

Affected Population

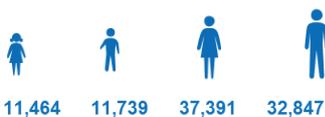
Number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs): **1,890,696**

Number of Returnees: **4,075,350**



Protection Monitoring**

41,467 families reached*



**The disaggregated figures indicate the number of households containing individuals from each age and gender group.*

24% of families do not have access to a regular source of income
10% of families are missing civil documentation

*** The data reflects the number of households assessed from 1 January to 31 August, 2018*

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Highlights

- 1,540 Iraqi refugees returned from Al Hol and Akda camps in Syria, citing concerns about the situation in the camps as well as a desire to reunite with family in Iraq.
- Incidents of military and police entering camps carrying guns, and at times conducting tent-to-tent searches continue to be reported in Ninewa Governorate.
- Incidents of forced relocations and premature returns as a result of eviction threats and confiscation of identity documents continue to be reported in different parts of the centre-south of Iraq.

Security Incidents

Explosions of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and other attacks continue to be reported in Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates. In Tuz Khurmatu, Salah al-Din, authorities reported an increase in organized crime affecting the overall protection environment, including kidnapping for ransom. According to local authorities as many as 400 people are missing. Protection monitoring reports indicate a growing fear among Tuz Khurmatu residents and displaced families from the area of a potential relapse in ethnically motivated violence as a result of the withdrawal of the highly respected Emergency Response Division (ERD) forces and their replacement by the Iraqi Army.

Displacement

During September, at least 5,302 individuals entered camps in Anbar, Diyala, Dohuk, Erbil, Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates (over half of these were in Ninewa alone). Many IDPs reported repeated displacement due to military operations, financial difficulties, or unsuccessful attempts to return to their area of origin due to lack of services. Others experienced threats or were denied return over perceived affiliation with extremists or other forms of collective punishment in their area of origin, while some female-headed households also reported moving to camps after incidents of sexual harassment in non-camp settings.

Significant gaps in services, particularly around mental health and psychosocial support as well as medical services, WASH, and shelter support continue to be reported in governorates hosting large concentrations of IDPs (Anbar, Dohuk, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Salah al-Din and Sulaymaniyah).

In Anbar and Ninewa, IDPs reported incidents of armed military and police personal entering camps, and at times conducting tent-to-tent searches. Protection actors continue to highlight the importance of maintaining the civilian character of camps in their advocacy. These security operations in Ninewa have in some instances been

accompanied by other protection incidents including verbal and physical assaults. The screening procedures are geared towards detecting additional families with possible extremist links in addition to those already included in lists maintained by security actors. In addition, Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and government authorities have reportedly pressured humanitarian actors to share data related to IDPs. Sharing detailed IDP data compromises the operational independence of humanitarian actors and can affect relations with IDPs.

Freedom of Movement Restrictions in Camps in Anbar

Since April, IDPs in Amriyeat Al Falujah (AAF) and Kilo 18 camps in Anbar have experienced restrictions on their movement, with authorities requiring them to leave their identification documents at the exit checkpoint of the camps; IDPs without the relevant legal documents have been unable to leave the camps. In September, several dozen IDPs with documents also reported being stopped at camp checkpoints and prevented from leaving, without any clear justification, including IDPs carrying medical referrals from health partners and those with appointments with courts or civil registries to replace documents.

Since April, authorities have required IDPs in Kilo 18 to have permission from the camp management in order to depart the camp. Since early August, IDPs have had to obtain 'sponsorship' from their sector leads as well. Around 46 households have not been able to obtain sponsorship due to perceived affiliation with extremists and can only leave the camp under exceptional circumstances, mainly in case of urgent medical needs and while being escorted by security actors.

Returns

In Ninewa, returning families reported that they had returned to their places of origin due to the improved security situation and to join their family members and relatives. There are however, push factors contributing to departures from camps, mainly lack of job opportunities and, for some families, the wish to enrol their children in school. The reasons for IDPs leaving the camps largely coincide with the reasons why they return to the camps, as many struggle and are unable to meet their basic needs in areas of displacement or return.

Collective Punishment

Tribal leaders, security actors and communities continue to impede or deny permission to families with perceived links to extremists to return to areas of origin in Anbar, Kirkuk and Ninewa. In Hajj Ali camp in Ninewa, a family, originally from Hawiga, Kirkuk, reported that they are afraid of further retaliation after their house and belongings were burnt by the community and members of government-affiliated armed groups. On 22 September, six families who had recently returned to their homes in Heet and Ramadi districts in Anbar were unharmed but scared back into displacement after unknown assailants attacked their homes with grenades.

Denied returns were reported in several camps in Ninewa. On 4 and 5 September, security actors forcibly relocated at least 22 families (70 individual) from villages near Mosul to camps in Ninewa. The families were female-headed households alleged to have affiliations with extremists. Some of the families reported having been verbally abused during the process. 16 of the families later left the camps following security screening and relocated to Mosul. Most families were unable to take legal documents or any belongings when they had to leave their homes. Only a few families were able to take some of their documents with them, but security actors later confiscated them.

UNHCR received reports indicating that government-affiliated armed groups had instructed the *Mukhtars* (local community leaders) in Abbassi sub-district in Kirkuk Governorate to direct families perceived to have affiliations with extremists to leave the area for Kirkuk city or camps within one week.

