

Affected Population

271,132 Refugees and Asylum-Seekers
 (as of 31 August 2019)

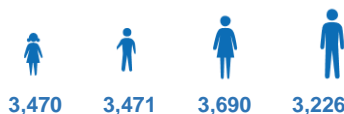
1,552,914 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)
 (as of 31 August 2019)

4,305,150 Returnees
 (as of 31 August 2019)



Protection Monitoring**

2,895 families (**13,857** individuals) reached



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

11% of individuals are lacking either a Civil Status ID or a Nationality Certificate.

60% of families do not have access to a regular source of income***

** The data reflects the number of IDP households assessed from 1 August 2019 to 31 August 2019.

*** Regular source of income includes pension, employment in private and public sectors, and self-employment.

LINKS

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Highlights

- Approximately 4,200 families across Iraq departed from camps while almost 500 families arrived in camps in August. The number of camp departures nearly doubled in August compared to July.
- Camp closures and consolidations resulting in forced evictions, forced relocations and coerced departures continued in Anbar, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din Governorates.
- Families with perceived affiliation with extremists continue to endure collective punishment in the form of arrest and detention, confiscation of documents, physical and verbal abuse and denial of return.

Camp Closures, Forced Evictions and Relocations and Involuntary Returns

Based on data provided by the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, the number of families who departed camps across Iraq nearly doubled from the previous month as 4,226 families (19,965 individuals) departed in August compared to 2,312 families (11,492 individuals) in July. In addition, nearly 90 per cent of families who arrived in camps in August were in secondary displacement as 454 families (1,862 individuals) out of the 499 families (2,113 individuals) newly arrived in camps were in secondary displacement. Such increase in the number of camp departures as well as the high percentage of secondary displacement can be attributed to the camp closures and increased security measures that led to forced evictions, forced relocations to other camps and involuntary returns of IDPs across the country.

In Anbar Governorate, IDPs in Amriyeat Al Fallujah (AAF) camp and Habaniyah Tourist City (HTC) camp expressed concerns about continued movement restrictions imposed by the government forces impacting their access to livelihoods and health care. In both camps, some IDPs expressed their willingness to stay in the camps due to security concerns in their areas of origin, while others stated they intended to return but are unable to due to infrastructure and housing destruction, tribal issues and lack of job opportunities in their areas of origin. Nevertheless, as a result of severe movement restrictions, many families decided to return.

In line with the recent high-level decision made by Iraqi national security authorities in Baghdad, the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) issued a letter to camp management in Hammam Al-Ail (HAA) camp in Ninewa informing that 35 families from Anbar would be returned to their areas of origin. Under the auspices of the government forces, on 23 August, MoDM transported 37 families (140 individuals) from HAA camps to HTC camp in Anbar. Upon departure, 16 families reported being relocated against their will, and several others reported being mistreated during the convoy travel.

While the initial plan was to accommodate the families in the HTC camp, government forces decided to forcibly send them back to their places of origin, only informing them of the change at the checkpoint between Anbar and Ninewa. The families were allegedly dropped in their areas of origin along the way, and most of them were unable to reach their houses due to severe security and movement restrictions, including rejection and threats by host communities. Reportedly, security forces temporarily detained 16 families in a school in Haditha District due to their perceived affiliation with extremist groups. Ten of the 16 families were released and allowed to return to their places of origin while the security forces transferred the remaining six families to empty houses in the District, where they restricted their freedom of movement.

In Kirkuk Governorate, on 29 August, a convoy of 117 families (614 individuals) were forcibly relocated to Laylan 1 camp from HAA, Salamiyah and Nimrud camps in Ninewa. Prior to departure, the families made it clear that the move was involuntary by expressing their concerns to partners and by staging a protest in HAA camp against their departure. Most of the families were originally from Hawija District. UNHCR and partners managed to respond to the returnee's immediate needs despite the lack of time given to receive a sizable number of families. During the meeting with the Governor and the Kirkuk Governorate Returns Committee (GRC), UNHCR emphasized the need to coordinate movements to Kirkuk, including to IDP camps, well in advance. UNHCR noted that future returns or relocations of IDPs to Kirkuk should be voluntary and conducted in conditions of safety and dignity and should only be conducted following information sharing with humanitarian and government agencies in areas of reception, provision of appropriate and dignified transportation, obtaining necessary security clearances and consultation with communities and authorities in areas of return.

In Ninewa Governorate, between 28 July and 3 August, 411 families (2,090 individuals) departed from five camps (HAA1 and 2, Salamiyah 1 and 2, and Nimrud), which accounted for the highest number of departures since the opening of the camps in 2017. The returns were reportedly motivated by fears of possible arrest and abuse by security forces as a result of the on-going security screening exercise rather than a genuine desire to depart the camps. In addition, IDP families reportedly departed camps in order to claim the "return grant" (1,500,000 IQD) announced by MoDM.

Following the forced returns of IDPs from Anbar, MoDM informed that IDPs in HAA, Salamiya and Nimrud camps from Kirkuk (mainly Hawija) would be relocated next, followed by those from Salah Al-Din. This resulted in self-organized departures (until the security authorities announced that families would not be allowed to depart on their own), protests and numerous IDPs approaching UNHCR's camp management and protection partners expressing strong concerns for their safety if they were returned to their areas of origin. Furthermore, on 28 August, the local authorities sent a written order to close Nimrud camp by 10 September, announcing that 466 families (2,120 individuals) would be relocated to Salamiyah 1 and 2 camps. During focus group discussions, IDPs stated to UNHCR that they would refuse to move and threatened to conduct a hunger strike. UNHCR held follow-up meetings with the authorities to extend the deadline to close the camp. The authorities have also ordered the closure of two IOM-supported camps, Hajj Ali and Jedaa 6. All closure decisions came within the framework of the Ninewa Governor's policy to return all IDPs to their areas of origin and close all camps within three years.

