translation:
 “Militias in Mosul arrested civilian starving and weak body and accused them they are Dawaish, and spokesperson threaten them they’re on their way to the massacre.”

Definition: “Daeshi” (member of Daesh) is a recent term that emerged with the occupation of Iraq’s cities by Daesh in 2014.³² It is a very new term spread on the internet, and is usually used by fanatics in Iraqi society against residents of Mosul and other cities in the western provinces. The term suggests that residents and communities in these areas supported Daesh during its emergence and rule there. This term has continued to be used even after the liberation of these areas from the control of Daesh.

During the focus group discussions, participants quoted this term together with the term “Hawaadan” (“incubator” in English) referring to Sunni areas that supported the expansion of al-Qaeda terrorism and provided them with material and logistical support. This insult is also used to refer to the young women in those areas, an accusation that is highly offensive because many were raped or forced into marriages by extremist fighters. Additionally, extremist forces have used the word “Hawaadan al-Sunna” (Sunni incubator) to spread the idea that the populations of the Sunni regions and provinces of Iraq are aligned in support of extremist organizations.

Why it’s offensive and inflammatory: The term “Daeshi” is offensive because it labels whole communities as supporters of Daesh without distinguishing between sympathizers, those who were forced to stay in their homes, or those who suffered directly under Daesh’s rule. Sunnis throughout Iraq have been labelled “Daeshi” simply for being adherents to Sunni Islam, the same faith the extremist Daesh claim to follow. When there is controversy or disagreement on

social networking sites, the Sunni are often told that they are “Daeshi” which, given Daesh’s extreme brutality, is considered offensive and inflammatory.

Non-offensive alternative terms: Residents of Mosul; people forced to remain in Iraq during the occupation of Daesh.

6. ابن زنا / Ibn Zana (Son of Adultery)

Other spellings and related references: زاني / *zani* (singular masculine); زانية / *zania* (singular female); المتعة اولد / *children of adultery* (plural); حرام اولد / *forbidden children, bastard*; نغل / *Nagel* (born of adultery); زنا / *zana* (adultery)

Sample Posts:

English translation:
“No Iraqi can prefer Iran’s interest on Iraq’s interest unless: Son of Haram or Son of adultery. The political process is still in place between the SAVAK and the Revolutionary Guards, and both of them, son of haram or son of adultery.”

Definition: Literally meaning “son of adultery,” the term is used to refer to somebody who was born outside of a legally- or religiously-recognized marriage. Adultery is a concept mentioned and condemned in many old stories. In these instances the belief is that, unless a marriage is performed in a manner customary to that religion, it is considered a sin of lust and any resulting birth is considered an undesirable birth to society since it came about as a result of a disapproved act or relation. This is a common insult used during quarrels, on the street, or in schools by children and young people. It infers that the person is illegitimate, unintelligent, and does not know his or her parents. One of the Basra workshop participants said that the term is used by fanatics and sectarians on social media. A participant in Baghdad said that it is an insult used against Shiites to question their honor and their family on social media.

There are variations of this term, some of which have more neutral uses. While “son of adultery” is used as a deliberate insult, according to focus group participants, the term “laqit” (bastard) is often used without specific intention for insult or injury.

Why it’s offensive and inflammatory: It is offensive because it casts doubt on the origins of a person and causes insult by challenging the character of the person’s mother by labelling them as illegitimate in a society that renounces children born outside of marriage between the mother

and father. It is especially inflammatory when used by extremist Sunnis against Shiites, fueling tensions around religious sectarianism in the country.

Accusations against one's character or honor in Iraqi society can have serious consequences for the individual or the family, and tribes and families try to avoid these types of accusations against their honor. Even in law, tolerance for so-called "honor crimes"³³ means that the characterization "son of adultery" can have serious consequences. In some situations, the person would not be considered eligible for marriage, may not be allowed to worship in certain places, may be denied professional opportunities, or may be deemed unfit to testify in court. The accusation represents a direct danger to the mother of the person as well. According to Iraqi tribal customs, the penalty for adultery is death. If the accused person is a woman, family members might seek to kill the woman, stigmatizing her children as well.

Non-offensive alternative terms: None.

7. ابن متعة / Ibn Mut'ah (Son of Pleasure)

Other spellings and related references: ابن المتعة / *son of pleasure*; من زواج مؤقت / *temporary marriage*, Mut'ah (pleasure) marriage; ابن المسيار / *son of al-Misyar*

Sample Posts:



حرام الرد علي أبناء المتعه في العراق اتركوهم خلو الإيرانيين
يتمتعون المتعه الحرام فيهم لانهم متعودين

English translation: "Haram (forbidden) to respond to son of mut'ah, (son of pleasure marriage) leave them enjoy with Iranian because they won't."



