

## IRAQ CUSTOMS

### Greetings:

However, in conservative sectors, men do not touch women unless they are first-degree relatives (wives, mothers, daughters, or sisters), in which case they greet with a handshake.

In rural areas, greetings between men include handshaking and kissing three times on the cheeks (right, left, and right again).

A son may kiss his mother's head as a sign of respect. Children show respect by kissing the hand of an elder.

A typical greeting is *Al-salamu 'alaykum* (May peace be upon you). Young Iraqis greet with a less-formal wave and the word *Marhaba* (Hi).

It is considered impolite to address a person by first name unless the individual is a close friend and from the same generation and social class.

A man is commonly addressed as *Abu* (Father of) followed by his oldest son's first name. A woman likewise might be addressed by her oldest son's name, as in *Um Abbas* (Mother of Abbas). Even a husband and wife refer to each other in this way, both in public and in private.

An individual with no sons is addressed by his or her oldest daughter's first name, and an individual with no children is called *Abu ghayib* or *Um ghayib* (Awaiting father or Awaiting mother).

### Gestures:

When engaged in conversation, Iraqis tend to stand a short distance from one another and use a good deal of physical contact. Body language is an important method of expression.

In keeping with Islamic custom, Iraqis use the right hand to pass items to another person; they use the right hand or both hands to receive items.

To express respect, especially to an elder, a person will avoid eye contact during conversation. Likewise, men and women will not maintain eye contact with each other.

### Holidays:

A three-day feast called *Eid al-Fitr* ends *Ramadan*.

Also important are *Moulid al-Nabi* (the prophet Muhammad's birthday) and *Eid al-Adha* (Feast of Sacrifice), a four-day holiday celebrating the end of the annual pilgrimage to Makkah, Saudi Arabia.

*Ashura* is observed by Shi'i Muslims, who reenact the suffering of the martyr Hussain, the grandson of Muhammad.