Country Policy and Information Note
Iraq: Security and humanitarian situation

Version 6.0

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Preface

Purpose

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and analysis of COI for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims (as set out in the Introduction section). It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into two main sections: (1) analysis and assessment of COI and other evidence; and (2) COI. These are explained in more detail below.

Assessment

This section analyses the evidence relevant to this note – i.e. the COI section; refugee/human rights laws and policies; and applicable caselaw – by describing this and its inter-relationships, and provides an assessment of, in general, whether one or more of the following applies**:**

- A person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm

- The general humanitarian situation is so severe as to breach Article 15(b) of European Council Directive 2004/83/EC (the Qualification Directive) / Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights as transposed in paragraph 339C and 339CA(iii) of the Immigration Rules

- The security situation presents a real risk to a civilian's life or person such that it would breach Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive as transposed in paragraph 339C and 339CA(iv) of the Immigration Rules

- A person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)

- A person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory

- A claim is likely to justify granting asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave, and

- If a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers **must**, however, still consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts

Country of origin information

The country information in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the Common EU [European Union] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information (COI), dated April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual, 2013. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

The structure and content of the country information section follows a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to this note.

All information included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date(s) in the country information section. Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available, and is from generally reliable sources. Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source

- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used

- the currency and detail of information, and

- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

Multiple sourcing is used to ensure that the information is accurate, balanced and corroborated, so that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture at the time of publication is provided of the issues relevant to this note.

Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source, however, is not an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a brief footnote; full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve our material. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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> Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration
> 5th Floor
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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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Assessment

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

1.1.1 That the general humanitarian situation in Iraq is so severe as to make removal to this country a breach of Article 15(b) of the European Council Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004 (the Qualification Directive)/ Articles 2 and 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) as transposed in paragraph 339C and 339CA(iii) of the Immigration Rules.; and/or

1.1.2 A fear of serious harm because the security situation presents a real risk to a civilian's life or person such that removal would be in breach of Article 15(c) (serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict) of European Council Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004 (the Qualification Directive), as transposed in paragraph 339C and 339CA(iv) of the Immigration Rules.

1.2 Points to note

1.2.1 Previous Home Office assessments of the security situation in Iraq had differentiated the 'contested' and 'non-contested' areas of the country. The:

- 'contested' areas were Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk (aka Tam'in), Ninewah and Salah al-Din governorates; and

- 'non-contested' areas were Baghdad governorate, 'the south' (Babil, Basra, Kerbala, Missan, Muthanna, Najaf, Qaddisiyah, Thi-Qar and Wasit governorates) and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) (Dohuk, Erbil, Halabja and Sulamaniyah governorates).

1.2.2 However, the security situation has changed since these definitions were first used and no longer reflects the security situation on the ground (see Security situation).

1.2.3 Furthermore, sources sometimes refer to 'contested' (or 'disputed') areas as the areas where sovereignty or control is disputed between the Government of Iraq (GOI) and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Therefore, to avoid any confusion, the 'contested' and 'non-contested' definitions in the context of the security situation in Iraq are no longer used. These areas are instead referred to as the 'formally contested areas'.

1.2.4 The UK government uses the term Daesh to describe the terrorist group also known as ISIL, Islamic State or ISIS. Although any text written by CPIT will use the term Daesh, quoted material (including that from the Upper Tribunal) may use other names.

2.   Consideration of issues

2.1   Credibility

2.1.1   For guidance on assessing credibility, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

2.1.2   Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).

2.1.3   Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

2.2   Exclusion

2.2.1   Various groups involved in the conflict in Iraq have been responsible for serious human rights abuses. If it is accepted that the person has been involved with such a group, then decision makers must consider whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses applies. If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.

2.2.2   For further guidance on the exclusion clauses and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instructions on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33(2) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and [Restricted Leave](#).

2.3   Risk

    a.   General approach and convention reason

2.3.1   In the country guidance case [AK (Article 15(c)) Afghanistan CG [2012] UKUT 00163(IAC)](#), the Upper Tribunal held that 'the need, when dealing with asylum-related claims based wholly or significantly on risks arising from situations of armed conflict and indiscriminate violence, to assess whether Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive is engaged, should not lead to judicial or other decision-makers going straight to Article 15(c). The normal course should be to deal with the issue of refugee eligibility, subsidiary (humanitarian) protection eligibility and Article 3 ECHR in that order.' (para 249A(ii) and headnote A(ii)).