تف عليك وعلى الرافضة يا ابن المتعة العراق بلد آمن لعنتك
الارض قبل السماء ..

English translation: "Spit on you, on Rafida, children of almuta'a (son of pleasure) Iraq safe country, curse of the earth before heaven on you."

Definition: The term "son of pleasure" (Ibn Mut'ah) refers to a child who is born out of an "al-Mut'ah marriage" (pleasure marriage), which is a temporary arrangement in Shia tradition made to allow sexual relations outside of a formal civil or religious marriage. It is limited in

time and does not confer any rights to the temporary spouse (such as inheritance, etc.) or their children. The “mut’ah” or “pleasure marriage” is similar to the “misyar” marriage in the Sunni tradition. The “Mut’ah marriage” is controversial even within the communities that practice this arrangement.

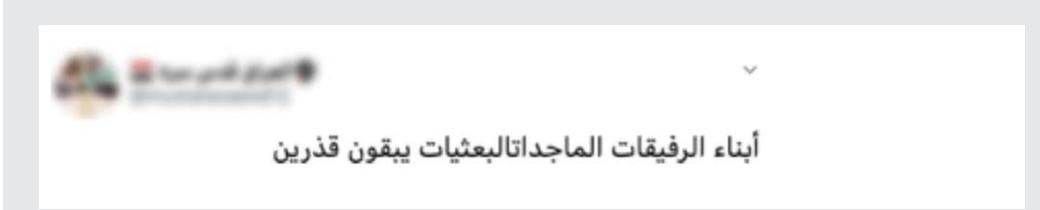
Why it’s offensive and inflammatory: The term “son of pleasure” (Ibn Mut’ah) is offensive when used by Sunnis to refer to Shiites in order to imply that they are impure, adulterous, or that they have “questionable” genealogy and heritage. It is sometimes used to denigrate and offend those who may have nothing to do with a “Mut’ah marriage,” insinuating that they are an illegitimate child (similar to “son of adultery”) or a child born outside of marriage. The term has spread on Facebook and often appears on webpages that discuss doctrinal and religious issues. In Nineveh, it has been specifically used to attack those affiliated with the “Popular Crowd,” a group of people who have volunteered for the so-called Jihad Kifa’ii to fight the Iraqi army.³⁴ A participant in the Mosul workshop stated, “this term can be used against a person even if they do not have a political affiliation, and is used in a derogatory manner to describe government armed forces.” When used on social media to target Al hashd al-Shaabi³⁵ it is considered offensive and a denigration of the armed forces.

Non-offensive alternative terms: The son of an informal marriage.

8. ابن الرفيقات / Ibn al-Rafiqat (Son of Comrades)

Other spellings and related references: *son of a courtesan*; ابن البعث / *son of the Ba’ath*; ابناء العاهرات / *son of a whore*

Sample Posts:



أبناء الرفيقات الماجداتالبعثيات يبغون قذرين

English translation: “*Son of women Baathist, Comrades stay dirty.*”



العراق بموقفه هذا حر والبعض من ابناء الرفيقات يريدون منا ان نكون ذيولا لسلمان المسطول

English translation: “*Iraq in that position, is free, and some of son of Comrades wants from us to be tail for the idiot Salaman.*”



لذلك يا #ابناء_الرفيقات انتم لم ولن تكونوا وطنيون في يوم من الأيام انتم أيتام المقبور الملعون انتم العبيد الأذلاء لعنكم الله دينا وآخره

English translation: “So sons of comrades, you are not and will not be patriots one day, you’re orphans of cursed Saddam, you’re slaves and servile. God cursed you, in this world and in the Hereafter”

Definition: The term translates as “son of Comrades,” referring specifically to the members of the Ba’ath Party under Saddam Hussein. It is used by political allies of the governments since the 2003 transition to mock and denigrate young people who criticize them. These partisans aim to discredit the opposition by characterizing them as supporters of the prohibited Ba’ath Party. The current regime and its allies are hostile to the Ba’ath Party so anyone who opposes them is labeled a “son of Comrade.” As explained by one workshop participant, the use of the phrase “son of Comrades” is similar by design to the use of the phrase “son of adultery,” as the Ba’ath “Comrades” were accused of being dishonest and engaging in prostitution and other shameful acts. There are many young people today who support the Ba’ath party even though their parents were never Ba’athists.

