



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

COI Note on the Situation of Yazidi IDPs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

May 2019¹

Contents

1) Access to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I).....	2
2) Humanitarian / Socio-Economic Situation in the KR-I	2
a) Shelter.....	3
b) Employment	4
c) Education.....	6
d) Mental Health.....	8
e) Humanitarian Assistance	10
3) Returns to Sinjar District.....	10

In August 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS) seized the districts of Sinjar, Tel Afar and the Ninewa Plains, leading to a mass exodus of Yazidis, Christians and other religious communities from these areas. Soon, reports began to surface regarding war crimes and serious human rights violations perpetrated by ISIS and associated armed groups. These included the systematic targeting of members of ethnic and religious minorities. By March 2015, 500,000 Yazidis, predominantly from Sinjar District, had been displaced, with the majority fleeing to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) and particularly Dohuk Governorate.²

Some 3,000 Yazidis, mostly women and children, reportedly continue to be missing after having been abducted by ISIS in 2014.³ Since Kurdish forces retook Sinjar in mid-November 2015, dozens of mass graves containing the remains of Yazidis have been found.⁴

¹ Corrigendum 11 November 2019, pp. 6, 7 and footnote 36.

² International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Understanding Ethno-Religious Groups in Iraq: Displacement and Return Report*, 28 February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2VHf1LS>, p. 7. “The entire Yazidi IDP population has fled Ninewa, mostly during the Sinjar crisis (third wave), due to generalized violence and direct threats to family members, and mostly re-settled in Dahuk”; IOM DTM, *Integrated Location Assessment II – Thematic Overview*, October 2017, <https://bit.ly/2xRAPGW>, p. 15.

³ “The Department of Yazidi Affairs in the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs in the Kurdistan Regional Government reported that as at 29 November [2018], a total of 3,334 individuals (2,121 women and girls and 1,213 men and boys) had been found or liberated, leaving a total of 3,083 Yazidis (1,427 women and girls and 1,656 men and boys) in ISIL captivity or missing”; UNSC, *Implementation of Resolution 2421 (2018)*, 1 February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2H5licP>, para. 40. Since the recapturing of remaining ISIS territory in north-eastern Syria in early 2019, several hundred Yazidi women and children have reportedly been freed; AFP, *Syria Kurds Return 25 Yazidis Freed from ISIS to Iraq*, 13 April 2019, <https://bit.ly/2GGqUK2>.

⁴ National Iraqi News Agency (NINA), *Mass Grave for Yazidis Found Northwest of Mosul*, 25 February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2J4UbkU>; United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) / Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Unearthing Atrocities: Mass Graves in Territory Formerly Controlled by ISIL*, 6 November 2018, <http://bit.ly/2lcPLI8>, p. 1; Al-Monitor, *Genocide still Haunts Iraq’s Yazidis*, 8 August 2018, <http://almon.co/33cr>; Human Rights Watch (HRW), *Four Years on, Evidence of ISIS Crimes Lost to Time*, 3 August 2018, <https://bit.ly/2O69IHK>.



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

1) Access to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I)

Access to the KR-I via Erbil Airport or internal land borders is generally possible, provided the individual holds valid travel documents. There are no visa requirements for Iraqi nationals to enter the KR-I. Persons originating from outside the KR-I must approach the local Directorate General of *Asayish* (*Asayish*)⁵ in the neighbourhood in which they seek to reside in order to obtain a residency card. They do not require a sponsor.⁶

2) Humanitarian / Socio-Economic Situation in the KR-I

There are serious concerns about the limits of the KR-I's absorption capacity in light of the continued high numbers of displaced populations present in the region,⁷ and against the backdrop of deteriorating socio-economic conditions and increasing poverty in the KR-I⁸ and limited (and decreasing) humanitarian assistance.⁹ The presence of large numbers of displaced populations mainly in and around urban areas is reported to have stretched local services and infrastructure, increased job competition, and contributed to a significant decline in living standards across the KR-I.¹⁰

⁵ The Directorate General of *Asayish* is responsible for domestic security in the KR-I.

⁶ UNHCR, *Iraq: Country of Origin Information on Access and Residency Requirements in Iraq*, 25 April 2019, www.refworld.org/docid/5cc2c30d7.html.

⁷ The KR-I, with an estimated total population of over five million people, continues to host close to 700,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 250,000 Syrian refugees. Some 1.2 million people, including IDPs, refugees, returnees and vulnerable host communities are considered to be in need of humanitarian assistance. Funding constraints mean that of these, fewer than half (500,000) are targeted for humanitarian assistance in 2019. In all three governorates, there are districts with high or very high humanitarian needs, including Sumel and Zakho (Dohuk Governorate), Makhmour (Erbil Governorate) and Sulaymaniyah (Sulaymaniyah Governorate). The severity of needs in Erbil District is assessed to be moderate, however, it hosts the highest number of people in need in all of the KR-I (approximately 321,000 people, including a third of all refugees). The majority of IDPs currently in camps in the KR-I do not intend to return to their areas of origin in the foreseeable future, which may result in further strains on already stretched resources; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Iraq: Humanitarian Response Plan January – December 2019*, 26 February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2TylbMb>, pp. 2, 12, 13, 33, 34. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)/IOM, *Demographic Survey: Kurdistan Region of Iraq*, 13 September 2018, <https://bit.ly/2NXyPeV>, p. 14. “*The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has borne the brunt of the influx of millions of refugees and displaced persons, often relying on its own finances to provide shelter and other basic needs for them. One in four current residents of the Kurdistan Region is either an internally displaced person (IDP) or a refugee*”; Kurdistan 24, *Access to Employment Greatest Concern for Iraq's Displaced*: IOM, 4 January 2019, <https://bit.ly/2NKIDTG>.

⁸ “*Continued low oil prices have led to budget deficits which have forced the KRG to reduce many government programs*”; Bertelsmann Foundation, *BTI 2018 Country Report – Iraq*, 2018, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1427413/488298_en.pdf, p. 9. The poverty level in the KR-I, although still lower than in other parts of the country, has risen from 3.5 per cent in 2012 to 12.5 per cent since the beginning of the conflict against ISIS. The unemployment rate is reported to have increased from 6.5 per cent before 2014 to 14 per cent in 2016, due to the influx of IDPs and refugees; World Bank, *Iraq Economic Monitor - Toward Reconstruction, Economic Recovery and Fostering Social Cohesion*, Fall 2018, <http://bit.ly/2UDpN2a>, pp. 9, 15.