2.3.2   Therefore, decision makers must first consider if the person faces persecution or serious harm for a Refugee Convention reason. However, a state of civil instability and/or where law and order has broken down does not of itself give rise to a well-founded fear of persecution for a Convention reason.

    b.   Humanitarian Protection

2.3.3   Where the person qualifies under the Refugee Convention, decision makers do not need to go on to assess the need for Humanitarian Protection. It is

only if the person does **not** qualify under the Refugee Convention that decision makers need to assess the need for protection firstly under Articles 15(b) of the Qualification Directive/Articles 2 and 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and, if that is unsuccessful, under Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive.

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c. Humanitarian situation

2.3.4 A person may claim that the state of his or her documentation means that they cannot access support. For information and assessment on documentation matters, see the country policy and information note on Iraq: internal relocation, civil documentation and returns

2.3.5 In January 2020, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) assessed that 4.1 million people needed humanitarian support, down from 6.7 million in February 2019 (this number represents the 'aggregate' rather than the 'absolute' number – a person may be counted more than once if they have multiple needs) (see Numbers and profile of people in need).

2.3.6 The efforts to help those in need of humanitarian assistance are focused on the governorates of Anbar, Ninewa, Kirkuk and Salah al-Din. Needs are greatest in Ninewah (see Location of people in need).

2.3.7 Of those in humanitarian need there are some groups who are particularly vulnerable, including children, women, and the elderly. Persons who are perceived to be affiliated to extremist groups who are not able to return to their areas of origin and face stigma and discrimination are also particularly vulnerable (see Vulnerable groups).

2.3.8 Healthcare, employment and water, sanitation and hygiene are among the top humanitarian needs (see Employment and financial security, Food security, Health and healthcare, Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and Education).

2.3.9 As of December 2019, the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) estimated that nearly 1.4 million civilians were displaced, the lowest figure since August 2014 (see Numbers of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)).

2.3.10 The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that government-affiliated armed groups and members of the community prevented some IDPs, particularly from Anbar and Ninewah, from returning to their homes because of their suspected affiliation with extremist groups (see Prevented returns).

2.3.11 However, according to the IOM, as of November 2019, nearly 4.5 million people have returned to their home areas, particularly to Ninewah, Anbar and Salah al-Din; a continuing upward trend explained by improvements in the security situation. The vast majority of returnees have gone back to their old homes (see Numbers of returnees and places of return).

2.3.12 Ninewah and Dohuk host more IDPs than any other individual governorates. Most IDPs originate from Ninewah, Salah al-Din and Anbar (see Origin and location of IDPs). The experiences of IDPs vary depending on location,

shelter types and priority needs, as well as their individual circumstances. 67% of IDPs live in private dwellings, 25% in camps and 8% in 'critical shelters' (informal settlements, religious buildings, schools and unfinished or abandoned buildings) (see Shelter types of IDPs).

2.3.13 Returnees may face explosive hazards, substandard accommodation and deteriorating public services. The World Bank estimated in 2018 that it will take at least a decade to rebuild parts of Iraq. However, some rebuilding of affected areas is now taking place (see Conditions in places of return).

2.3.14 In 2019, 1.1 million people were reached with some form of humanitarian aid. In 2019 there were 105 organisations (45 national non-government organisations (NGOs), 49 international NGOs and 5 UN entities and 6 government departments) working in 1,258 locations across 93 districts in the 18 governorates of Iraq (see Numbers and reach of humanitarian partners). In 2020, 1.77 million people were targeted for assistance (see Numbers and profile of people targeted for assistance).

2.3.15 By November 2019, humanitarian actors in Iraq reached 1.3 million of the 1.75 million people targeted across 1,332 different locations. OCHA also reported that the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in Iraq decreased 40% in 2020 when compared to 2019 with 4.1 million people requiring assistance (see Effectiveness of humanitarian support).

2.3.16 There is a nationwide government programme, the Public Distribution System (PDS), which distributes food. However distribution is sporadic and irregular. Recently a smart card system has been trialled with the aim of empowering citizens allowing them to access government services more conveniently (see Public Distribution System (PDS)).

