

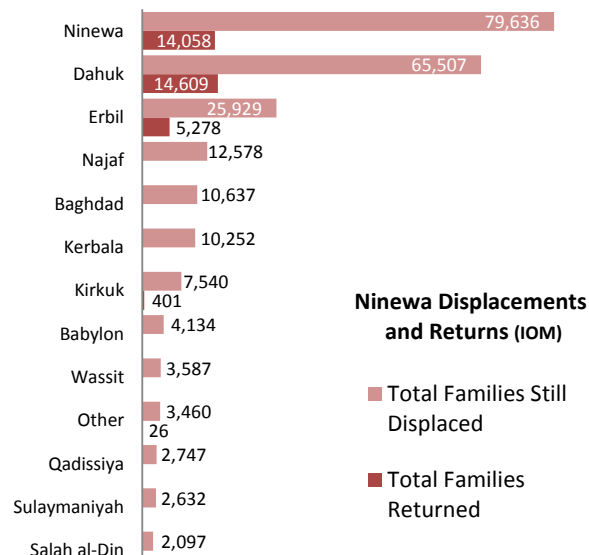
Iraq Protection Cluster: Ninewa Returnee Profile - January & February 2017

30 March 2017

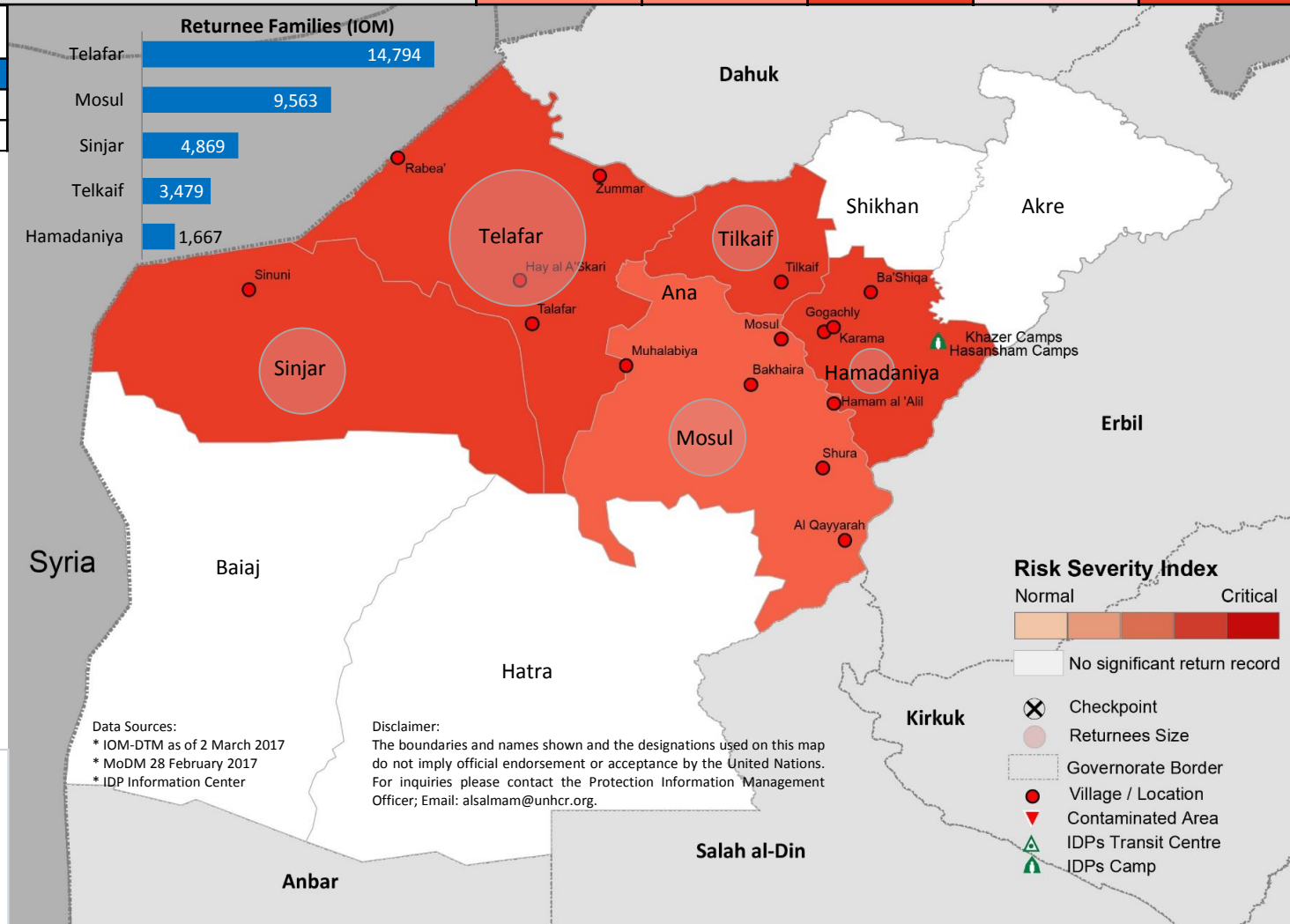
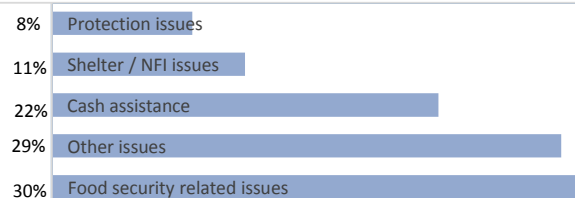
Protection Risk Matrix by District	High	Protection Concerns					Sinjar	Hamdaniya	Telafar	Mosul	Telkaif
	Medium	Reported Violations of principles relating to return movements (including non-discrimination in the right of return, as well as voluntariness, safety and dignity of return movements)									
	Low	Security incidents resulting in death/injury in return area (including assault, murder, conflict-related casualties)									
		Explosive Remnants of War (ERW)/ Improvised Explosive Device (IED) contamination in return area									
		Reported Rights violations by state or non-state military/security actors (including abduction, arbitrary arrest/detention, disproportionate restrictions on freedom of movement)									
		Concerns relating to inter-communal relations and social cohesion									