⁹ “*IDPs outside of camps do not enjoy the same level of support from humanitarian partners as those in camps, and largely rely on the generosity of host communities*”; OCHA, *Iraq: “Internally Displaced Persons Must Be Presented with Options Beyond Life in a Camp” – Humanitarian Coordinator*, 4 March 2019, <https://bit.ly/2lOnO9W>. “*IDPs do not feel that the support they receive will enable them to live without aid in the future, with Yazidis and IDPs living in private housing in urban areas appearing particularly pessimistic. Most consider the existing support insufficient and mention the lack of job opportunities as reasons for their continued reliance on support*” (emphasis added); Mixed Migration Platform, *IDP Perceptions in Northern Iraq*, 27 April 2017, <https://bit.ly/2zuF3pK>, pp. 3, 4. Humanitarian agencies report that funding has become more limited, whether due to donor fatigue or because donor attention turns from humanitarian assistance to reconstruction following ISIS' military defeat; KRG, *Kurdistan Region still Hosts about 1.5 Million IDPs and Refugees*, 14 February 2019, <http://bit.ly/2UIRcQa>; Rudaw, *IDP Camps in Duhok still Need Help amid Decreasing NGO Assistance*, 11 February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2EQlWcx>; The New Humanitarian, *As Displacement Runs to Years, Northern Iraq Camps Need an Overhaul*, 25 February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2Xpg1SY>; Al Jazeera (Video), *Iraq's Yazidis 'Forgotten by World' since ISIL Attacks*, 10 December 2018, <http://bit.ly/2YPSNWO>; The New Humanitarian, *As Iraq Slips from the Headlines, Humanitarians Worry that Aid Donors Are Beginning to Lose Interest*, 2 August 2018, <https://bit.ly/2XFZ4UE>; Deutsche Welle, *Iraq Urges Billions for Reconstruction amid Donor Fatigue*, 12 February 2018, <https://bit.ly/2Tlr2Xd>.

¹⁰ OCHA, *Iraq: 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan (February 2018)*, 21 March 2018, <https://bit.ly/2Jiwv7P>, p. 32. “*Iraqi residents reported challenges in job competition due to the influx of Syrian refugees (and Iraqi IDPs)*”; Danish Refugee Council (DRC) / Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) / International Rescue Committee (IRC) / Impact Initiatives, *Far From Home: Future Prospects for Syrian Refugees in Iraq*, 8 January 2019, <https://bit.ly/2lQEkGd>, p. 7. “*In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), limited resources, services and livelihoods opportunities, which are already stretched due to the global reduction in oil prices, decrease in domestic and foreign investment, government salary cuts and the military effort against Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL) greatly*



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

a) Shelter

The majority of Yazidi IDPs reside outside camps, while others are hosted in IDP camps.¹¹ Out-of-camp IDPs are settled in informal settlements and in urban areas, including in unfinished or abandoned buildings and/or rented accommodation.¹²

As camps were built and are managed by different actors, standards of accommodation vary greatly, ranging from upgraded shelters (e.g. caravans and residential housing units) to emergency shelters (tents with or without cement base).¹³ IDPs living in camps and informal settlements are particularly exposed to extreme weather conditions,¹⁴ and challenges related to inadequate water and sanitation infrastructure continue to persist.¹⁵

As rent levels in the KR-I are relatively high and increasing,¹⁶ many IDPs cannot afford the rising costs and are at risk of eviction and/or are forced to relocate to IDP camps. However, admission to camps is

limited the capacity of local communities and authorities to adequately respond to the continued influx of IDPs and Syrian refugees facing protracted displacement. And further: *“The presence of IDPs and refugees in need of accessing the job market creates significant competition among the different target groups and causes social frictions in many areas”*; Action Against Hunger, *Creating Job Opportunities for Young Adults in Kurdistan – Final Independent Evaluation*, September 2018, <https://bit.ly/2Nlf5rV>, pp. 8, 39. *“Syrian refugees and IDPs today constitute about 23 per cent of the Kurdistan population. This entails a strain on employment and livelihood opportunities, as well as on services. Increased competition for housing outside the camps drove up costs and led to overcrowding and resorting to substandard accommodations”*; Migration Policy Centre, *Profile Iraq*, undated, accessed 30 April 2019, <https://bit.ly/2lRlptR>. See also, ACTED, *Municipal Services under Pressure as IDPs Flock to Dohuk*, 10 October 2018, <https://bit.ly/2C4KEUX>.

¹¹ IDPs in Dohuk Governorate are dispersed across the governorate’s seven districts. The majority, over 222,968 individuals, reside outside camps, while over 166,105 individuals are hosted in one of 17 camps. In Erbil Governorate, nearly 200 Yazidi families are scattered in areas outside camps of which around 60 reside in unfinished buildings. A total of 1,025 Yazidi families (5,365 individuals) reside in Sulaymaniyah Governorate, of which 198 families (941 individuals) live in camps and 827 families (4,424 individuals) live outside camps; UNHCR Information, May 2019.

¹² *“Those Yazidis and other internally displaced populations who have opted to live outside of the camps have struggled to find shelter (for example in unfinished construction sites) on the outskirts of major urban centres. These populations are required to fend for themselves with little or no social supports and generally must barter or offer their labour in exchange for rent payments and other shelter. This is in the context of an economic crisis in Kurdistan where the State struggles to provide minimal services while public employees are not paid regularly”*; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, *Population Profile: The Yazidis*, 24 February 2017, <https://bit.ly/2zuxEa5>, p. 7. See also, IOM, *Protracted Displacement Study: An In-Depth Analysis of the Main Districts of Displacement*, April 2019, <https://bit.ly/2vDU4mx>, pp. 21-26.

¹³ More than 20,000 households are estimated to be in need of tent replacement and are exposed to harsh climatic conditions. Furthermore, *“[I]n many of these camps, overall minimum service standards have not significantly improved from the initial emergency phase due to lack of investment and upgrades. The large caseload, protracted nature of displacement, and age of the camps (some camps are over four years old, particularly in Dahuk), are also contributing factors”*; OCHA, *Iraq: Humanitarian Response Plan January – December 2019*, 26 February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2TyIbMb>, pp. 8, 17. Fifty per cent of in-camp IDP households surveyed were found to be in need of shelter assistance; REACH, *Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment (MCNA) – In-Camp IDPs*, September 2018, <https://bit.ly/2CWipsP>, p. 4. See also, Foreign Policy, *Among Displaced Iraqis, One Group Is Worse Off than the Rest*, 29 April 2019, <https://bit.ly/2J7jiBW>; The New Humanitarian, *As Displacement Runs to Years, Northern Iraq Camps Need an Overhaul*, 25 February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2Xpg1SY>; World Food Programme (WFP)/UNHCR, *Joint Vulnerability Assessment June 2018*, 2 August 2018, <https://bit.ly/2DyL1dn>, p. 48.

¹⁴ Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Situation Still Difficult in Yazidis’ Home Regions*, 8 March 2019, <http://bit.ly/2lfiXAx>; The New Humanitarian, *As Displacement Runs to Years, Northern Iraq Camps Need an Overhaul*, 25 February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2Xpg1SY>; UNICEF, *Latest Threat to Displaced Children in Iraq: Winter*, 10 December 2018, <https://uni.cf/2Roc6BK>; Kurdistan 24, *Latest Floods in Kurdistan Kill Teen, Damage IDP Camp, Close Roads*, 7 December 2018, <https://bit.ly/2TIVkVU>; Rudaw, *Flooding Ruins Yazidi IDP Camp, Kills Villagers in Northern Iraq*, 23 November 2018, <https://bit.ly/2HEbr5T>; OCHA, *Iraq: Floods Leave Hundreds of Families Strained in Sinjar Mountain*, 23 May 2018, <https://bit.ly/2DJID2U>; IOM, *Soaring Temperatures Next Challenge for Mosul Displaced*; IOM, May 2017, <https://bit.ly/2qqzZPo>. See also, Rudaw, *Fire Kills Two Year Old Yazidi Boy in Dohuk Camp*, 30 January 2019, <http://bit.ly/2l2GocT>.