Why it’s offensive and inflammatory: This is a recent term that emerged after the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime, especially during the failures of the post-2003 administrations. These failures led citizens to resent these governments and their parties, criticize them in a serious manner, and then demonstrate against them. To undermine these efforts, government parties have used various means to persuade the broader society that these demonstrations and this dissatisfaction are not about citizen rights. This term is used to accuse people and to question their origins as well as the honor of their mother, and does not indicate an actual change of allegiance to the ideology of the Ba’ath Party and Saddam Hussein. It is a verbal insult and considered offensive to young people who demonstrate, protest, and demand their rights.

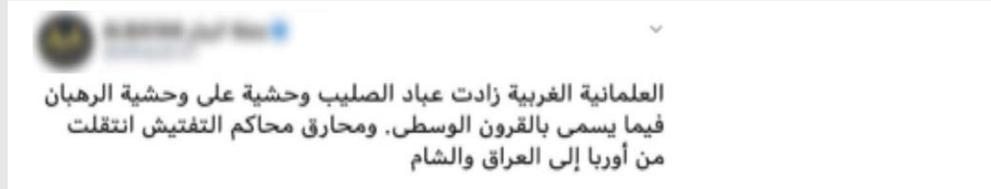
This term appears frequently in the comment sections on social networking sites (especially on Facebook) where many young people join Facebook groups to organize and promote demonstrations. Comments describe the protesters as the “sons of Comrades” and allege that they are inflaming conflict in the streets and making noise against the government. Some participants in the Mosul workshop said that when this phrase is mentioned in conjunction with the phrase “children of pleasure,” it brings additional insult and abuse.

Non-offensive alternative terms: Groups demanding their rights; protestor; demonstrator.

9. عباد الصليب / Eibad Alsalib (Slaves of the Cross)

Other spellings and related references: المسيحيين / *Almassiheen/ Christians*; صليبي / *Salibi*; النصارى / *the Nassara*

Sample Posts:



English translation: “Western Secularism, The slaves of the cross increased brutality over the brutality of the monks in the so-called medieval centuries. The crematoria of the Inquisition moved from Europe to Iraq and Syria.”



English translation: “Don’t forget, my country who cut the head of Iranian when they occupied The Sacred Mosque in eighties, and my country who was protecting you and your country, and my country who sacrificed 1 million Iraqi martyr for you, but You are betrayed and helped to topple the martyr Saddam, and You encouraged the occupier on us, don’t speak, because you’re people of Treason, O servants of the cross.”

Definition: “Slaves of the cross” is a very old term historically used to pit Muslims against Christians. This is because it depicted Christians and Christian faith as antithetical to Islam by claiming Christians were polytheists by worshiping the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) rather than just one God. Its use reappeared with the proliferation of the internet in Iraq after 2003. More recently, it has been used by Sunni extremists and Daesh on social media to accuse Christians of idolatry and therefore relieving Muslims of the obligation (as set in their scriptures) to coexist peacefully with Christians. The phrase “slaves of the cross” implies the notions of polytheism, idol worship, and worship of God in ways that are different than those of the Muslim faith. A similar phrase, “worshippers of the cross,” was invented by religious extremists who believe that anyone carrying a cross is a polytheist; however, the phrase does not appear in religious texts or in the biography of the Prophet.

Why it’s offensive and inflammatory: This term is inflammatory because it seeks to exploit the devotion to monotheism among Muslims and the instruction to kill those considered to be infidels. One participant in the workshop in Mosul said that if the phrase is said generally it is not

offensive, but that if it is said in a certain context in order to ridicule and denigrate Christians it will offend Christians.

Christians are a religious minority in Iraq. One of the workshop participants stated that this phrase was uncommon in Baghdad, but in Nineveh it was prevalent, especially during the Daesh occupation. Another workshop participant said she felt insulted if the word was said to her because she was a Christian. The sheikh in the Mosul workshop mentioned that this term was used by Daesh and “electronic armies” to incite against Christians.

Non-offensive alternative terms: Christians.

10. ايمو / Emo

Other spellings and related references: جرو/Jaru (puppy); مثلي الجنس/ homosexual

Sample Posts:



English translation: “This kind in Iraq named Jaru (puppy), or Emo, in Iraq they catch him, and They smash his head with a big rock, second day, the killer unknown, many Jarawi like him killed, I don’t know where this guy hide and why Iraqis didn’t kill him yet. Killing them Halal, because they act as women and they’re practice pederasty in secret and in public.”



English translation: “Mahmood Almitiri, child aged 15 years from Iraq killed because of his appearance and dress and his action not a standard to his sex, so he’s Suspect to be gay, or transgender, or Emo “literally, The emo charge exists” The series of killings of women and people like them continues by gangs, backed by the silence of the Iraqi government.”