However, the Mayor of Abbassi reportedly referred the issue to the Governor of Kirkuk and the action has been suspended.

Returns from Syria and Turkey

During September, 230 Iraqi refugees returned from different locations in Turkey and 1,540 from Al Hol and Akda camps in Syria. The Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) organized the convoys to facilitate the returns. The primary reason the families gave for deciding to return from Syria was a lack of employment opportunities, lack of services (electricity, water, and medical) and restriction of movements in Syria. They also cited a desire to reunite with family in Iraq. Refugee returnees from Turkey reported similar reasons as well as challenges with the renewal of their residency permits. The majority of the returning Iraqi refugees, originating from parts of Anbar, Baghdad, Ninewa and Salah al-Din, intended to return to their areas of origin. Upon arrival to transit sites in Ninewa, UNHCR conducts protection assessments to identify vulnerable families, and provides core relief items for those who are unable to return to their areas of origin.

Camp Closures, Eviction Threats and Forced Relocations

Anbar

- On 22 September, authorities instructed IDPs in Al-Khalidiya (AK) camps to register for relocation to Habbaniya Tourist City (HTC) camps or facilitated returns due to the closure of AK camps. The Anbar Governorate Return Committee (GRC) had agreed on 17 July that IDPs in AK camps would be provided with the options of: returning to their areas of origin; integrating locally; relocating to Kilo 18, Ameriyat Al Fallujah (AAF) or HTC; or, remaining in AK camps, although some sectors would be closed to consolidate services. The CCCM cluster had developed a plan for the camp consolidation to facilitate this process and an intentions survey was conducted. The final date of the closures and limited options for IDPs had not been coordinated with humanitarian actors in advance, and IDPs had not been provided with information regarding conditions in HTC. 58 families returned to areas of origin in Al Qa'im, Ana and Heet districts in Anbar. Between 24 and 26 September, all but four of the remaining families were moved to HTC camps. Some families, particularly those originating from Al Qa'im, reported no significant concern about the relocation, especially due to improved freedom of movement in the camps of relocation. Several families originating from Heet and Fallujah, however, stated that they wished to stay in AK camps, but were not given this option. Four families remain in the camp due to health reasons while awaiting security clearance to return to their areas of origin. A large number of families interviewed reported that they had to rent trucks to transport their belongings. In April 2018, the government introduced GRCs composed of government, NGO and UN representatives with administrative support from OCHA to ensure that IDP returns are well informed, voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable, as well as to address the needs of IDPs remaining in camps. However, many decisions around camp closures continue to take place outside the framework of the GRCs.
- On 26 September, partners reported that members of the Anbar Operations Command (AOC) in Kilo 18, AAF and HTC camps approached IDPs in the camps to register them for return to their areas of origin. In Kilo 18, armed members of the AOC conducted tent-to-tent visits to confirm the presence of IDPs based on a list provided by the camp management. In AAF, the first 13 families departed the camp on 26 September. IDPs in most cases were informed they could remain in the camp until the end of the year in case they are unable or unwilling to return. However, some IDPs reported having been told by the AOC that their unwillingness to return would raise questions about possible affiliation with extremists.

Baghdad

- On 9 September, Baghdad Operations Command closed Al-Khadhraa camp following a verbal notification to the IDPs in late August. 51 families left the camp with at least 20 families moving

to rented houses in the neighbourhood. On 9 September, the remaining 31 families were forced to leave the camp. MoMD transported 13 families to their areas of origin in Anbar and Baghdad governorates and 14 families to Al Ahal camp, while four families moved to non-camp settings in Baghdad. WASH and shelter facilities in Al Ahal camp are limited and the families expressed concerns about the distance between the camp and schools and livelihood opportunities. Based on feedback from authorities, the closure of all camps inside Baghdad, except Al Ahel and Amal in Abu Ghraib district is expected in the near future. However, the capacity of these two camps is extremely limited and cannot accommodate the majority of the IDPs that would be affected by closure of other camps. Following months of advocacy by humanitarian actors, the Governor of Baghdad issued an executive order to activate a GRC in Baghdad in mid-September.

Salah al-Din

- On 7 and 8 September, police reportedly visited the Dream City complex, an informal settlement in Tikrit city, and confiscated identity documents of IDPs originating from Baiji and Shirqat districts. The complex had repeatedly been visited by police in the past to pressure IDPs to vacate and return to their areas of origin.
- On 7 September, police visited Qadissiyah complex in Tikrit and instructed IDP families from Baiji and Shirqat districts to leave within three days. Only IDPs originating from Al Senya sub-district of Baiji were informed that they would be exempt from the eviction. On 10 and 11 September, the Salah al-Din Tactical Regiment (STR) of the police entered Qadissiyah complex and began confiscating civil documents and ordering IDPs to leave. On 14 September, STR returned and confiscated identification documents from additional families. By 16 September, more than 139 families had left the complex – most returned to Baiji. The vast majority of these families reported that they felt they had no choice except to leave following the document confiscations. Most also reported that they were returning to severely damaged houses. The Qadissiyah complex hosts around 1,000 families. Although Salah al-Din has a functioning GRC, which has been operational since April, security actors continue to engage in threats and forced evictions outside of the framework of the GRCs.