¹⁵ *“In many of the camps for displaced families, (...) water, sanitation and livelihood programmes need to be expanded”* (emphasis added); OCHA, *Humanitarian Response Plan – 2018*, February 2018, <https://bit.ly/2Jiwv7P>, p. 32. Over half of IDP households reported issues with the quality of the water in Dohuk Governorate, particularly in Bersive 1 & 2, and Kabarto 2 (75 per cent); REACH, *Comparative Multi-Cluster Assessment of Internally Displaced Persons Living in Camps – Iraq*, July 2017, <https://bit.ly/2xWJBDJ>, p. 22.

¹⁶ *“In areas of displacement – especially the northern governorates which host a large proportion of IDPs – rent prices are increasing, negatively affecting IDPs, host communities and returnees”*; OCHA, *Iraq: Humanitarian Response Plan January – December 2019*, 26 February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2TyIbMb>, p. 8. *“Housing prices increased by 20 percent in 2018 in the Kurdistan Region, while rent has gone up by 15, with even higher prices predicted”*; Rudaw, *Housing, Rent Prices Increasing in Kurdistan Region*, 8 January 2019, <https://bit.ly/2Vz1VwH>. *“Increased competition for housing outside the camps drove up costs and led to*



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

subject to space limitations and therefore regulated by waiting lists.¹⁷ Those living in critical shelter arrangements such as unfinished or abandoned buildings are often faced with no or limited access to adequate water, electricity, heating and sanitation, and exposed to harsh weather conditions, e.g. as a result of leaking roofs, opening in the walls, and broken windows.¹⁸

b) Employment

IDPs in the KR-I are reported to face difficulties in accessing employment and many can only find casual work,¹⁹ leaving them without a regular income.²⁰ IDPs find it difficult to find jobs that would enable them to cover their basic costs of living, including medical care, education fees and housing.²¹ IDPs living outside of camps may find it difficult to compete with those in camps where living costs are lower, allowing them to accept lower wages.²² A survey undertaken in the KR-I by the International

overcrowding and resorting to substandard accommodations"; Migration Policy Centre, *Profile Iraq*, undated, <https://bit.ly/2IRlptR>. For example, in Dohuk Governorate, rent payments range from Iraqi Dinar (IQD) 150,000 (US\$ 125) to IQD 500,000 (US\$ 416) depending on the location and the distance from Dohuk City. In Erbil Governorate, the average rent is around 300 US\$. In Sulaymaniyah Governorate, rent payments range from IQD 200,000 (US\$ 166) to IQD 550,000 (US\$ 458), depending on the location and the distance from the City; UNHCR information, May 2019.

¹⁷ As at April 2019, around 3,000 individuals were waiting for admission to an IDP camp in Erbil (2,200 persons) and Dohuk Governorates (780 individuals). In Dohuk Governorate, the highest demand is for admission to Yezidi-populated camps; UNHCR information, April 2019. Moreover, "[I]n many camps, tents are worn-out, water and sanitation services need to be increased, access to health and education services needs to be improved and livelihood programmes need to be expanded"; OCHA, *Iraq: Humanitarian Response Plan January – December 2019*, 26 February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2TyIbMb>, p. 34.

¹⁸ UNHCR/CCCM Cluster/REACH, *Informal Site Assessment Dahuk Governorate (August 2018)*, 31 August 2018, <https://bit.ly/2NWekZb>; *ibid.*, *Informal Site Assessment Sulaymaniyah Governorate (August 2018)*, 31 August 2018, <https://bit.ly/2tSS7BS>. See also, IOM/CCCM Cluster/REACH, *Assessment of Informal IDP Sites in Iraq (June 2017)*, 30 June 2017, <https://bit.ly/2SQH5qM>. See also, IOM, *Understanding Ethno-Religious Groups in Iraq: Displacement and Return Report*, 28 February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2VHf1LS>, p. 13.

¹⁹ In the KR-I nearly 50 per cent of IDPs living outside of camps and around 40 per cent of those settled in camps rely on daily labour (this compares to 20 per cent among the KR-I non-camp population). Over 40 per cent of camp households are also dependent on humanitarian assistance or support from charities; UNFPA/IOM, *Demographic Survey: Kurdistan Region of Iraq*, September 2018, <https://bit.ly/2NXvPeV>, pp. 40, 45-46. See also, IOM, *Integrated Location Assessment III*, 2 January 2019, <https://bit.ly/2SjPReW>, p. 36.

²⁰ According to the 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview, the governorates in the Kurdistan Region have some of the highest rates of unemployed IDPs seeking work among the IDP-hosting governorates not directly affected by conflict (Dohuk Governorate: 41 per cent of out-of-camp IDPs and 29 per cent of in-camp IDPs, respectively; Erbil Governorate: 24 and 38 per cent; and Sulaymaniyah Governorate: 10 and 21 per cent); OCHA, *Iraq: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019 (November 2018)*, 16 December 2018, <https://bit.ly/2CIZSWd>, p. 51. According to Hoshang Muhammad, Director-General of the KRG Ministry of Interior's Joint Crisis Coordination Centre, "[F]ew IDPs and refugees earn incomes. While some IDPs are current or retired civil servants receiving monthly compensation from the Iraqi government, 65 percent of IDPs and refugees depend on assistance from KRG, UN agencies, and NGOs"; KRG, *Kurdistan Region still Hosts about 1.5 Million IDPs and Refugees*, 14 February 2019, <http://bit.ly/2UIRcQa>. Many IDPs are reported to have lost hope of finding employment (nearly half of the male IDPs in camps and over one-third outside of camps); UNFPA/IOM, *Demographic Survey: Kurdistan Region of Iraq*, 13 September 2018, <https://bit.ly/2NXvPeV>, pp. 42-43. See also, IOM, *Integrated Location Assessment III*, 2 January 2019, <https://bit.ly/2SjPReW>, p. 35.

²¹ IDPs in the KR-I are more likely to be among the lower-income households: over 80 per cent of households settled in camps and nearly 45 per cent of those living outside camps have a monthly income of less than 500,000 IQD per month (compared to 35 per cent among the non-camp KR-I); UNFPA/IOM, *Demographic Survey: Kurdistan Region of Iraq*, 13 September 2018, <https://bit.ly/2NXvPeV>, p. 44. "The impact of the economic crisis is severely felt in camps because of a lack of jobs outside the camp both for men and women reduced household incomes and peoples' purchasing ability. All the female participants who are/were running shops or beauty salons said their income has declined significantly since the start of the economic crisis"; London School of Economics (LSE), *Displacement and Women's Empowerment: Voices of Displaced Women in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq*, 4 March 2018, <https://bit.ly/2MZrvq0>, p. 17.

²² DRC / UN Development Programme (UNDP) / UNHCR, *A Study of the Opportunities in Labour Markets for IDPs and Refugees in KRI Construction Labour and Service-Sector Labour Market Systems*, December 2014, <https://bit.ly/2UprErg>, p. 7.