Definition: “Emo” is a modern term that appeared in Iraq around 2006 as the public’s exposure to global pop culture trends grew with the increase of internet and social media connectivity. The word “emo” is derived from the English word “emotional,” and in its Western usage implies that the person who is “emo” is sensitive, creative, and prefers alternatives to mainstream culture. “Emo” is rooted in the culture of rock and punk music. This music is popular among youth in North America who see it as a way to express their feelings. This pop culture phenomenon has recently appeared in Iraqi schools and universities where young people wear non-traditional clothing and jewelry as well as distinctive hairstyles. Their “alternative” appearance has provoked a strong reaction from religious extremists and fanatics who accuse them of “worshipping Satan.”

The term is also used as a homophobic reference and as a synonym for people who are homosexual or gay. Another derogatory term used similarly is “al-jarawi” (puppies). Sometimes the word “aru” (puppy) is used as a derogatory term to “diminish the value of a man” and, if it is used on social networking sites, is meant to publicly embarrass and threaten him.³⁶

Extremists have called for a restriction on the movement of young people they identify as “emo” or gay, and even for their murder. In October 2018, Hamoudi al-Mutairi, was stabbed to death in Baghdad for “looking gay.”³⁷

Why it’s offensive and inflammatory: While the term “emo” itself is not insulting, its use by extremists is meant to offend and silence those who follow “emo” trends. It is also used to accuse someone of being gay or homosexual — this can harass or incite violence against the target of this term, as the accuser sees these phenomena as “incompatible with the traditions of [an Islamic] society.”

Militant groups spread death threats unless “these emo” change the practices which they regard as “the dirt that desecrates the city.” For example, in 2019, a religious extremist Shia group issued death threats against a group of men and women “for being gay,” and hung a list of names on a hospital wall in Baghdad.

Extremists consider the “emo” lifestyle a “moral abomination” and feel justified in their call to violence against anybody who follows it.³⁸

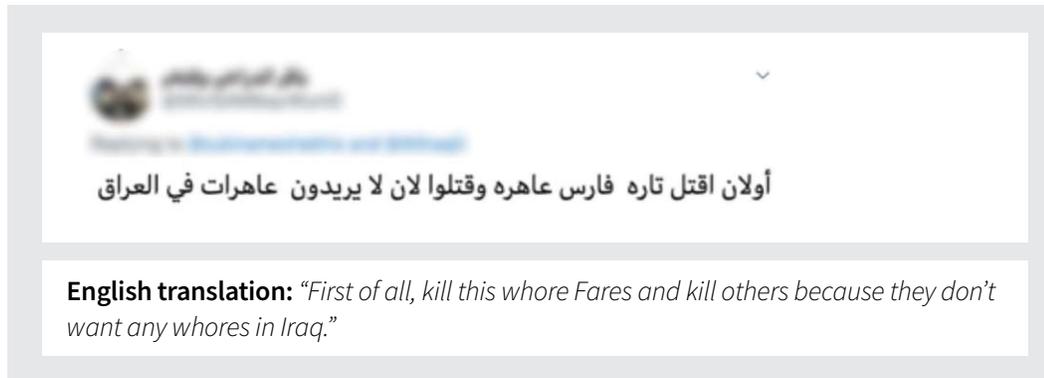
Extremely violent images and videos have been circulating on social media³⁹ in which extremist groups and militias chase young people in order to kill them — some videos even show them stoning these young people and smashing heads with cement blocks. In 2019 alone, there have been at least three murders and potential suicides in the central provinces of Iraq,⁴⁰ events that have spread fear among the “emo” and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community.

Non-offensive alternative terms: A group that follows an alternative style of clothing, accessories, and music.

11. عاهرة / Eahira (Whore)

Other spellings and related references: عاهرة / prostitute, hooker

Sample Posts:



Definition: The term whore (عاهرة / eahira) is used as an insult by both Sunnis and Shiites to abuse and harass women in general and in particular those who demand their rights and the rights of other women, participate in demonstrations, or have a prominent voice on social networking sites.

The expectations placed on women in Iraqi society puts particular emphasis on honor, family, reputation, and restriction of movement. Men, on the other hand, are allowed to have greater social freedoms such as smoking, dancing, singing or shouting in the street, and flirting with women.

Sunni and Shia religious extremists have even more restrictive conceptions of what constitutes “virtue” for a woman, in some cases calling those who do not wear the hijab or certain modest clothes “eahira.”

Why it’s offensive and inflammatory: The term “eahira” is offensive and inflammatory because it is used to accuse women of having a “low [moral] character” and compromising their own dignity and, by extension, their family’s honor. The social implication of such an accusation can have grave consequences. As one workshop participant explained, “However, the term may incite extremists to murder women or to remove them from public life.”