MODM Returnee Figures (Registered and non-registered)

District	Families
Sinjar	7,050
Mosul	4,740



IDP Information Center: 14% of 3,600 calls received from Ninewa in Jan and Feb were from returnees. The main issues raised were:



GENERAL CONTEXT

Within a four month span (June 2014-August 2014) an extremist armed group took over large tracts of territory within Ninewa governorate. Some of these areas included the disputed internal border (DIBs) areas, which is a factor in the ability of some displaced persons from these areas being able or willing to return. The Ministry of Planning estimates that in 2014 Ninewa had a population of about 3,100,000 people (51% female and 49% male), with 54% of these residing in the capital Mosul, 14% in Tel Afar and Sinjar with about 9% of the population. With the advance of the extremist group it is estimated that approximately 400,000 people fled parts of – Tal Afar, Tilkaif, Mosul, Sinjar, Ba'aj, Hatra, Shikhan and Hamdaniya. Akre was not invaded and remained under government control. Parts of Sheikhan were however quickly retaken, and along with Akre are currently under the de-facto administrative control of the Kurdistan Regional Government.

The advance of the extremists into Ninewa affected all groups, including ethnic and religious minorities and anyone perceived as disloyal to the extremists for example those who worked for the government as civil servants and in particular police and military personnel. Masses of people fled occupied areas to relatively safer areas; a majority of the minority groups fled towards the Kurdistan Region of Iraq while others fled southwards to other governorates. The extremist group perpetrated gross violations of human rights and humanitarian law in areas they took over including killings, torture, abductions. For example, when the extremists took over Sinjar, home to the Yazidis, the extremist group perpetrated mass killings and abducted and enslaved women and children. Similar atrocities against the Yazidis across the border in Syria have been determined to amount to the crime of genocide as well as multiple crimes against humanity and war crimes. Thousands of Yazidi managed to flee towards the Sinjar Mountain and then eventually settled in host community or IDP camps in Dohuk. Thousands of Christians also fled towards the KRI. By the end of 2015 Kurdish security forces (Peshmerga) had retaken Sinjar and parts of Tal Afar, Tilkaif and Hamdaniya. The other areas remained under the control of extremists and inaccessible to humanitarian actors.

Since early 2016, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) have engaged in several military campaigns to dislodge and retake territory from extremist armed groups starting in Anbar before heading northwards on the Mosul corridor and ultimately launching operations to retake Mosul in October 2016, together with Kurdish security forces and coalition partners. In November 2016 pro-government armed groups started surrounding Tal Afar and recaptured the Tal Afar air base. Despite the military success in retaking cities, towns and villages, the security and protection environment remains volatile with serious protection risks for displaced Iraqis and those that have returned to their areas of origin. However despite the serious security and protection concerns in retaken areas, there have been high rates of premature return to retaken areas due to a number of factors including pressures to return, the de-facto encampment policy and severe restrictions of movement, leaving displaced persons to prefer early returns as opposed to remaining in basic IDP camps.