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

Organization for Migration (IOM) in September 2018 indicated that IDPs settled in camps appear to be more vulnerable than the non-camp IDP population.²³

The public sector, which plays a dominant role in the KR-I economy,²⁴ is generally not open for non-Kurds from outside the region.²⁵ Patronage and nepotism continue to be important factors in securing employment in the KR-I, which puts those not originating from the area at a disadvantage.²⁶ Yazidis face particular difficulties in finding employment, including on account of low levels of education, missing documentation, as well as lack of work experience in sectors other than construction and agriculture.²⁷ In light of limited livelihood opportunities and exhausted savings,²⁸ IDP households have been increasingly reliant on negative coping strategies in order to meet their basic needs, including incurring debts, child marriage and forced marriage, sending children to work and reducing food intake.²⁹

²³ "Internally displaced people settled in camps appear to be more vulnerable than the non-camp IDP population, which displays on average a distribution of vulnerabilities in line with the KRI. In nearly 57% of camp households, the HoH [heads of household] was found not working and in 41% no one was working in the week preceding the survey. In addition, 14% of camp households are led by a female, and 15% include a mentally/physically impaired individual among their members"; IOM, *Demographic Survey: Kurdistan Region of Iraq*, September 2018, <https://bit.ly/2lghnrZ>, p. 30.

²⁴ "The public sector employs nearly half of the working population and as much as 75% of working women"; UNFPA/IOM, *Demographic Survey: Kurdistan Region of Iraq*, September 2018, <https://bit.ly/2NXvPeV>, pp. 4, 40.

²⁵ In the KR-I, non-Kurds cannot work in the public sector unless it is for the institutions of the central government. Some IDPs were able to transfer their employment to these bodies and received their salaries from the central government. Others managed to find employment because of their Arabic language skills in the largely Kurdish-speaking KR-I; Georgetown University/IOM, *Access to Durable Solutions Among IDPs in Iraq: Three Years in Displacement*, 12 February 2019, <http://bit.ly/2H7ozZQ>, p. 25.

²⁶ "For minorities living in the KRI or areas under the de-facto control of the Kurdish authorities, access to public sector jobs is often conditioned on support for the aims of the major Kurdish political parties"; Minority Rights Group International (MRGI), *Alternative Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) – Review of the Periodic Report of Iraq, 2018*, <http://bit.ly/2VKsoYo>, para. 18. For example, "(...) presidents of universities, deans of colleges, and heads of departments and even school managers in Hawler (Erbil) and Duhok provinces are either employed by, or are members of KDP; and in Sulaimani and Halabja provinces they are mostly hired by PUK"; Open Democracy, *Corruption Corrodes Kurdish Education*, 15 October 2018, <https://bit.ly/2Umst4c>. "About one fifth of interviewees perceive *wasta* [(a term referring to connections, favoritism, nepotism) as a key hindrance to obtaining livelihood opportunities, especially in the camps"; LSE, *Displacement and Women's Empowerment: Voices of Displaced Women in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq*, 4 March 2018, <https://bit.ly/2MZrvq0>, p. 17. According to reports, finding work in the informal sector often requires connections: "Informal job searching is by far the main recruitment mechanism. Employers generally turn first to their friends and families and advertising job openings is not a common practice, therefore making the recruitment system a non-transparent"; DRC/UNDP/UNHCR, *A Study of the Opportunities in Labour Markets for IDPs and Refugees in KRI Construction Labour and Service-Sector Labour Market Systems*, December 2014, <https://bit.ly/2UprErq>, p. 7.

²⁷ An IOM study on ethno-religious groups found that unemployment was widespread among both IDP and returnee households. With regards to Yazidi IDPs, "levels of unemployment were significantly higher among Yazidi IDPs: half of the interviewed Yazidi IDPs were unemployed (49.6%)." This compares to 24 per cent among Christian, Shabak Shi'a and Turkmen Shi'a IDPs. The study further found that "[E]mployment in informal commerce or inconsistent daily labour as well as agriculture and animal husbandry are more prevalent among Yazidis"; IOM, *Understanding Ethno-Religious Groups in Iraq: Displacement and Return Report*, 28 February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2VHf1LS>, pp. 6, 10, 11.

²⁸ "Across the region [KR-I], limited livelihoods opportunities, compounded by increased indebtedness and the exhaustion of savings, further exacerbated protection risks and negative coping mechanisms for vulnerable populations, refugees, IDPs and Hosting communities"; Action Against Hunger, *Creating Job Opportunities for Young Adults in Kurdistan*, September 2018, <https://bit.ly/2UWJyRu>, p. 8. "(...) findings from the tenth round of Camp Profiling (August 2018) indicate that 70 per cent of in-camp IDP households had been resorting to borrowing money or relying on debt as a coping strategy in the 30 days prior to being interviewed, or had already exhausted such means of coping"; OCHA, *Iraq: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019 (November 2018)*, 16 December 2018, <https://bit.ly/2CIZSWd>, p. 47. "As their displacement becomes protracted, IDPs shift from selling assets and spending savings towards the use of debt to meet their needs, as they exhaust their resources. This was visible in **Dahuk, Diyala and Sulaymaniyah**, where the average date of displacement was in 2014. In these governorates the use of debt as a coping strategy was more common than the sale of assets: 55% of households in Dahuk reported resorting to taking on debt whilst only 29% reported selling assets, compared to 32% and 16% respectively in Sulaymaniyah and 23% and 15% respectively in Diyala (...). This indicates a trend in the use of coping strategies where IDPs increasingly resort to taking on debt once their assets become exhausted" (emphasis added); REACH, *Comparative Multi-Cluster Assessment of Internally Displaced Persons Living in Camps – Iraq*, July 2017, <https://bit.ly/2xWJBDJ>, p. 15.

²⁹ "Soaring levels of household debt were particularly high among non-displaced, returnee, and out-of-camp IDP households and among households in **Erbil, Anbar, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Dahuk, and Salah al-Din Governorates**." And further: "Conflict-affected households in Erbil reported an average of more than 3,000,000 IQD of debt (roughly 2,500 USD) [the highest among all governorates]" (emphasis added); REACH, *Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment (MCNA) – In-Camp IDPs*, September 2018, <https://bit.ly/2CWipsP>, pp. 5, 35. See also, OCHA, *Iraq: Humanitarian Response Plan January – December 2019*, 26 February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2TVlbMb>, p. 4.



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

Inability to access employment/livelihoods often results in difficulties with accessing food, health services and shelter.³⁰

c) Education

Overall in Iraq, one third of school-aged IDP children in camps and a quarter of IDP children living in out-of-camp location have no access to formal education opportunities.³¹ Schools across the country are reported to lack basic facilities and access to electricity and water.³² Furthermore, schools suffer from overcrowding and a shortage of qualified teachers, textbooks and teaching materials.³³ The shortage of adequate school facilities means that many schools have to run multiple shifts, further compromising educational standards.³⁴ Lack of access to and participation in education increases the risks for children and youth to be exposed to child labour, recruitment by armed groups, child marriage and psychosocial distress.³⁵

A considerable number of IDP children is reported to face challenges to accessing formal education in the KR-I, including due to the long distance to reach school and limited economic resources (e.g. to pay for school fees, uniforms, transportation and books.³⁶ Moreover, while Arabic schools, established in

³⁰ IOM, *Integrated Location Assessment III*, 2 January 2019, <https://bit.ly/2SjPReW>, pp. 34, 38; OCHA, *Iraq: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019 (November 2018)*, 16 December 2018, <https://bit.ly/2CIZSWd>, p. 51.

