

Topical Note

Iraq: Security and internally displaced people in Anbar province, March 2015

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SUMMARY

The conflict that is currently unfolding in Anbar is very severe but has attracted less attention than the conflicts elsewhere in the country. During 2014 government forces and ISIL have fought over the control of the entire province. The civilian population has come under severe pressure. The hostilities and the belligerents' direct targeting of civilians has led to thousands of civilians getting killed. About half a million individuals – one third of the province's population – fled their homes in the period from January to September 2014.

Daily life is strongly affected by the prevailing security situation. Drawn-out hostilities take place in areas of large population concentrations. The provision of public and private services is reportedly seriously impaired.

Apart from Northern Iraq, Anbar is the province with the largest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq. The province hosted 17 % of the Iraqis who were forced to flee their homes in 2014.

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1. INTRODUCTION

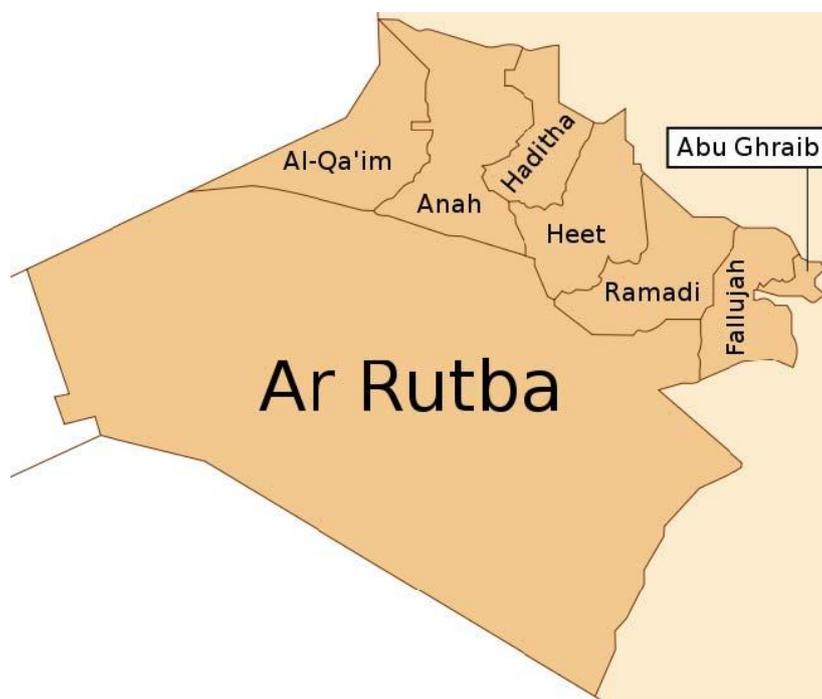
Anbar province is mostly a sparsely populated desert. The cities are mostly located along the Euphrates, where there is a highway northwest to Syria, and along the highway west to Jordan and Syria. These two roads meet just west of the provincial capital of Ramadi. On the highway between Ramadi and Baghdad is the province's second largest city, Fallujah.

The province has a relatively homogeneous Sunni Muslim Arab population (Kaplan 2007, p. 5). Most of the tribes in Anbar are Sunni (Cole 2014a).

The ongoing conflict in Anbar is very hard, but has received less attention than, for example, in Ninewa, where ISIL conquered Iraq's second largest city Mosul in June 2014. However, Anbar is sometimes called "the forgotten province" (Cole 2014b).

It is difficult for independent observers to get into these areas. Much of the information which comes out ultimately derives from local residents and from parties in the conflict. The information may have passed through several hands and may be difficult to verify. Many media reports may turn out to contain errors and inaccurate representations. Last but not least, there is a "battle for the truth" and a battle between "narratives" about what it is all about. We must thus assume that access to reliable sources is limited.

Figure 1. Map of Anbar province with districts¹



Source: Wikimedia Commons 2008.

¹ For a more detailed map of Anbar, we refer to Kagan 2007, p. 3 and 4 (available from <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/reports/IraqReport03.pdf>) and ISW 2015 (available from <http://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/control-terrain-iraq-february-2-2015>).

