



**Capital:** Baghdad  
**Languages:** Arabic, Kurdish  
**Religion:** 97% Islam 3% Christianity or other  
**Population:** 31,234,000  
**Refugees:** 1,903,519  
**Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):** 2,647,251

Formerly part of the Ottoman Empire, the Middle Eastern country of Iraq has a long rich history that spans millennia. Nestled in what was formerly known as Mesopotamia and nourished by the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, this “cradle of

civilization” is bordered by Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Iran, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Although the formation of a republic was proclaimed in 1958, the government of Iraq has been ruled by a series of ruthless dictators ending with the toppling of the leadership of Saddam Hussein. After the horrific events of September 11, 2001 and with the Iraqi government’s continual noncompliance with international law regarding the possession of weapons of mass destruction, a United States-led coalition of forces deployed to Iraq to bring down the despotic government. As violence erupted and permeated throughout the country, thousands of Iraqi citizens have been forced to flee to neighboring countries, thus creating one of the fastest growing refugee situations in the world. In addition to this flight a large number of Iraqi citizens supplied expert assistance to coalition forces, making them vulnerable to further violence and persecution. Many Iraqis have been resettled in the United States bearing the fresh trauma of a continuing war.

Iraqi refugee students present a different set of challenges regarding their resettlement and subsequent integration into the United States school system. Unlike other protracted refugee situations like those in Africa, Iraqi children have experienced both a structured school setting and an education interrupted by war. A high percentage of families arrive having witnessed and experienced car bombs, kidnappings, torture and the deaths of family and friends. Iraqis tend to be distrustful of authority and may be in need of mental health services to address the trauma that has largely been ignored due to their rapid flight and resettlement. These elements of Iraqi refugee resettlement must be taken into consideration as Iraqi students integrate into the school system.