³¹ OCHA, *Iraq: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019 (November 2018)*, 16 December 2018, <https://bit.ly/2CIZSWd>, p. 48.

³² NRC, *A Clean Drop in the Ocean: Working in Iraq's Worst Health Crisis*, 19 February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2SP01ep>; NRC, *Iraq: Basra's Children Face Disease Outbreak in Rundown Schools*, 23 October 2018, <https://bit.ly/2D1nNLZ>. See also, ACTED/PIN, *No Lost Generation: After ISIL, Children in Iraq Are Given a Second Chance at Learning, Friendship, and Life*, 26 September 2018, <https://bit.ly/2sHlkOq>.

³³ "The Ministries of Education for KR-I and federal Iraq indicate sufficient teachers on their payrolls, however displacement has resulted in a shortage of qualified teachers in some areas"; OCHA, *Iraq: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019 (November 2018)*, 16 December 2018, <https://bit.ly/2CIZSWd>, p. 49. See also, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) / Save the Children / Education Cluster, *Iraq Education Cluster Strategy 2019*, 9 February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2JdqwPJ>, p. 8; AFP, *Kids in Iraq Camps Dream Big, but They Can't Enroll in School*, 26 December 2018, <https://bit.ly/2WddoD8>; Al-Monitor, *Why Has Illiteracy Rate Gone Up in Iraq?*, 9 December 2018, <http://almon.co/355h>; Middle East Eye, *'We Have Received Nothing': Sinjar's only School Pleads for Help in Post-IS Iraq*, 30 April 2018, <https://bit.ly/2HvC3zx>.

³⁴ OCHA, *Iraq: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019 (November 2018)*, 16 December 2018, <https://bit.ly/2CIZSWd>, p. 49. "Children in Iraq can expect to complete 6.9 years of pre-primary, primary and secondary school by age 18. However, when years of schooling are adjusted for quality of learning, this is only equivalent to 4 years with a learning gap of 2.9 years"; World Bank, *Building Strong Human Capital in Iraq to Unleash Economic Potential*, 21 October 2018, <https://goo.gl/dc12Ux>. According to Peter Hawkins, UNICEF Representative for Iraq, "[T]he children who go to triple shift schools get less than 10 contact hours a week of education (...); UNICEF, *Educating Children 'Is the only Hope for the Future of Iraq'*, 12 February 2018, <https://bit.ly/2AYbBZW>. See also, Middle East Eye, *'We Have Received Nothing': Sinjar's only School Pleads for Help in Post-IS Iraq*, 30 April 2018, <https://bit.ly/2HvC3zx>.

³⁵ OCHA, *Iraq: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019 (November 2018)*, 16 December 2018, <https://bit.ly/2CIZSWd>, p. 50.

³⁶ In Dohuk Governorate, in 95 out of 115 assessed informal IDP sites school-aged children faced challenges to accessing formal education, mostly due to long distance to school, limited economic resources and physical/logistical restraints. In Sulaymaniyah Governorate, key informants in 17 of 18 sites reported challenges to accessing formal education for the same reasons; REACH, *Informal Site Assessment Sulaymaniyah Governorate*, August 2018, <https://bit.ly/2WVHNH8>; *Ibid*, *Informal Site Assessment Dahuk Governorate*, August 2018, <https://bit.ly/33wGIYQ>. According to a 2018 assessment of IDPs in camps in Sulaymaniyah Governorate, 75 per cent of IDP children aged 6 to 11 received formal education, while the figure decreased to 59 per cent for children aged 12 to 17. In Dohuk Governorate, the rates stood at 83 and 69 per cent, and in Erbil Governorate at 78 and 54 per cent, respectively. The most commonly cited reason for non-attendance was the "disinterest of children"; REACH, *Comparative Multi-Cluster Assessment of IDPs Living in Camps – Assessment Report Round IX*, April 2018, <https://bit.ly/2NNpeAG>, p. 29. "Children affected by conflict continue to have limited access to education, particularly those still living in displacement –in and out of camps –as well as in the areas of return. The greatest education needs continue to be in Ninewa, Anbar, Salah al Din, Kirkuk, Diyala, Sulaymaniyah, Erbil and Dahuk" (emphasis added); OCHA, *Iraq: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019 (November 2018)*, 16 December 2018, <https://bit.ly/2CIZSWd>, p. 48. In Sulaymaniyah, "many IDP schools have only one or two teachers who receive a salary from the government; other teachers are supported directly by IDP families through the collection of monthly economic 'incentives,' which has financial and protection implications for IDPs. In 12 out-of-camp schools, IDP parents also pay the rent for the school building because it is not a government-owned facility. Such circumstances are one of the consequences of protracted displacement, as host communities try to contend with unexpected population increases"; OCHA, *Iraq: "Internally Displaced Persons Must Be Presented with Options Beyond Life in a Camp" – Humanitarian Coordinator*, 4 March 2019, <https://bit.ly/2iOnO9W>. "MRG's sources indicate that many Christians and Yazidis have been quitting even temporary schools due to a different education environment, whereas IDPs from Sinjar have reported difficulties in adapting to the KRI curriculum, as schools in Sinjar pre-ISIS used to follow the Arabic curriculum of the GoF"; MRGI, *Alternative Report to the*



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

response to the influx of mostly Arabic-speaking IDPs into the KR-I since 2014, are set to close according to a decision by the Iraqi Ministry of Education.³⁷ School attendance among Yazidi children in displacement is reportedly limited including as a result of families' inability to afford costs related to education and the need for children to work in order to support their families.³⁸ In addition, schools in IDP camps reportedly suffer from overcrowding and a lack of qualified teaching staff.³⁹ These conditions reportedly result in elevated levels of illiteracy among Yazidi IDP children.⁴⁰

According to UNHCR information, Yazidi IDP children commonly joined Arabic-speaking schools as schools in their areas of origin in Ninewa Governorate used to follow the Arabic curriculum of the central Government.⁴¹ According to information available to UNHCR, school closures are expected for the academic year 2019/2020.⁴² UNHCR received information that along with the decision to close Arabic schools in the KR-I, 1,800 IDP teachers have been formally requested by the central Government to return to their areas of origin.⁴³ Transfers of Arabic-speaking IDP children to Kurdish schools are

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) – Review of the Periodic Report of Iraq, <http://bit.ly/2VKsoYo>, para. 29.

³⁷ Rudaw, *With Thousands of Iraqi IDPs Some Families Want to Stay in Erbil*, 8 October 2018, <https://bit.ly/2HdvAaM>; Rudaw, *As School Starts Displaced Iraqi Students Left in Limbo in Kurdistan*, 2 September 2018, <https://bit.ly/2TfjHbD>; Rudaw, *Iraqi Teachers Condemn Baghdad Decision to Shut Down IDP Schools*, 23 July 2018, <https://bit.ly/2Rdh9oR>. IDPs in Sulaymaniyah Governorate reported that school closures and shortages in teachers were among the reasons influencing their decision to return to their areas of origin; UNHCR, *Iraq Protection Update – December 2018*, 31 December 2018, <https://bit.ly/2C9D9vI>, p. 2.