Sex workers in Iraqi society are believed to bring shame to their family. In many cases, the woman’s relatives kill her in order to preserve “the family’s honor.”

This term is used against female activists in order to intimidate them and silence their voices as every woman who disagrees with the views of the hardliners and demands their rights and the rights of other women is accused of abominations, prostitution, and other vices.

Non-offensive alternative terms: Feminist; activist; civilian; woman.

12. ملحد / Mulhed (Atheist)

Other spellings and related references: كافر / *infidel*; لاديني / *Ladini (has no faith)*; شيوعي / *communist*; علماني / *secular*

Sample Posts:



English translation:
“The largest proportion of atheists at the level of any Arab people are Shiites in Iraq.”



English translation: “I am Iraqi and proud, but admonish Iraq for the presence of atheists on the back do not recognize the existence of God and cursing the Messenger of God I have published their accounts.”

Definition: “Mulhed” means “atheist” in English and refers to a person who denies or does not believe in the existence of a god or gods. It is used in a derogatory way against those who do not believe in a creator or the Prophets and Apostles. It is an old term used by both Sunnis and Shiites. Prevalence of the term increased after the regime change in 2003 as it was used especially to agitate against “communist thought” or popular movements. The term “mulhed” is used synonymously with “laddinin” (لا ديني), literally translated as “no religion”).

Communists are also, in some cases, called “atheists.” However, the term “communist” is an older term that is more commonly used due to the long history of the Communist Party in Iraq. At its founding, some clerics and hardliners determined that the Communist Party was an atheist party since it was based on Marxist-Leninist principles.

Why it’s offensive and inflammatory: The term “atheist” is used by both Sunni and Shia extremists as an insult because they see atheism as incompatible with their beliefs of how a Muslim society should be. They refer to atheists as “infidels, secularists, or communists,” accusing them of denying the existence of God and thereby being a threat to Islam in Iraqi society.

During Iraq’s political crises,⁴¹ the term “communist-infidel” emerged as a way of undermining communist influence by accusing them of lacking religious and moral beliefs. “Infidel” has also been used by Daesh to target people seen as enemies, such as the Yazidin.

One workshop participant noted that the word “atheist” is not offensive in itself, but that it is frequently used in an insulting and inflammatory way on social networking sites with the intent to mobilize against the person labeled as such.

Non-offensive alternative terms: Communists; secularists; civilians.

13. صدامي / Saddami (Saddamist) or بعثي / Ba’athi (Ba’athist)

Other spellings and related references: مجرم / *criminal*; فدائي / *commando*; عفلكي / *Aflaki*; *uprooting*

Sample Posts:



هذا بعثي سرقوا العراق واللثة مدراء الدوائر البعثيين الانجاس

English translation: “This man Ba’athists, stole Iraq and the directors are Baathist and anjas too (and impure)”



لم يكن يستطيع ان يتكلم احد ويظهر بالتلفزيون بزمن سيدك وانت عبده صدام ، انت بعثي معروف ، انتم من كنتم تكتبون التقارير التي يعدم صدام بموجبها العراقيين الان صرت شريف يا منافق، هل يوجد حربه وديمقراطيه عند اسياذك ومن انت تطبل لهم مثل هذه ويستطيع المواطن ان يشتكي على الهواء،ساقط

English translation: “He was not able to speak and appear on TV during the time of your master and you are the slave of Saddam, you are a well-known Baathist, you are the ones who write reports to Saddam and Saddam is executed Iraqis based on that. now you became a hypocrite. Is there a freedom and democracy at your masters and you are baptizing them like this and citizens can complain On the air, looser.”

Definition: “Saddamist” or “Ba’athist” is a name given to those Iraqis who belonged to the now-dissolved Arab Ba’ath Socialist Party in Iraq which ruled the country until 2003.⁴² The Ba’ath party perpetrated some of the worst abuses and repression against the Iraqi people, involved Iraq in several wars, drained the country’s human and financial resources, and destroyed its infrastructure. Despite its long rule, the party was not accepted by a large portion of the Iraqi people.⁴³ Today, the word “Ba’athist” is used to refer to somebody who was a member of the

party as well as anyone who still glorifies and praises the party. The related word “Saddamist” refers to anyone who defends or belongs to this ideology that was led by former President Saddam Hussein. In 2003, Iraq was invaded by US forces and Saddam and the Ba’athist regime were overthrown; the party was then dissolved and banned by the Coalition Provisional Authority. There is no distinction made between followers of the Ba’athist Party and ideology and supporters of the policies of former President Saddam Hussein.⁴⁴

Why it’s offensive and inflammatory: Public rejection of the Ba’ath Party and Saddam for their rule has been exploited by the current political parties in order to insult and target their opponents. Some political parties and “electronic armies” call anyone who opposes the current political system and who criticizes the government’s performance in the administration of the state “Saddamists” or “Ba’athists.” The term becomes offensive and inflammatory when used with the aim to solidify support for the current parties by inferring that critics and the political opposition will bring back the abuses of the era of Ba’athist and Saddam’s rule, which is seen as an era of injustice and violence. More recently, these terms have been used in publications in comparison of the situation after Daesh.