2. THE SECURITY SITUATION

Landinfo and the Swedish Migration Board most recently presented the security situation in Anbar in February 2014 (Landinfo & the Swedish Migration Board 2014, p. 14). Since then, the situation has worsened significantly and can today be best described as war.

The start of this development can be dated to the beginning of 2014, when ISIL got a serious hold in the province in the wake of the government forces crackdown on mass demonstrations going on throughout 2013 (Parker 2014).

ISIL conducted a long-term offensive in 2014 where they attacked cities and towns along the following three routes:

- Ramadi – Bagdad: The highway and other roads through urban areas.
- Ramadi – Trebil: The highway to Trebil border crossing to Jordan.
- Ramadi – Qaim: The main road along the Euphrates to Qaim border crossing to Syria (see map in Kagan 2007, p. 4).

In 2011, Anbar had over 1.5 million inhabitants (COSIT 2011). According to figures from Iraq Body Count (IBC 2015), 3,623 civilians were killed in Anbar in 2014. According to IBC, half of these, 1,748, were killed by the Iraqi military in connection with daily airstrikes, particularly in and around Fallujah.

2.1 THE DEVELOPMENT SINCE FEBRUARY 2014

During 2014, government forces and ISIL fought over the control along all the three mentioned routes. ISIL's goal is to take over and hold these routes in order to ensure freedom of movement, income from traffic² and control of the cities.

Anbar is important for ISIL. With control here, they will achieve a significant expansion of the "caliphate" territory and simultaneously be in a position to attack Baghdad. With full control of the highways west to the border, they can expand their deployment area towards Baghdad's northern and southern periphery (Squires & Kozak 2014).

ISIL has now conquered a good number of cities and towns in Anbar, while there is still fighting over others. Where they have succeeded in taking over control, they are challenged by the government army with Shiite militias, who try to take the place back, sometimes with Iraqi and U.S. air support. The entire province is thus characterised by ongoing hostilities in the places people live. In many places, the fighting has been ongoing for months.

The civilian population in Anbar has come under severe pressure. The fighting, including the government forces' attacks on civilian targets, has led to thousands of civilians being killed and about half a million individuals – one third of the province's inhabitants – have fled their homes in the period from January to September 2014 (HRW 2015, p. 1)

The leaders of the tribes which the civilian population belongs to have become caught between ISIL and the government forces. Even though on the one hand they want ISIL out, on the other hand they do not want the Shiite-dominated government army and its supporters, the Shiite militias, to get in. Many of the tribes primarily want to defend themselves and their territories, but see that they are too weak. Some tribes, such as the Albu Nimr tribe, are so hard pressured by ISIL that last autumn they invited Shiite militias to come into their areas and take up the fight there. This led to a very harsh reaction from the other tribes and ISIL took the opportunity to show themselves as the Sunni Muslim tribes' protectors by massacring several hundred members of Albu Nimr (ABC News 2014).

² The transportation of goods by land between Iraq and Jordan runs through this area.

However, the massacre seems to have backfired on ISIL, because even more Sunni tribes have later found it necessary to turn to Shiite militias to keep ISIL out. Amongst other things, the situation has now arisen that both U.S. air forces and the Iran-supported Shiite militia the Badr organisation now fight together at the Asad airbase in the middle of Anbar (Cole 2014a).

Likely enough, ISIL's progress has split the tribes of Anbar in two: those who are for the government and those who are against them. In addition, some tribes are said to be internally divided on this issue (Bradley 2014).

2.2 "HOT SPOTS"

2.2.1 Ramadi

Ramadi is the province's capital with 400,000 inhabitants. ISIL had taken half the city in autumn 2014 (Roggio 2014), and after this the government forces have made repeated attempts to recapture lost ground. There is still fighting going on around the city.

The fighting around Ramadi follows a pattern of attacks and counterattacks. ISIL attacks the government forces from three sides around and inside the city, from parts of the city they already have under control. The government forces, often with air support, try to drive out ISIL, with the result that there is periodically intense fighting both in and around the city which involves extensive injury and pain.