In many retaken areas, even when returns are voluntary, conditions are still not suitable for dignified, safe and sustainable returns due to continuing attacks by armed groups, high risk of death/injury from explosive hazards/IEDs, presence of militias, tribal conflicts, extensive property destructions, lack of basic services and critical infrastructure. To date, MOMD estimates that approximately 70,400 IDPs have returned to Ninewa between 26 October 2016 and 28 February 2017. However, IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) reports that 34,372 families (206,232 individuals) have returned over the same period. The reports and information gathered from IDPs who have returned from Khazer and Hasansham IDP camps indicates that the majority of returnees have returned to Mosul city, Gogachly and Qayyarah.

MOSUL DISTRICT

Mosul district is comprised of six sub districts (Mosul, Qayyarah, Shura, Hamman Al Aliil, Mahalabiya and Bashiqa). By mid-November 2016 (barely a month after the launch of the military operations to retake Mosul) MOMD reported that more than 200 families had returned to retaken sub districts such as Shura and Qayyarah and villages like Nimrud, Haj Ali and Gogachly.

Despite the retaking of east Mosul, the security situation remained precarious with reports of drone and suicide attacks by extremists in Rasheediya and Karama and also the presence of militia groups who are alleged to frequently conduct arbitrary raids and detentions of men and boys in neighbourhoods such as Bakhaira and Rasheediya in the reporting period. The militias are also accused of evicting families from their homes on allegations, without due process, of perceived affiliation with extremist armed groups. In addition, the lack of safe drinking water and electricity remains a challenge. Displacement out of east Mosul continues, albeit at a much lower rate than before. UNHCR and protection partners observed that some families who had initially returned to east Mosul after liberation have returned back to the camps citing the unstable security situation, the unavailability of basic services (potable water and electricity) and the prohibitive costs of food. There were also reports of secondary displacement as families who had resided in homes of displaced families had to find alternative accommodation upon the return of the rightful owners.

The military offensive to retake west Mosul began on 19 February 2017. By the end of February nearly 5,000 families, or 30,000 individuals, had been displaced from west Mosul. Returns to west Mosul are yet to be tracked however, displaced families report dire humanitarian conditions with many cases of malnutrition especially among children.

HAMDANIYA DISTRICT

Al-Hamdaniya fell to extremists in August 2014 and was retaken by government forces in October 2016. It is estimated that prior to control by extremists, the district had a population of about 125,000 people. It was multi-ethnic and multi-religious with mixed communities of Arabs and Kurds and predominantly Christian families. It was the largest Christian district in Iraq with outskirt towns such as Qaraqosh which had over 50,000 residents, mainly Christians. Almost all the inhabitants fled the town prior to invasion by extremists. As a result shops and houses were looted, demolished or burned down. Although Iraqi Security Forces have retaken the district, reconstruction work is yet to start due to various concerns. IOM's DTM estimates that about 10,000 individuals have returned to some areas such as Wardak, Tal Al-Laban, Al-Adla and Ibrahim Alkhalil villages but no returns have been recorded for Al-Hamdaniya city itself.

TILKAIF DISTRICT

The extremist armed group took over Tilkaif in October 2014. Like Hamdaniya city, the town of Tilkaif was predominantly Christian, however surrounding towns and villages had a mixed population. IOM's DTM reports that 20,874 individuals have since returned to liberated areas of Tilkaif. ISF recaptured the town of Tilkaif in January 2017. The majority of returns are to Wanna centre (9,768 individuals), Mosul Dam (4140 individuals) and about 2,300 people for Tal Adas. Again, similar with Hamdaniya city, there are no recorded returns to Tilkaif town. Christian IDPs displaced to Erbil have expressed concerns over their security as the main factor inhibiting returns.