Due to the camp consolidations and closures in Ninewa, the number of IDPs entering East Mosul camps significantly increased (i.e. Baharka, Debaga, Harsham, Hasansham U2, Hasansham U3, Khazir M). The families reported fear of being forcibly returned to their areas of origin against their will as well as increased activities of government-affiliated armed groups. Interviewed families claimed to face exploitation, arbitrary detention of relatives, threats, night-time raids, and bribery attempts by armed groups in Ninawa camps. In August, 41 families (169 individuals) were displaced from Ninewa camps to the East Mosul camps. The majority (80%) of the families were female-headed households.

In Salah Al-Din Governorate, the local authorities announced the potential closure of Al-Karama camp. The displaced families in the camp (majority from Al-Senya and Baiji) expressed that they were unable to return to their areas of origin due to infrastructure destruction and tribal problems. Furthermore, the closure of Al-Qadissiyah informal site was almost completed by the end of August. By then, only seven families out of approximately 700 were still residing in the complex. Most evicted IDP families reportedly had no other options but to return to their areas of origins (mainly in Al-Senya and Baiji) despite the high level of house destruction, potential explosive contamination, and shortage of water. The lack of coordination between local authorities resulted in families being unable to or being denied return to their areas of origin. Some families had to wait several days before being authorized to return to Al-Senya, while other families went to Tikrit and Baiji city to stay with relatives. Reportedly, four families relocated to Al-Karama camp, while 40 families with perceived affiliation were authorized to settle in Tikrit city.

Collective Punishment

UNHCR continues to receive reports of collective punishment of families due to accusations of perceived affiliation with extremists.

In Anbar Governorate, on 25 August, HTC camp management confirmed that most of the families inside the camp are facing security concerns in their areas of origin and prefer to stay in camps. The decision of IDPs to remain in HTC were allegedly influenced by the reported detention of 16 families who were forcibly evicted from HAA camp in Haditha District by the military and tribesmen on the pretext that they are affiliated with extremist groups. Of the 16 families, eleven (four female headed households) were not allowed to enter their areas of origin in Rawa and Al-Qaim Districts as local tribesmen denied their return due to their perceived affiliation with extremists. In addition, on 25 August, one of the forcibly returned families from Ninewa to Zangoora village (north-west of Ramadi) was evicted by the community due to accusations that their 19-year-old son was affiliated with extremists. The family was re-displaced to HTC camp and reported that their son had gone missing ever since he went to Al-Qaim to collect their belongings.

In Ninewa Governorate, on 20 August, security forces entered HAA camp and detained one IDP (originally from Hawija District) due to his alleged affiliation with extremists. The following day, the same forces returned to the camp and detained another IDP for the same reason. In addition, on 23 August, a family from Hatra city who attempted to return to their area of origin from Hajj Ali camp was denied entry into their village by government-affiliated armed groups. The armed groups verbally abused the family and made them sign a paper pledging that they would never return, reportedly due to the husband's alleged affiliation with extremists. Moreover, during the reporting period, some families from Ninewa and other governorates reportedly departed HAA camps without requesting exit letters or informing the camp management over fears of forced relocation. They fear that, if forcefully relocated to their areas of origin, the local communities might seek revenge due to the families' perceived affiliation with extremists.

In Salah Al-Din Governorate, on 29 August, 134 IDP families originally from Shirqat District were evicted from camps in Ninewa and forcibly relocated to Basateen camp. Tensions with the host community immediately erupted upon their arrival due to their perceived affiliation with extremists. Several security incidents, including grenade attacks, were reported in August.

Iraqi Returnees from Syria

During the reporting period, UNHCR identified four Iraqis who returned from Syria through the Al Fao border crossing point into Sinuni, Sinjar District of Ninewa Governorate. The returnees are reportedly Yazidis who had organized the returns themselves to reunite with families in Duhok.

Syrian Refugees and Asylum-seekers

In August, UNHCR registered 1,216 individuals from Syria, including 676 new arrivals. Currently, the total number of Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR is 228,573 individuals (48% female and 52% male; 45% children and 55% adults). Nearly 99% of the Syrian refugee population resides in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), where 40% are living in camps and 60% in urban, rural and peri-urban areas. The majority of Syrian refugees originate from Al-Hasakeh (55.8%) followed by Aleppo (22.6%) and Damascus (8.9%).

Response by UNHCR and Partners

During the reporting period, UNHCR conducted the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) Capacity Assessment of current data gathering organizations (DGOs), which is a key exercise aiming to improve the quality of SGBV case management, information management and reporting. UNHCR, as co-chair of the GBVIMS Task Force, conducted the capacity assessment of 5 DGOs reporting refugee data jointly with the GBVIMS Task Force Coordinator. The results of the assessment are expected to inform the capacity development plans of the GBVIMS Task Force, including future trainings and mentoring of DGO staff.

On 26 August, UNHCR facilitated a workshop in Baquba, Diyala Governorate on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and the Code of Conduct (CoC). 16 people composed of camp management, security guards from the police and army, community police, Human Rights Commissioner and MoDM Branch Office in Diyala attended the workshop. On 27 August, UNHCR facilitated the same workshop for 23 people from partner organizations, community support centres, and other service providers.