2.2.2 Fallujah

Fallujah is the province's second largest city. The government forces make persistent attempts to take back the city from ISIL, which has had control since January 2014. The fighting in Fallujah is characterised by the following:

- ISIL constantly launches new offensives to conquer the entire Fallujah area, which they call "the Emirate of Fallujah"³ (Weiss 2015).
- Fallujah city itself has periodically been besieged by ISIL since October 2014 (Weiss 2015).
- The warring parties usually use weapons such as grenade launchers, mortars, rockets, machine guns and handguns, as well as suicide bombers/car bombs (Weiss 2015; Cole 2014b).
- The government forces bombard densely populated areas with artillery and mortars (HRW 2015).

³ "Emirate" means a subdistrict in the "caliphate."

2.2.3 Habbaniyah

In Habbaniyah, there is also ongoing fighting between ISIL and the government forces over control (ISW 2015). There are reports that the parties use handguns, suicide bombers, grenade launchers, mortars and artillery, amongst other things. Iraqi or U.S. air forces are also engaged according to Roggio (2015).

2.2.4 Haditha

The city of Haditha, which is near an important dam on the Euphrates, has been under attack by ISIL for several months. The government army, along with a local Sunni Muslim tribe called Jughafi, now control the central areas, while ISIL attacks regularly in the surrounding areas (ISW 2015). Haditha was taken back from ISIL by the government army in December 2014 (Mustafa 2014).

2.2.5 Hit

Hit is a medium-sized city along the highway to Jordan. The city has recently come under ISIL's control (ISW 2015). At the end of 2014, it was reported that ISIL had used a chemical weapon, chlorine gas, against civilians in Hit (Russia Today 2014), possibly during the fighting which ended with ISIL taking over the city.

2.2.6 Rutba

Rutba is a small city along the highway to Jordan. ISIL conquered Rutba in June, which was important to achieving better control over the transport corridor between Baghdad and the border crossings Walid (to Syria) and Trebil (to Jordan). After ISIL conquered the city, it was put under siege by the government army, U.S. forces and Shiite militias. The siege began in January 2015 and was part of the preparations to try to drive out ISIL (Berwari 2015).

2.2.7 Al-Baghdadi

Al-Baghdadi is a small city near Asad military airbase, which is a base for U.S. and Iraqi fighter planes. ISIL needs control there to be able to besiege and attack the base (Morris & Salim 2015).

2.3 WHO HAS CONTROL WHERE?

As of the early February 2015, the various parties in the conflict have control as follows (the source of this information is ISW 2015, unless otherwise specified):

Government forces:

- East, southeast and northeast of Fallujah (Adnan & Discharry 2015)
- Haditha

ISIL:

- Fallujah: Since January 2014 (Adnan & Discharry 2015)
- Hit: Since October 2014 (Roggio & Adaki 2014).
- Rutba: Since 25 June 2014 (Adnan & Discharry 2015)
- Rawa
- Ana
- Qaim border crossing to Syria

Local tribes:

- Waleed border crossing to Syria
- Trebil border crossing to Jordan

Areas and places still being fought over:

- Ramadi. Persistent fighting where ISIL, supported by sympathetic local tribes, fights against the government army, supported by Shiite militias. ISIL must have taken about half the city in autumn 2014 (Roggio 2014).
- Habbaniyah
- Al-Baghdadi

In several of the cities and places held by the government forces, there are also Shiite militias there who support, although they do not necessarily submit to, the government forces.

3. THE VIOLENCE SITUATION

3.1 WHO COMMITS ACTS OF VIOLENCE?

There are four main dominant players:

- The government army, sometimes with air support. The army and air force bombs and fires on densely populated areas.
- Shiite militias. These partially support the government army and partially operate on their own. The militias have conducted attacks on Sunni Muslims on sectarian grounds (Martin & al-Dulimi 2015).
- ISIL. According to World Bulletin (2014), quoting Iraqi government sources, ISIL attacks with both light and heavy weapons, including tanks and field guns. Suicide bombers are also used, something which ISIL is considered to be almost alone in (AFP 2015). As stated below, they conduct massacres and other types of retribution on both civilians and defeated opponents.
- Local tribes who either fight with or against ISIL. According to RFE/RL (Paraszczuk 2014b), amongst the tribes who fight against ISIL in cooperation with the government army are tribes from around the areas of Haditha, Ana, Rawa, Al-Qaim and Haditha.