Non-offensive alternative terms: Opponents; Supporters of the Saddam regime.

14. كاولي او غجر /Kawliya (Gypsies)

Other spellings and related references: كاولي / *Kawli (singular)*; كاولية / *Kawliya*; عجريين / *gypsies*

Sample Posts:



يا كاولي هذا الشغل التحالف ولا انت شروكي معيدي نقل

English translation: “*Kawliya, that’s job of Alliance, you Shroki, hinny.*”



ارض الأكراد؟ هوا منين الكرد عندهم ارض في العراق و سوريا؟
ارض الكرد هيا ايران و أفغانستان و الهند. ارجع لأرضك هناك يا
قرج.

English translation: “*Land of Kurds? Since when Kurds have land in Iraq or Syria? Kurds Lands are Iran, Afghanistan and India, back to your land gypsies.*”



أصولكم كيوليه قرج ولو لم تكونوا هكذا لما دمرتم العراق ونهبتم
خيراته انتم أصل العماله والنذالة وقلة الأدب #

English translation: “You are originally, Kawliya, gypsies, If you were not so, you would not have destroyed Iraq, And looted his goods ye origin of the vile and lack of literature.”

Definition: The Kawliya (also referred to as the Iraqi Roma) are an ethnic minority group that is socially and economically marginalized and whose customs are not accepted by the majority of Iraqis.⁴⁵ Many live in isolated villages and settlements on the outskirts of towns and cities such as Baghdad, Basrah, Nineveh, as well as in some villages in the southern Iraqi plains of Muthanna and Diwanayah.⁴⁶

Historically, the Kawliya have not been granted Iraqi citizenship, but had greater protections under Saddam Hussein’s rule.⁴⁷ For those that did receive formal Iraqi identification cards, “Kawliya” was marked on their papers, leaving the door open for further discrimination.⁴⁸ Because the Kawliya were commonly known as musicians and professional dancers, they have been increasingly persecuted and accused of having “loose morals” under the rise of radical Islamist groups. According to one of the participants in the workshop, Kawliya have suffered so much discrimination that they are unable to seek employment in either the public or private sector, and that their children aren’t even accepted into schools. This has forced women and children to beg in the streets and markets in order to live.

In 2019, Iraqi authorities granted minority citizenship rights to the Kawliya in an attempt to combat entrenched discrimination. However, they continue to face social and economic inequality.

Why it’s offensive and inflammatory: While the term can be simply descriptive, it becomes offensive and inflammatory when used to abuse and ridicule the Kawliya as a group of people. Given that Kawliya are socially despised, labelling someone “Kawli” is a way to mock or offend a person in a particular debate or disagreement. It suggests the person is an outcast, of low social standing, and lacks social and economic rights.

Non-offensive alternative terms: People from Southern Iraq; Iraqi Roma.