³⁸ An IOM study found that levels of education were similar across all ethno-religious IDP and returnee groups with the exception of the Yazidis, who “had significantly lower levels of education.” Among Yazidi IDPs, 60 per cent of the respondents had not received any formal education while 28 per cent attained primary school level; IOM, *Understanding Ethno-Religious Groups in Iraq: Displacement and Return Report*, 28 February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2VHf1LS>, p. 10. Twenty per cent of IDP households in Dohuk Governorate reported the inability to afford costs associated with sending their children to school: “Here again, the lack of sufficient livelihood opportunities inside the camps has become a significant financial barrier, preventing households from sending their children to school”. The same 2017 survey also found that “[H]ouseholds in Dahuk also frequently reported children involved in work and chores as an obstacle [sic] to education (28% reported children working and 30% reported them involved in chores) – this was common across all camps, in particular Kabarto 1, Bersive, Rwanda community and Shariya where these challenges were reported by 20 to 40% of households. The need for children to work reflects the urgency for households to find sufficient sources of income in order to meet their basic needs and be able to send their children to school”; REACH, *Comparative Multi-Cluster Assessment of Internally Displaced Persons Living in Camps – Iraq*, July 2017, <https://bit.ly/2xWJBDJ>, p. 26.

³⁹ In Sulaymaniyah, “many IDP schools have only one or two teachers who receive a salary from the government; other teachers are supported directly by IDP families through the collection of monthly economic ‘incentives,’ which has financial and protection implications for IDPs. In 12 out-of-camp schools, IDP parents also pay the rent for the school building because it is not a government-owned facility. Such circumstances are one of the consequences of protracted displacement, as host communities try to contend with unexpected population increases”; OCHA, Iraq: “Internally Displaced Persons Must Be Presented with Options Beyond Life in a Camp” – Humanitarian Coordinator, 4 March 2019, <https://bit.ly/2lOnO9W>. “The incursion of Daesh in the summer of 2014 and the subsequent displacement of the Yazidi population resulted in a disruption of at least half a year of the studies of most Yazidi youth that had been in school. Makeshift schools that have been built in displacement camps in Iraqi Kurdistan struggle to meet the educational demand of the displaced population. Camp schools suffer from over-crowding, as well as shortages of qualified instructors and funding”; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, *Population Profile: The Yazidis*, February 2017, <https://bit.ly/2zuxEa5>, p. 6.

⁴⁰ “These overall conditions mean that many Yazidi refugee populations lack even basic levels of education. For example, of a sample of 144 Yazidis that have been resettled to the United States in 2016, 83% had little or no primary or secondary education”; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, *Population Profile: The Yazidis*, February 2017, <https://bit.ly/2zuxEa5>, p. 6. For statistical information on the number of children attending formal education and reasons for which children are not attending school, see also REACH, *IDP Camp Profiles – Dahuk*, January 2018, <https://bit.ly/2xOpmb9>.

⁴¹ UNHCR information, April 2019. According to Minority Rights Group International (MRG), many IDP children from Sinjar (Ninewa Governorate) have reported difficulties in adapting to the KR-I curriculum; MRGI, *Alternative Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) – Review of the Periodic Report of Iraq*, <http://bit.ly/2VKsoYo>, para. 29. In Sulaymaniyah Governorate, ethno-religious discrimination against Yazidi children was reported to be a factor for school drop-outs: “Community leaders claimed that Yazidi and Shebak children were subjected to verbal abuse, mostly based on their religious faith, by Arab students”; IOM, *The Politics of IDP Education Provision: Negotiating Identity and Schooling in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq*, 28 January 2019, <http://bit.ly/2UySZKX>.

⁴² UNHCR information, April 2019.

⁴³ UNHCR, April 2019. See also, UNHCR, *Iraq Protection Update – December 2018*, 31 December 2018, <https://bit.ly/2C9D9vI>, p. 2; UNHCR, *Iraq Protection Update – October 2018*, 31 October 2018, <https://bit.ly/2Esl91v>, p. 2; Rudaw, *Iraqi Teachers Condemn Baghdad Decision to Shut Down IDP Schools*, 23 July 2018, <https://bit.ly/2Rdh9oR>.



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

generally not possible, particularly for older children due to differences in language (Kurdish vs. Arabic) and curriculum.⁴⁴

d) Mental Health

Many Yazidis suffer from (extreme) psychosocial distress as a result of the serious violence they have experienced, the loss or captivity of family members, ongoing displacement and economic hardship.⁴⁵ Therefore, psycho-social needs among this IDP population are reported to be extremely high. A high number of suicides, suicide attempts and other self-destructive behaviour among the displaced population has been observed by UNHCR's protection partners operating in camps in Dohuk Governorate. At least 40 incidents of (attempted) suicides have been reported in 2018 and some 10 incidents (six attempts and four committed) between January and April 2019 in IDP camps (primarily in Khanke, Sharya, Bajid Kandala, Chamishko, Kabarto, and Bersive) and non-camp locations where Yazidis reside. It is estimated that the real number is likely higher as not all cases are reported.⁴⁶ According to the information obtained from survivors, community leaders, and/or service providers, the main causes for (attempted) suicides include psycho-social distress, family disputes and domestic abuse, as well as poor living conditions.⁴⁷ One report describes that among Yazidi IDPs, "suicide, especially among teenagers, has been an increasingly worrisome problem as the community loses hope."⁴⁸

While the humanitarian community as well as relevant institutions of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) are engaged in efforts to provide psycho-social support to IDPs in critical need, particularly Yazidi women and children who escaped from ISIS captivity, reports indicate that the level of support and professional capacity remains inadequate given the overwhelming and urgent needs.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ UNHCR information, April 2019.

⁴⁵ A recent study on the psychological state of Yazidi children and adolescents found: "(...) factors as escape shock, sudden separation from already familiar environments, losing relatives, acquaintances, and family members can drastically threaten these children and teens. Many of them especially had witnessed the death, slavery, and selling of their close relatives and friends, or had suffered from pressure and torture to denounce their religion. Some of these children sheltered in mountains isolated from their family members and relatives for a long time, and walked for several days to find a safe place. Moreover, camp life also imposed several difficulties. The camps were overpopulated and there was a deficit in educational and hygiene facilities which seriously threatened the physical and psychological health of camp inhabitants. In any war, children and senior citizens are the most vulnerable groups due to their physical and mental condition. They witness violence, terror, and slaughter of their family members and relatives. Most of them have not experienced educational environments, or their experience has not been pleasing"; Seyedeh Behnaz Hosseini and Pegah A.M. Seidi, *A Study of Psychological Problem in Yazidi Children and Adolescents*, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2li9ORO>.

⁴⁶ UNHCR information, May 2019.

⁴⁷ UNHCR information, May 2019. See also, Forbes, *Surviving Islamic State: The Plight of The Yazidi Community*, 18 September 2018, <https://bit.ly/2MUJz11>; Middle East Eye, *Back from Hell: The Yazidi Women who Survived the Islamic State*, 3 August 2018, <https://shar.es/a14hXN>.