The tribes in Anbar are mostly Sunni Muslim. In efforts to recapture the province, the government faced a challenge in regaining the lost trust with the tribes in the province so that they would again be willing to submit to state authority. One measure which has been announced by Prime Minister Abadi is to create a separate "national guard" within the government army, manned by personnel from these Sunni Muslim tribes (Mansour 2014). We have not see information that such forces have been deployed in active service, but enrolment of the first recruits was reportedly announced in a ceremony in Anbar in November 2014 (Salama 2014).

3.2 TARGET GROUPS AND PATTERNS OF ACTION

The violence situation in Anbar is characterised by hostilities between warring parties and attacks on civilians.

HRW (2015, p. 1) directs strong criticism against the government forces for their "indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas," particularly with airstrikes and artillery attacks, where numerous civilians were killed. HRW refers to the central hospital in Fallujah having been repeatedly hit with bombs and artillery fire. In addition, Iraqi planes have reportedly used so-called barrel bombs (empty oil drums filled with scrap iron and explosives dropped from helicopters) on residential areas since May 2014, which caused thousands of residents to flee from the city (HRW 2015, p. 2). These attacks have probably claimed a high number of victims.

ISIL displays well-known behaviour wherever they take control. A UN source reports that around 180,000 people fled from Hit after ISIL conquered the city (UN Radio 2015). After conquering, ISIL introduced measures which are typical for them in order to ensure dominance over the population. Al-Monitor (Mamouri 2014) reported, via a local source, that any residents who had either incited resistance, been in the government army or belonged to a tribe in opposition to ISIL have been "eliminated" by ISIL immediately after the takeover. "Dormant" ISIL members amongst the population produced lists of who could be considered to constitute opposition. People who had criticised ISIL's disciplinary measures, such as the requirement for women to wear niqab, were reportedly executed and ISIL's flag raised over the person's home. Prisoners of war taken by ISIL were executed in groups. For example, 30 members of the Albu Nimr tribe were reportedly executed in the street in Hit in broad daylight (Hall 2014), several months after several hundred from the same tribe were massacred. In February, there were reports that ISIL had burned 45 people, including government soldiers, living in al-Baghdadi (BBC 2015), and also that they conducted beheadings of prisoners taken from anti-ISIL tribes (Weiss 2015).

3.3 FREQUENCY OF VIOLENCE

How frequently violence-related incidents occur varies over time and from place to place. It is difficult to find systematic figures for individual places.

A source in Baghdad who follows the situation daily and who we consider reliable reports, for example (e-mail 8 February 2015), on the following twelve events over the course of three days in February:

1. Habbaniyah: Government forces turn back attacks from ISIL with boats over the Euphrates.
2. Kubaisa, west of Ramadi: Coalition-led airstrikes on ISIL positions.
3. Hit: Airstrikes and ground attacks from the government forces on ISIL positions.
4. Ramadi: ISIL attacks on government forces.

5. Ramadi: Three suicide car bombers with explosives detonated against government forces.
6. Qaim: Coalition-led airstrikes against ISIL positions.
7. Kubaisa, west of Ramadi: New coalition-led airstrikes on ISIL positions.
8. Ramadi: Attacks conducted by ISIL from three sides against government forces.
9. Ramadi: Coalition-led airstrikes against ISIL positions northeast of the city.
10. Fallujah: Two suicide bombers blew themselves up against government forces east of the city.
11. Fallujah: Government forces shot artillery rounds into the city.
12. Hit: Three civilians burned alive by ISIL.

Together with the source's other reports, we consider this frequency of events to be representative of the beginning of 2015.

3.4 LEVEL OF CRIME AND POSSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT PROTECTION

We found neither references nor figures for the level of crime in Anbar. Searches in open sources only provide information on the warring parties' crimes in connection with warfare and their treatment of the population but nothing about ordinary crime.

In light of the government's lack of ability to protect the citizens in ISIL-controlled areas and their own treatment of the population in areas being fought over and areas they themselves control, it seems that both the ability and the willingness to provide protection are very small.

4. VULNERABLE GROUPS

The population in Anbar seems to be primarily exposed to two types of threats – hostilities between the various parties and terrorism by ISIL and the government army, partly in collaboration with Shiite militias (Cole 2014a).