2.3.17 In the country guidance case SMO, KSP & IM (Article 15(c); identity documents) Iraq CG [2019] UKUT 400 (IAC) (20 December 2019), heard on 24-26 June 2019 (hereafter SMO) and promulgated on 20 December 2019, the Upper Tribunal (UT) held:

'The living conditions in Iraq as a whole, including the Formerly Contested Areas, are unlikely to give rise to a breach of Article 3 ECHR or (therefore) to necessitate subsidiary protection under Article 15(b) QD. Where it is asserted that return to a particular part of Iraq would give rise to such a breach, however, it is to be recalled that the minimum level of severity required is relative, according to the personal circumstances of the individual concerned. Any such circumstances require individualised assessment in the context of the conditions of the area in question.' (para 425 (35))

2.3.18 While the humanitarian situation varies across the country and remains severe in some places, the overall trend has been one of gradual improvement since 2014/15. In general, the humanitarian situation is not so severe that a person is likely to face a breach of Articles 15(b) of the Qualification Directive / Articles 2 and 3 of the ECHR, requiring a grant of Humanitarian Protection (HP). However, decision makers must consider each case on its merits. There may be cases where a combination of circumstances means that a person will face a breach of Articles 15(b) of the Qualification Directive/Articles 2 and 3 of the ECHR on return.

2.3.19 In assessing whether an individual case reaches this threshold, decision makers must consider:

- where the person is from (as humanitarian conditions are more severe in some areas than others, and this may also impact on whether the person becomes an IDP on return, if they were not already prior to leaving the country)

- a person's individual profile and circumstances, including, but not limited to, their age, gender, state of health and ethnicity and means to support themselves

- vulnerability to discrimination because of perceived or actual affiliation to extremist groups

- whether the person has the ability to relocate to another area and access a support network.

2.3.20 For general guidance on Article 15(b)/Article 3 ECHR, including consideration of enhanced risk factors, see the Asylum Instruction on Humanitarian Protection.

d. Security situation

2.3.21 An assessment of protection needs under Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive must only take place if a person is unable to establish a need for refugee protection or subsidiary protection under Article 15(b).

2.3.22 A claim for protection based on indiscriminate violence must be assessed by applying the test set out in (QD (Iraq) v SSHD [2009] EWCA Civ 620): 'Is there in [country] or a material part of it such a high level of indiscriminate violence that substantial grounds exist for believing that an applicant would, solely by being present there, face a real risk which threatens their life or person?'

2.3.23 The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), in Diakité (C-285/12), heard on 29 May 2013 and promulgated on 30 January 2014 concluded that 'The usual meaning in everyday language of 'internal armed conflict' is a situation in which a State's armed forces confront one or more armed groups or in which two or more armed groups confront each other.' (para 28) but that:

'…internal armed conflict can be a cause for granting subsidiary protection only where confrontations between a State's armed forces and one or more armed groups or between two or more armed groups are exceptionally considered to create a serious and individual threat to the life or person of an applicant for subsidiary protection for the purposes of Article 15(c) of Directive 2004/83 because the degree of indiscriminate violence which characterises those confrontations reaches such a high level that substantial grounds are shown for believing that a civilian, if returned to the relevant country or, as the case may be, to the relevant region, would – solely on account of his presence in the territory of that country or region – face a real risk of being subject to that threat' (para 30).

2.3.24 In Diakité, the CJEU also reaffirmed the view that Article 15(c) also contains (what UNHCR has termed) a "sliding scale" such that "the more the applicant is able to show that he is specifically affected by reason of factors particular to his personal circumstances, the lower the level of indiscriminate violence required for him to be eligible for subsidiary protection" (para 31). Therefore, a person may still be accorded protection even when the general level of violence is not very high if they are able to show that there are specific reasons, over and above them being mere civilians, for being affected by the indiscriminate violence. In this way the Article 15(c) inquiry is two-pronged: (a) it asks whether the level of violence is so high that there is a general risk to all civilians; (b) it asks that even if there is not such a general risk, there is a specific risk based on the "sliding-scale" notion.

2.3.25 Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive applies only to civilians, who must be genuine non-combatants and not those who are party to the conflict. This could include former combatants who have genuinely and permanently renounced armed activity.