Additional Words or Phrases That Are Offensive and Inflammatory

Word or Phrase	Definition and Why it's Offensive and Inflammatory
عبدة التراب (Abadat AlTurab) Worshippers of Soil	“Worshippers of soil” is used by Sunni extremists against Shiites. It refers to their practice of prostrating on the ground during prayer and infers that devout Shiite Muslims are “worshiping soil” (with the connotation of paganism) and is highly offensive.
مرتزق (murtaziq) / Mercenary عميل (eamil) / Agent	This term, which translates to “agent,” is used to refer to someone who leaks sensitive information about their country or is hired by a foreign government (especially the United States or European governments), or another entity to work against their country’s interests. It infers that the person is a traitor. It may also be used to imply someone is corrupt (for example, a governor who is making self-interested business deals).
لقيط (laqit) / Foundling نغل (naghal) / Illegitimate (son/child)	This is a general term for an abandoned child whose parents are unknown and who is found by others. It is often used on social media as an insult against political party activists. Since it refers to identity and honor, it is offensive.
عبدة الشيطان (eabdat alshaytan) / Devil Worshippers	This is a term that is used against the Yazidis by both Sunni and Shia extremists. It is a claim that the non-Muslim Yazidis and their children do not worship God. This would make them non-believers (or infidels) in the eyes of radical Muslims, and thus justifies violence against the Yazidis.
عبد أو عبيد (Abed or Abeed) / Slave or Slaves اصحاب البشرة السمراء (asahab albasharat alsumara’) / Black People	The terms “slave” and “black” or “black people” are used synonymously to insult Arab Iraqis with darker skin from southern Iraq (especially from the city of Basra and parts of Dhi Qar). The use of these terms has its origin in the history of the slave trade in the region. Historians believe that, beginning in the 9th century, slaves were brought to Iraq from modern-day Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Sudan. ⁴⁹ The term was not commonly used until the arrival of the internet and social media.
محافظات (muhafazat) / Provinces قروي (qarwy) / Villager	This is a term used by Baghdadis to insult those who were not born in nor residents of Baghdad. It refers to those who have arrived to Baghdad from another province and whose behavior and customs are different from those of Baghdad (which is known for its diversity and modernity). One of the focus group participants said that these terms are insulting and mock people from the villages and township of Nineveh, and thus would be offended if these words were used against these individuals in social media posts.
معيدي (Muidi) / Provincial	The term is meant as an insult and describes someone as “ignorant” or “illiterate.” It refers to people from a group of cities north of Basra and the province of Maysan whose livelihood depends on breeding cows and buffaloes and who wear distinctive outfits like Al aqal and Al Kufiya. It is meant to denigrate people who live in the marshlands of Iraq.

شروكي (Shroki) / Orientals	“Shroki” is a word that means “Orientals” and refers to people and farmers from the south. It is used by Baghdadis against groups of people living in mud huts on the outskirts of Baghdad. The term is used as an insult that means you are uneducated and/or unsophisticated. It is sometimes used by Kurdish people against people from the south. A workshop participant said this term is used to infer that a person from the south is “backward or barbaric,” while others believed that it means “uneducated” or “uncivilized.”
ناصرية خبيث (Nasiriyah khabith)/ Nasiriyah Malignant	This term has its origins in folklore about an evil man and his children from Nasiriyah in southern Iraq. While it is a common insult, it is used to target people from the provinces of Nasiriyah in southern Iraq. It means “malignant” or evil and therefore is offensive when used to describe a person’s character.
كردي بالة (Kurdi Bala) / Used Kurdish	Meaning “secondhand” or “previously used,” this phrase is used by some Arabs in the Iraqi provinces to insult and mock Kurdish people.
عرب جرب (Arab Jarab) / Arab disease	Translated to “Arab disease” this phrase is highly offensive because it insinuates that a group of people are like a disease that is contagious and spreads easily. The phrase is used by Kurds in northern Iraq to mock and denigrate Arabs in the rest of Iraq’s provinces. Attendees at one of the workshops said that the phrase is used specifically against the people of Nineveh.
الحرس الوثني (Alharas Alwathny) / Pagan Guard	The term is intended to imply that someone is pagan or polytheist. The term first appeared in 2003 in the predominantly Sunni areas of Iraq. It was used by Sunni extremists against the National Guard and the army, much of which was Shia. The intent was to denigrate them for their religious beliefs and to undermine public trust in the National Guard and army.
مصلاوي (Maslawi) / From Mosul قحي (Qahi) / ungenerous.	The phrase means “from Mosul” or “resident of Mosul.” When used by itself as “Qahi Maslawi” it is not offensive, but when used in reference to Daesh it is meant to convey that the person is a supporter of Daesh and as such is highly offensive because it assumes that all people from the city of Mosul support Daesh. While Mosul was occupied by Daesh, not all Maslawi supported Daesh.

Annex A: Methodology and Considerations

Scope and Design

In order to investigate online hate speech and conflict in Iraq, the project team created a web-based survey in Arabic and Kurdish so that Iraqis could contribute their experiences and insights about the phenomenon of hate speech. In February 2019 more than 150 individuals from across Iraq took the online survey. In March and April of 2019 ten (10) focus group discussions were conducted by four local partner organizations to further contextualize and validate the findings. Finally, expert advisors reviewed the final draft of the lexicon, providing additional feedback on the findings.

Online Survey

The online surveys were translated into Arabic and Kurdish from the English version of the survey previously used for the lexicon development process for Cameroon. The translation was done by PeaceTech Lab's local partners.

PeaceTech Lab partnered with four organizations for this project but other Iraqi NGOs helped to disseminate the online survey through Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms, as well as by email to their wider networks. The survey was hosted on a Google Forms platform because of the widespread familiarity with Google products and because of Google's reliable security features.