ISIL demands almost complete submission from the population in their areas and strikes hard to make sure this happens. However, local tribes can sometimes intervene and take on tasks to manage their respective tribal areas where ISIL has otherwise taken over control. Amongst other things, a "military council" has reportedly been established for tribes in Anbar, Ninewa and Salah al-Din. In some cases the council took charge and administered areas which ISIL had conquered (Heras 2014). Local tribes can in this way acquire a certain authority in their own areas and can possibly thereby lighten the pressure of ISIL's dominance on the civilian population.

The army and the Shiite militias for their part no longer seem to have confidence in the Sunni Muslim tribes and treat the population with mistrust where they have control. This is something which drives many a tribe over to ISIL. Washington Post (Ingatius 2014) quotes a tribal leader as saying: "Why must we be doomed to join ISIL? Those who join them, do it because of the government's persecution."

The government forces do not seem to take any consideration for the population when they conduct warfare where people live.

The civilian population is also subjected to retribution from Shiite militias. For example, ISW (Adnan 2015) recently reported that members of the Shiite militia Popular Mobilisation Units (PMU) had cut the throats of two civilians belonging to a local tribe in Ramadi. The event immediately led to demonstrations. ISW (Adnan 2015) points out that the Shiite militias are needed militarily, but on the other hand they operate independently of the military chain of command and largely act on their own.

There are many examples of civilians becoming random victims in connection with attacks which are otherwise directed against parties in the military conflict. For example, a civilian must have been killed and some others wounded in a suicide bombing at the border station in Trebil, where four soldiers were also killed (Jane's 2014). There are also a large number of other examples.

The description above applies to the civilian population in general. Within the population, we can point out some vulnerable groups which are mentioned by various sources:

- Tribes who oppose ISIL. According to Strategypage.com (2014), a U.S. news site which comments on military issues, most civilian victims of ISIL are members of Sunni Muslim tribes who oppose them or oppose their work. ISIL's reprisals strike broadly - neither men, women nor children are spared (BBC News 2014).
- Mosques. For example, a mosque in the Jubbah area, where the Assad military airbase and the small city of al-Baghdadi are located, were attacked on 6 January this year. The target of this attack was fighters from an anti-ISIL tribe who was hiding out in the Mosque (AFP 2015).
- Students and academics. At the universities in both Ramadi and Fallujah, the students appear to be caught between the government and ISIL. The government sees them as traitors because they are part of a population which has let ISIL get a foothold. ISIL sees them as collaborators with the government because they study at public institutions. Both students and academics (which probably means academic employees) are terrorised from these two sides. Physically, the hostilities in these places have reduced educational institutions to "rubble" (Al-Assaf & Schweitzer 2014).
- Women in ISIL-controlled areas. There have been reports that ISIL punishes women who do not follow the prescribed dress code. According to The Independent (Saul 2014), ISIL established their own team of women who are tasked with checking and possibly punishing women who do not comply. Members of such teams have reportedly stabbed and bitten women they have taken and women who have opposed being married off to ISIL fighters must have been executed, according to The Independent (Saul 2014). We have not seen exactly this type of punishment reported in these places by other sources, but we assume that ISIL is generally very attentive to women's behaviour in all areas they control.
- Families who are prevented from leaving their homes to go to safer places. Several hundred families have been prevented from leaving their homes, both in ISIL and government-controlled areas (al-Shorfa 2014; HRW 2015, p. 6).
- In addition, government officials, politicians and police officers are a permanent target group for ISIL. For example, the police headquarters in the small city of Wafa three miles west of Ramadi was attacked when the mayor was visiting (Al Jazeera 2014).

The emerging picture of vulnerable groups seems to apply to the entire province, as both large and small population concentrations are affected by the same types of security problems.

5. DAILY LIFE

Based on what has been reported, daily life seems to be strongly affected by the security situation. A third of the population has fled from their homes. Drawn-out hostilities take place in places with large population concentrations. Public and private services appear to be significantly impaired and 63 % of the population is in need of humanitarian aid to substitute for missing public and private services and access to care (Cole 2014b). However, access to aid in places where people live is very difficult.

