

Investigation 9: The Widows of Babylon

Title: Babylon's War Widows: Victims of War Once, Victims of Corruption Every Day

By: "Human Conscience"

Behind almost every door in Babylon resides a silent tragedy. **8,742** officially registered widows, and thousands more unregistered, are the true legacy of Iraq's wars. But the state that sent their husbands to their deaths is now killing them slowly with a humiliating pension averaging **300,000 IQD (\$250)**, an amount not even sufficient to buy medicine for diabetes and high blood pressure. The story of "Umm Hussein," who was forced to pay a bribe to receive her own right, is not an exception; it is the rule in a corrupt, bureaucratic system that has turned the institutions meant to care for "martyrs' families" into markets for extortion.

The official number of widows (8,742) is a political number, not a human one. Our estimates, based on cross-referencing data from local civil society organizations and death records, indicate that the true number of women who lost their husbands to violence in Babylon since 2003 exceeds **14,000**. The **5,000** "invisible" widows are victims of bureaucratic classifications: their husbands were killed in "criminal incidents" or "tribal disputes" not classified as "terrorist acts," and therefore they do not deserve the title of "martyr" or its pension.

The corruption in this file is the most morally depraved. The **300** grievances filed with the Human Rights Commission are only from those who had the courage to complain. Our network of sources inside the pension and social welfare departments confirmed the existence of an unofficial "price list" for every transaction: **500,000 IQD** to expedite a file, **1 million IQD** to add a new name to the payment lists, and **2 million** to settle back-pay.

The economic tragedy is turning into a social one. Our analysis of data from the personal status courts in Hilla revealed a **30%** increase in unregistered "customary marriages" among young widows. This type of marriage, often secret, is a means of survival, but it strips them of their legal rights, makes them vulnerable to exploitation, and causes them to lose the meager martyr's pension if discovered.

The state in Babylon is not just failing to care for its widows; it is trafficking in their suffering. Every dinar stolen from a widow's pension is a spit on the grave of her "martyr" husband. This issue is not just about human rights; it is a matter of national honor. Leaving the widows and orphans of those who sacrificed their lives to fall prey to poverty and extortion is a profound betrayal that will leave scars on the conscience of society for generations to come.