TEL AFAR DISTRICT

The pre-crisis population of Tel Afar district is unclear but the main populated areas were Tel Afar city, Rabe'a and Zummar. Shortly after the launch of the Mosul operations, pro-government armed groups under the banner have been active on the outskirt of Tal Afar, west of Mosul, a town that is considered to be a stronghold of extremists. During the reporting period, the town was effectively under siege after the pro-government militias recaptured several areas around Tel Afar. Unlike the Mosul operation where only Iraqi army and police were allowed to enter the city, the militias have been in control of the Tel Afar operation. Tel Afar's population is predominantly Turkmen and Sunni Muslims with about a quarter of the population being of Shia Muslim faith. There are serious concerns about the possibility of revenge attacks on Sunni families by militias for past atrocities committed by extremist armed group against Shia Muslims in the town and elsewhere.

Prior to the crisis, Zummar had a population of about 24,000 people who were made up of 60% Arab and 40% Kurdish. When extremist took over the village in 2014, the Kurds fled to the KRI. Those who remained, fled towards Mosul and surrounding villages when operations by the Kurdish security forces (Peshmerga) began to retake the area. Rabe'a was estimated to have a population of about 85,000 people with the

city of Rabe'a having about 12,000 people. The city was taken by extremist group in June 2014 and was liberated on 1 October 2014 while the surrounding villages were also liberated by the end of December 2014. To date the majority of returns are from initial displacement and those who fled to surrounding villages and areas within Ninewa. There was widespread destruction of homes and infrastructure. IOM's DTM reports that 88,764 individuals have since returned to Tel Afar with the majority of returns being to Ewaynat village (7,296 people), Hay al Askari (6,100 individuals) and Qasabat Zummar (6,000 individuals). There are still hundreds of families from Zummar, Rabe'a and other areas in Tal Afar that remain in displacement camps despite the fact that these areas were retaken from extremists and are currently under Peshmerga control. Arab IDPs who were displaced to Mosul and areas under de-facto control of Kurdistan regional Government, when the Kurdish security forces launched operations to retake these areas have been pleading to be allowed to return to their villages of origin in the disputed areas but so far have not been allowed to, despite repeated interventions by UNHCR and protection partners. While some barred returns appear linked to claims of affiliations to extremist armed groups, in other instances such as the situation in Zumar, Rabi'a and other 'disputed areas' they appear linked to demographic considerations and the issue of disputed internal border areas.

Other parts of Tel Afar remain under extremists' control and are inaccessible to humanitarian actors. IDPs who have fled these areas report that the security situation remains unstable with reports of gross violations of human right violations against the residents by the extremist group.

SINJAR DISTRICT

Sinjar city was liberated by the Kurdish Forces comprising Peshmerga, Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and Yazidi militia in November 2015. IDP returns to Sinjar started in December 2015 and continue in modest numbers to date. Humanitarian access is severely limited, other than for Sinuni sub-district which is largely accessible. The majority of former residents of Sinjar remain in displacement in Dohuk and other parts of the KRI. Mass destruction, widespread contamination with explosive hazards, lack of basic services and critical infrastructure, presence of armed groups, in addition to punishment and expulsion of families suspected of having links with extremists have been reported by returnees as some of their main concerns and also factors hindering more returns. The Iraqi Security Forces estimate that 7,050 IDPs have returned to Sinjar while IOM's DTM reports that as the end of February 2017, 4,869 families (29,214 individuals) had returned to Sinjar. A substantial number of those that have returned are believed to be family members of the pro-government armed groups controlling the areas. The security situation in Sinjar has recently become unstable with reports of clashes between different armed actors. Tensions have recently escalated between the KRG Peshmerga and the Sinjar Protections Units (YBS), an armed PKK-affiliated group based in Sinjar resulting in several casualties.

Return to Ninewa can be classified as:

Voluntary return: Families returning to areas of origin after stabilization of the security situation and restoration of services, following screening procedures. Some of these returns can be classified as premature especially those who have returned to east Mosul amidst volatile security conditions, widespread destructions, presence of armed groups and severe shortages of basic necessities including food and water. The situation in retaken areas has forced some returnees to go back to IDP camps after returning to their areas of origin.

Spontaneous return: Families prematurely returning, after security screening procedures, due to push factors of economic pressure, de-facto encampment policy with severe restrictions on freedom of movement and fatigue from being displaced, following successful screening procedures.

Forced return: Other than isolated instances of compelled returns to Shura at the commencement of return movements, instances of forced returns are yet to be observed.

No or limited return: families/tribes/ethnic groups suspected to have links with extremists are not granted approval or not allowed to return by local communities, especially in disputed areas such as Sinjar, Tel Afar and Tilkaif. Some denied returns are linked to claims of affiliations to extremist armed groups, while others appear linked to demographic considerations and the issue of disputed internal border areas.