It has been reported from various sources that there is major destruction in cities and towns. These are some of the problems reported (Paraszczuk 2014a; Asharq al-Awsat 2014):

- Destroyed roads which make it difficult or impossible to travel in and out of residential areas
- Major, increasing or complete lack of food, medicines and fuel
- Epidemics
- Shelling of the central hospital in Fallujah
- Interruptions in health services, power and water supply
- No or little emergency relief arriving
- Locked and damaged health centres
- Doctors have fled
- Lack of drinking water and heating

Already in August 2014, there were reports of extensive damage to main infrastructure such that it undoubtedly places strong limitations on daily life in many places. These include (Al-Jaffal 2014; Cole 2014b):

- Damaged markets
- Abandoned homes have been rigged with explosives
- Locked, abandoned and damaged shops, commercial and public buildings
- Damaged water treatment plants and power plants
- Bombed hospitals, schools and mosques
- Blown up bridges
- Residential areas riddled with bullets and abandoned

The universities in Ramadi and Fallujah are reportedly "reduced to ruins" (Al-Assaf & Schweitzer 2014). The hostilities have spread out particularly harshly over the two largest cities, Ramadi and Fallujah, which have been reduced to "bombed wreckage" according to the blog Informed Comment (Cole 2014b). The hospitals which still operate must lack medicines, equipment and staff. Obtaining medicines for chronic diseases such as diabetes must be a major problem. The hospitals have become entirely dependent on their own emergency generators as a replacement for normal power supply, but this is also problematic because access to fuel is unstable.

The interruptions of normal supply lines have generally led to a sharp increase in prices in many places, including in Ramadi, where the prices of basic commodities have increased by between 30 and 100 % in the course of 2014. This causes even more serious effects, because there will now be few people with gainful employment as a result of many workplaces being physically damaged and many employers having been injured and unable to work (Cole 2014b).

Daily life is further worsened in that humanitarian aid can only get into the war zones to a limited degree (see section 6.3).

6. INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

6.1 NUMBER

The total number of internally displaced people in Anbar as of January 2015 was 386,904 people (IOM 2015b, p. 5). This seems to have increased by about 13,600 people since November, when there were reported to be 62,206 internally displaced families in Anbar (about 373,236 people) (IOM 2014).

Apart from Northern Iraq, Anbar is the province with the largest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq. The province hosted 17 % of the Iraqis who were forced to flee their homes in 2014 (IOM 2015b, p. 4). According to IOM (2015b, p. 5), almost all of the province's internally displaced people are originally from Anbar (a total of 373,302 people). Most of these come from Fallujah and Ramadi, but there are also an increasing number fleeing from the city of Hit (REACH Initiative 2014, p. 2). Fierce fighting in and around Hit in October, as well as violent events in Haditha, have resulted in over 6,200 families having been displaced from their homes in these areas between the beginning of August and end of October (IOM 2014, p. 2).

The rest of the internally displaced population in Anbar comes from Salah al-Din (7,603 people), Baghdad (3,246), Ninewa (2,532), Diyala (132) and Babylon (90) (IOM 2015b, p. 5).

There are also many who have fled from the province (HRW 2015). At some point in autumn 2014, 40 internally displaced families left the province per hour (OCHA 2014a, p. 2).

According to IOM (2015b, p. 4), a total of 668,460 displaced people in Iraq are originally from Anbar. This constitutes about 30 % of the total number of displaced people in the country and Anbar is thus the province producing the second most internal refugees, beaten only by Ninewa (IOM 2015b, p. 4).

6.2 HOUSING

According to IOM's figures from November 2014, 60 % of the internally displaced people live in private homes in Anbar, primarily with relatives (*host families*). Another 15 % stay in rented housing, 11 % have sought shelter in abandoned public buildings/areas (tents), 7 % stay in school buildings, 4 % in community centres and 3 % in "other housing" (IOM 2014, p. 3).

The fact that so many internally displaced people live with relatives, according to IOM (2014, p. 3) creates overcrowded and unsustainable living conditions in many places. Many of the internally displaced families live in rudimentary tents which they have set up next to their relatives' home. These families lack access to basic services and will be vulnerable to winter weather conditions (IOM 2014, p. 3).