⁴⁸ America Magazine, *Traces of ISIS Might be Disappearing but the Yazidi Continue to Suffer*, 5 October 2018, <http://bit.ly/2UCEgG2>. See also, Kurdistan24, *Yezidi Woman, 20, Commits Suicide at IDP Camp in Kurdistan Region*, 3 February 2019, <http://bit.ly/2UwEF5x>.

⁴⁹ "There is a growing mental health crisis in Kurdistan and trauma is widespread, particularly among those who have escaped or been rescued from ISIS captivity. (...) Psychosocial support services are scarce and even where available, the stigma associated with mental health services, combined with a lack of freedom of movement of some women, has deterred many from seeking support"; Seed Foundation, *Mental Health and Psychosocial Services*, accessed 6 May 2019, <http://bit.ly/2vAll3M>. "Those [survivors] who have returned live in camps, where they struggle with stigma, and lack access to medical and psychosocial care and other basic services"; LSE, *Reforming Legal Responses to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region*, 25 April 2019, <https://bit.ly/2PvteGe>. "Yazidi women who had survived prolonged IS captivity and enslavement continued to lament the lack of an accessible and unified system of medical and psychosocial care. In August [2018], Yazidi women who had recently escaped IS captivity in Syria and returned to Iraq told Amnesty International that they had struggled to pay for medical and psychological care (...)"; Amnesty International, *Human Rights in Iraq: Review of 2018*, 26 February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2EkxROr>, p. 4. According to Ramanathan Balakrishnan, UNFPA Representative in Iraq, "[T]he demand for health



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

Following the retaking of areas formerly held by the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria, many Yazidi women and girls who had been held in captivity by ISIS have re-joined their families in the KR-I. Yazidi religious authorities have called for the reintegration of women and girls who had been subjected to ISIS enslavement into the community.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, Yazidi survivors reportedly face “*extreme medical conditions*” requiring “*physical and emotional recovery*”⁵¹ and fear or experience social stigma and discrimination.⁵² Survivors are reported to also face challenges to their recovery due to the difficult living conditions, which make it “difficult for victims to experience a safe environment and access resources important to the healing process.”⁵³

The Yazidi community’s willingness to reintegrate the survivors of ISIS captivity does not extend to children born as a result of sexual enslavement, who are reported to be at risk of remaining without official legal status and documentation,⁵⁴ and abandonment.⁵⁵ Based on applicable Iraqi law, children

and protection services far exceeds supply in Iraq, despite the end of the conflict”; UNFPA, *Support from Korea Sustains Services for Women and Girls During Iraq’s Post-Conflict Recovery*, 27 September 2018, <https://bit.ly/2OIkH4w>. See, for example, Voice of America, *Yazidi Children Rescued from IS Getting Psychological Help*, 11 January 2018, <https://bit.ly/2QWpzlg>; Physicians for Human Rights, *Reconciliation and Justice in Northern Iraq*, 26 September 2017, <https://bit.ly/2zucjxp>. “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)” (emphasis added); UNHCR, *Iraq Protection Update*, September 2018, <https://bit.ly/2K5WxMQ>, p. 1. “Between February and July 2017, trained local assessors interviewed a sample of 416 Yazidi women and girls (65 of whom had survived sexual enslavement), aged between 17 and 75 years, and living in internally displaced person camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. (...) Only 18.5% of participants reported having received any type of psychosocial support”; BMC Medicine, *Trauma and Perceived Social Rejection among Yazidi Women and Girls Who Survived Enslavement and Genocide*, 13 September 2018, <https://bit.ly/2vxoNl9>.

⁵⁰ This was reaffirmed in a 27 April 2019 statement by the Yazidi community’s Supreme Spiritual Council; AP, *Iraq: Yazidis to Accept Survivors of IS Rape, not Children*, 28 April 2019, <https://bit.ly/2IPQ4le>. See also, Redress, *Guidance for Practitioners in Iraq*, March 2018, www.refworld.org/docid/5ac785c04.html, p. 34; Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, *UNSC Briefing by Suzan Aref*, 8 August 2018, <https://bit.ly/2PBuVVd>, p. 1.

⁵¹ Seed Foundation / Center for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services, *Human Trafficking in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq*, December 2018, <https://bit.ly/2VDLmDk>, p. 18.

⁵² “Although the Yazidi community have tried to reintegrate women victims who have escaped, the stigma attached to such women is far reaching. Relatives of abducted Yazidi women and girls (...) expressed deep concerns not just about the suffering inflicted on their captured relatives, but also about the negative social consequences of the abductions for the future of these women and girls. Some said that it would be difficult to find suitable husbands for those who had been abducted, even if they had not been victims of sexual violence, because it was assumed that all those abducted had been raped”; The Conversation, *Sexual Violence against the Yazidis is Part of IS’s Genocide Campaign*, 6 July 2017, <http://bit.ly/2q7dH3R>. See also, Amnesty International, *Four Years on: Yazidi Women’s Struggles Continue*, 3 August 2018, www.refworld.org/docid/5bcf1cc84.html; UNAMI, *Promotion and Protection of Rights of Victims of Sexual Violence Captured by ISIL/or in Areas Controlled by ISIL in Iraq*, 22 August 2017, www.refworld.org/docid/59b67bf04.html, para. 10; UN Women, *Case Study: In the Words of Pari Ibrahim*, 18 August 2017, <http://bit.ly/2ECyZQE>; MRGI, *Crossroads: The Future of Iraq’s Minorities after ISIS*, June 2017, <http://bit.ly/2S9rio5>, p. 18.

⁵³ Seed Foundation / Center for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services, *Human Trafficking in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq*, December 2018, <https://bit.ly/2VDLmDk>, p. 18.

⁵⁴ Children born in areas formerly under the control of ISIS, including those born out of rape and/or (forced) marriage, reportedly face challenges in obtaining official civil documentation, restricting their access to basic services and rendering them at heightened risk of statelessness, marginalization and other forms of violence and abuse. “Children born out of rape and forced marriages are currently in a legal limbo, and susceptible to radicalization, trafficking and exploitation”; UNFPA/UNAMI/UNICEF, *United Nations Calls for the Protection of Children Born of Sexual Violence in Conflict*, 27 June 2018, <https://bit.ly/2KcYsT9>, p. 2. “If a woman married a man in an area under ISIS control and gave birth to a child in an ISIS-run hospital, Iraqi authorities generally will not accept the ISIS-issued marriage and birth certificates”; HRW, *Iraq: Families of Alleged ISIS Members Denied IDs*, 25 February 2018, www.ecoi.net/en/document/1425202.html. See also, Al Jazeera, *Iraq’s Undocumented Children: 45,000 IDPs Denied Basic Rights*, 30 April 2019, <https://aje.io/mchvn>; AP, *Iraqi Women, Children Bear the Burden of ISIS Legacy*, 24 April 2019, <https://bit.ly/2vkA0dS>; Al-Monitor, *Iraq Struggles to Provide War Orphans with Identities*, 17 July 2018, <https://bit.ly/2M8tf3X>; Iraqi News, *Children of Iraq’s Islamic State Rape Victims in Limbo*, 26 June 2018, <https://bit.ly/2N5HiF4>; UNU, *Cradled by Conflict: Child Involvement with Armed Groups in Contemporary Conflict*, 12 February 2018, <https://bit.ly/2NXbzW8>, p. 136; IRC, *Born under ISIS, the Children Struggling in Iraq*, 19 January 2018, <https://bit.ly/2Kt8pao>; Voice of America, *Children of Terror Left Behind in Iraq*, 8 January 2018, <https://bit.ly/2OqvcWV>.