Validation Workshops

After a first list of terms was drafted based on the survey results, several workshops were held in different cities of Iraq to question and validate the findings. The workshops were led by four local partner NGOs: Better World Organization hosted two validation workshops in Duhok, northern Iraq; Youth Without Borders hosted two validation workshops in Mosul; Iraqi Network for Social Media hosted one workshop in Baghdad and a second one in Diwaniya; and Iraqi Alfourdus Organization hosted two validation workshops in Basra, a third one in Maysan, and a fourth in Thi Qar in southern Iraq. The multiple locations and number of workshops brought out diverse viewpoints and provided an abundance of valuable insights. Based on those inputs, by the end of May 2019, PeaceTech Lab produced a lexicon for Iraqi advisors to provide expert review on.

Expert Advisors

The project team tasked nine Iraqi experts from diverse backgrounds with reviewing and providing feedback on the lexicon draft developed based on the information gathered from the online surveys and validation workshops. The experts included Iraqi civil society activists and academic professionals. Efforts were also made to ensure that the experts were diverse in terms of gender, community of origin, and professional background. These experts contributed additional analysis and insights regarding the social and political context in Iraq.

Annex B: Issues and Risks

1) Time Constraints and Timing of the Research

One of the project's biggest challenges was its limited timeframe (February to May 2019). Due to observance of the holy month of Ramadan, some of our partners had to implement the program during the onset of Ramadan. Since the majority of citizens spend the night praying until late and then spend the day fasting, the arrival of the Muslim participants for discussion groups was often delayed.

In addition, since the idea of the project was new to people, in the future it might be beneficial to have more time to properly promote and explain the project to ensure full and efficient participation, especially given that people might be reluctant to participate because of the sensitivity of the topic.

Finally, the length of the workshops was challenging. Since they each ran one full day, some of the participants had to leave early due to work or family obligations.

2) Concerns about Privacy and Security

For privacy or security reasons many participants were concerned about photos or videos being taken during the workshops. However, as the facilitator built trust with the participants, they expressed their desire to take pictures and write news stories about the project.

Some participants from minority communities were reluctant to participate and interact in the sessions and discussions, with the Gypsies expressing particular concern for their appearance in pictures. However, the facilitator resolved these concerns by involving the director of community police to explain the nature of the relationship between the police and marginalized groups. The director also explained the importance of their communication with other components of the community so that the public would be aware of their problems and the specific terms offensive to them. This helped to dispel fears of the privacy and security consequences from their participation.

Finally, while the presence of participants from different ideological, religious, and ethnic backgrounds was one of the reasons for the success of the workshops, it also represented one of its biggest challenges. This is because raising issues about religious beliefs and other hate speech related topics in the Iraq context with such a diverse group had the potential to become a source of conflict during the discussion.

3) Sensitivities and Limited Understanding of Hate Speech Concepts

Hate speech is a sensitive topic for people and organizations to discuss and work on because it touches on issues related to different political, religious, and social conflicts. Not everybody or every organization is able to openly work on such a project. Careful preparation is needed to avoid unexpected risks because governments or political parties sometimes think such projects are targeting them. In addition, the topic was very sensitive in the Iraq context given that many of the terms collected did not reflect well on the government or its activity. This was especially true for the focus group discussions, where skilled facilitation was essential to avoid conflicts among participants, who represented different religions, communities, and ethnicities.

4) Limitations Regarding Language

The survey was translated from English into Arabic and Kurdish (both official languages in Iraq) and then disseminated. Translation of the resulting survey data back to English was challenging because the discussion in the Kurdish areas was conducted in Kurdish while the other workshops were conducted in Arabic and the final report was written in English. All translations may have lost some context because it was not possible to capture all the nuances of the terms in their original form.

At times during the focus group discussions participants were confused or had intense discussions and arguments as to whether specific words or phrases constituted hate speech since, in some circumstances, the word or phrase under discussion was also used in normal or every day interactions. Thus it became important to understand the context within which the words were used.

5) Representation of Minority Groups

Although considerable efforts were made to involve ethnic and religious minorities in the focus group discussions, representation from all groups was difficult to achieve. The Mosul workshop lacked participation of women from minority groups such as the Yazidi. However, despite security concerns due to a terrorist attack in Mosul,⁵⁰ there was strong female participation, interaction, and attendance.

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ABOUT PEACETECH LAB

PeaceTech Lab works for individuals and communities affected by conflict, using technology, media, and data to accelerate local peacebuilding efforts. The Lab's programs emphasize a data driven, cross-sector approach, engaging everyone from student engineers and citizen journalists to Fortune 500 companies in scaling the impact of peacetechnology.

PeaceTech Lab was established as a Center for Innovation by the U.S. Institute of Peace in 2008, and became an independent nonprofit with expert staff and Board of Directors in 2014.



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