Most of the internally displaced people who live in abandoned buildings stay in Hit and Ramadi, which respectively house 2,283 and 2,177 families in these types of buildings. An entire 77 % of the population living in school buildings stay in Fallujah and Ramadi (IOM 2014, p. 3). According to IOM (2014, p. 3), families who live under such conditions are amongst the most vulnerable, because they often lack access to basic services, are easy to throw out, and will be vulnerable to winter weather conditions.

According to Global CCCM Cluster (2015), there are currently no permanent camps for internally displaced people in Anbar.

There is said to be an improvised camp in the vicinity of Fallujah, where 300 families live in tents and 700 other families in barns and various abandoned buildings and structures (OCHA 2015b, p. 3).

In November 2014, UNHCR began to set up 300 tents as preparation for creating collective centres in Habbaniyah and Nikhaib subdistricts. The tents, in addition to 450 "metal pavilions," must provide shelter to 7,200 people (JAU Iraq 2014, p. 1).

6.3 NEEDS

The internally displaced people in Anbar have little access to food and water: 98 % report having insufficient access to food, while over 60 % report that they do not have adequate access to water. Almost 60 % of the families lack access to functioning health services (IOM 2014, p. 2). Almost all internally displaced people in Anbar want the need for food assistance to be prioritised, followed by basic equipment (not food, but so-called *Non-Food Items, NFI*), shelter and water (IOM 2014, p. 2).

6.4 AID SCHEMES

The aid which is being provided is subject to many, often long interruptions. The security situation makes aid work very challenging, according to OCHA (2015a, p. 2).

The assistance providers experience constant shorter or longer interruptions in the ability to get supplies transported in. For example, the World Food Programme has started up its distribution again around Hit in September, after a five month suspension (IRIN 2014; WFP 2014). WFP themselves reported that in September they had the goal of getting out to 76,000 internally displaced people in Hit and Ramadi (WFP 2014). OCHA also reported in October 2014 (2014b, p. 1, 4) on "serious obstacles" to access for humanitarian aid to western parts of the country, something which affected 400,000 internally displaced people in Anbar.

After an interruption from October 2014, it was only in late January 2015 that humanitarian supplies were able to get access to four districts in Anbar again. 31,800 internally displaced people then received food packages allocated for families (OCHA 2015a).

In October, IRIN (2014) reported that only a handful of aid organisations have been able to deliver supplies to people in Anbar, including ICRC, the Iraqi Red Crescent and some local groups. Danish Refugee Assistance (DRC) have also participated in the aid work in Anbar. According to IRIN (2014), DRC – using the volunteer community and local authorities – have handed out core emergency packages (*CRI - Core Relief Items*) consisting of food, toiletries and other equipment to 3,000 internally displaced people in Ramadi.

By the New Year, IOM also reported that they had distributed basic items to 950 internally displaced families in the city of Ar-Rahhaliya (IOM 2015a). Basic items containing winter equipment and other emergency items, including thick blankets, tarpaulins, kerosene and stoves, mattresses, pillows, kitchen sets and toiletries (IOM 2015a).

IOM (2015) generally states that they have cooperated closely with local authorities and with representatives for both the host communities and the displaced people in the aid work in the al-Rutba district.

6.5 ACCESS RESTRICTIONS IN THE PROVINCE

The internally displaced people from Anbar, according to UNHCR (2014, p. 3) have stated that they do not get into Haditha without a local sponsor. HRW (2015) also reports that the authorities sometimes put restrictions on internal refugees within the province, but we do not know the reasons for this. In general, we have not found more concrete information about such access restrictions.

OCHA reported in October (2014a, p. 3) that flight out of the province was still more difficult due to the ongoing hostilities. At the time of reporting, Ana and Rawa, far west in the province, were place which seemed relatively safer, but these villages had limited capacity to take in internally displaced people and the capacity would have been quickly exceeded. Villages in the areas around Ramadi could sometimes also offer a certain relative safety. Flight to Baghdad had become so dangerous that instead of taking the shortest path along the highway, people instead travelled through the open desert to Kerbala in order to then head on to Baghdad. However, the access to Baghdad has been limited by requirements for sponsors for internally displaced people. Others reportedly have gone to Syria and to a relative safety there (OCHA 2014b, p. 2).

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