⁵⁵ “Many here [at the Mosul orphanage] are the abandoned children of ISIS fathers and the Yazidi girls and women they raped, or children kidnapped from their birth parents and raised in ISIS families. (...) In the region’s conservative societies, rape victims are often blamed for dishonoring their families and are at risk of being killed. With so many Yazidi women captured, religious elders decreed that women enslaved by ISIS would be welcomed back. But there was no such ruling covering their children from ISIS fathers”; NPR, *Kidnapped, Abandoned Children Turn Up at Mosul Orphanage as ISIS Battle Ends*, 27 December 2017,



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

born to a Muslim father would automatically be considered as Muslims, irrespective of the mother's religion. The Iraqi government has to date not undertaken any efforts to amend laws that impose the Muslim religion onto children born to Yazidi mothers.⁵⁶

e) Humanitarian Assistance

IDPs in camps generally have access to basic social services and humanitarian assistance, which are provided by the KRG and the humanitarian community. Assistance provided by various service providers, including food rations through the government public distribution system (PDS), is very limited and not considered sufficient as the only means of subsistence. The majority of the IDPs reside outside camps where humanitarian assistance is even less available.⁵⁷

According to IDPs, immediate priority needs include the provision of special medical assistance for households hosting vulnerable members, shelter and non-food items (NFIs) related to winterisation, as well as improved water supply and sanitation. High proportions of IDPs across all camps struggle to afford their most basic needs and resort to negative coping strategies. With the overwhelming majority of assessed IDP households reporting that they do not intend to return within the near future,⁵⁸ access to livelihoods and increased community representation in camp management remain key challenges in the medium to longer-term.⁵⁹

3) Returns to Sinjar District

Most Yazidi IDPs who fled Sinjar District in 2014 have not attempted to return to their area of origin, including due to the widespread destruction of homes and infrastructure, the lack of livelihoods and basic services, persisting community tensions as well as continued insecurity.⁶⁰ A survey conducted by

⁵⁶ <https://n.pr/2C9Kc9c>. See also, Voice of America, *Children of Terror Left Behind in Iraq*, 8 January 2018, <https://bit.ly/2OqvcWV>; CERAH, *Challenges of Children Born by ISIS Rape in Iraq*, Working Paper 49, September 2017, <https://bit.ly/2oQ6Zyp>, p. 23.

⁵⁷ According to the 2015 National Identity Card Law, children followed the religion of Islam from the Muslim parents; LSE, *Iraq's Reparation Bill for Yazidi Female Survivors: More Progress Needed*, 26 April 2019, <https://bit.ly/2J16YTs>; Al-Monitor, *Iraqi Bill on Yazidi Female Survivors Stirs Controversy*, 25 April 2019, <http://almon.co/378s>; Forbes, *Let The Children Be Yazidis*, 3 April 2019, <https://bit.ly/2URfKGb>.

⁵⁸ "The majority of the humanitarian response to date has focused on serving people displaced in camps, although this population accounts for only 29 per cent of the IDP population overall. (...) Expanding assistance to out-of-camp population, particularly in 20 prioritized districts with the highest density of displaced people, is a priority for 2019"; OCHA, *Iraq: Humanitarian Response Plan January – December 2019*, 26 February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2TylbMb>, pp. 9, 27. "It is estimated that aid reaches only 10 per cent of the remaining 1.5 million who live outside of camps"; OCHA, *Iraq: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019 (November 2018)*, 16 December 2018, <https://bit.ly/2CIZSWd>, p. 22.

⁵⁹ See below Section 3 ("Returns to Sinjar District").

⁶⁰ UNHCR Information, May 2019.

⁶⁰ "The destruction in Sinjar is almost complete with almost all essential infrastructure having incurred some sort of damage. The buildings that remain are contaminated with sophisticated booby traps and IEDs. For these reasons, only approximately 12% of the pre-ISIL population has returned, the majority of whom are Yazidi"; UNDP, *Funding Facility for Stabilization Quarter III Report 2018*, 3 January 2019, <https://bit.ly/2WAlSob>, p. 42. "Three years since Sinjar was retaken from Islamic State group, more than 200,000 people, mostly Yazidis, remain displaced in northern Iraq and abroad, with no homes to return to"; NRC, *Sinjar: Three Years on, Yazidis Have Nowhere to Return*, 8 November 2018, <https://bit.ly/2Fbnlam>. "Key challenges for post-conflict stabilisation in Sinjar's towns and villages persist in rebuilding communities (and the idea of community); providing security and basic services; addressing public grievances; seeking accountability and justice; fostering local reconciliation; and helping people return home, to live in peace, dignity, and safety with their neighbours (as well as with their emotional and physical scars)"; European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), *When the Weapons Fall Silent: Reconciliation in Sinjar after ISIS*, 31 October 2018, <https://bit.ly/2P3B2x7>, p. 3. See also, IOM, *Protracted Displacement Study: An In-Depth Analysis of the Main Districts of Displacement*, April 2019, <https://bit.ly/2vDU4mx>, pp. 21-26, 55-56; UNHCR/CCCM Cluster/REACH Initiative, *Intentions Survey: IDP Areas of Origin*, February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2VaHY3v>, pp. 11-14; IOM, *Understanding Ethno-Religious Groups in Iraq: Displacement and Return Report*, 28 February 2019, <https://bit.ly/2VHf1LS>; Reuters, *Anger and Apprehension Haunt Ruined Sinjar, Years after Islamic State Ousted*, 26 February 2019, <https://reut.rs/2Ezd7ny>; Amnesty International, *Dead Land: Islamic State's Deliberate Destruction of Iraq's Farmland*, 12 December 2018, <https://bit.ly/2QEknG3>; The Observer, *'Only Bones Remain': Shattered Yazidis Fear Returning Home*, 9 September 2018, <https://bit.ly/2QsIB1e>; REACH, *Rapid Overview of Areas*



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

UNHCR, Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster and REACH Initiative in February 2019 indicates that only three per cent of the IDP population displaced from Sinjar District intends to return in the coming 12 months.⁶¹ According to the survey, the main reasons for not intending to return to Sinjar District are: presence of mines (42 per cent); lack of security forces (41 per cent); house damaged or destroyed (33 per cent); fear of discrimination (29 per cent); and no financial means to return (13 per cent).⁶² Seventy-four per cent of IDPs from Sinjar District reported that they had safety concerns in their area of origin.⁶³

of Return (ROAR): Sinjar and Surrounding Areas Ninewa Governorate, Iraq – May 2018, 31 May 2018, <https://bit.ly/2G5dnvw>, p. 3.

⁶¹ UNHCR, CCCM Cluster, *REACH Initiative, Intentions Survey: IDP Areas of Origin*, February 2019, 28 February 2019, <http://bit.ly/2H2rmB5>, p. 2.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ “This continues to suggest that barriers around security are particularly prevalent for IDP households from Sinjar”; *ibid.*, p. 3.