2.3.26 The Iraqi security forces have taken back control of territory previously seized by Daesh with the government declaring at the end of 2017 that Daesh was militarily defeated. Since then there has been a steady decline in violence and kidnapping with the remains of Daesh, in general, limited to occasional insurgent IED attacks and shootings. Sources indicate the overall levels of violence are the lowest for 10 years and possibly since the invasion of Iraq by coalition forces in 2003. Daesh activity in Baghdad has virtually disappeared with most of the violence there linked to criminal and political disputes. By early 2019 Daesh was reported to have largely pulled out of the Baghdad Belts although some insurgent attacks have been reported in the outer regions (see Security situation).

2.3.27 EASO assessed in their June 2019 report that there are no governates in Iraq where the degree of indiscriminate violence reached such a high level that substantial grounds are shown for believing that a civilian, returned to the relevant region, would, solely on account of his or her presence on the territory of that region, face a real risk of being subject to the serious threat referred to in Article 15(c) QD (see Security situation).

2.3.28 Protests highlighting poor public services, corruption and unemployment took place in Baghdad at the end of December 2019 leading to violent confrontations between security forces and protestors in which upward of 400 people died and led to the resignation of the prime minister. The protests continued at the time of writing in February 2020 in a generally peaceful fashion with students staging a sit-in in Tahrir Square (see 2019 Baghdad protests).

2.3.29 In the country guidance case of SMO, the UT held that

'There continues to be an internal armed conflict in certain parts of Iraq, involving government forces, various militia and the remnants of ISIL. Following the military defeat of ISIL at the end of 2017 and the resulting reduction in levels of direct and indirect violence, the intensity of the internal armed conflict is not such that, as a general matter, there are substantial grounds for believing that any civilian returned to Iraq, solely on account of

his presence there, faces a real risk of being subjected to indiscriminate violence amounting to serious harm within the scope of Article 15(c) QD..

'The only exception to the general conclusion above is the small mountainous area north of Baiji in Sahal al-Din… ISIL continues to exercise doctrinal control in the area and the risk of indiscriminate violence is at a level which would engage Article 15(c) as a general matter' (para 425 (30-31)) (see Overview: the war against Daesh (Islamic State)).

2.3.30 The Upper Tribunal in SMO, also held that whether or not the return of an individual to one of the Formerly Contested Areas (the governorates of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewah and Salah Al-Din) would be contrary to Article 15(c) requires a fact-sensitive, 'sliding scale' assessment. This assessment, alongside particular reference to the extent of ongoing Daesh activity and the behaviour of the security actors in control of that area, must take into account the following factors and characteristics:

- Opposition to or criticism of the Government of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government or local security actors;

- Membership of a national, ethnic or religious group which is either in the minority in the area in question, or not in de facto control of that area;

- LGBTI individuals, those not conforming to Islamic mores and wealthy or Westernised individuals;

- Humanitarian or medical staff and those associated with Western organisations or security forces;

- Women and children without genuine family support; and

- Individuals with disabilities (para 425 (32 and 34)).

2.3.31 Decision makers should however take a holistic view of all the circumstances relating to a person's claim and not view the factors listed above in isolation. See also other Iraqi Country Policy and Information Notes covering some possible refugee convention reasons listed above. Decision makers should be mindful that in some cases, a grant of refugee status may be more appropriate than a grant of humanitarian protection. The UT in SMO commented that:

'[…] we note that there is potentially significant overlap with the Refugee Convention, in that an individual who is at risk of being specifically targeted because of factors particular to his personal circumstances might well be deserving of protection under the 1951 Convention on that account. It must, in other words, be recalled that a person who is at risk of persecutory ill treatment on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is, subject to countervailing considerations, a refugee whose appeal falls to be allowed on that basis. A decision maker who is minded to conclude, say, that an individual with an actual or perceived association with ISIL is more likely to be exposed to conditions contrary to Article 15(c) would be well advised to consider whether, in reality, it should be the 1951 Convention and not the Qualification Directive which should provide the appropriate protection against return' (para 292)

2.3.32 The Tribunal also held that 'Those with an actual or perceived association with ISIL are likely to be at enhanced risk throughout Iraq. In those areas in which ISIL retains an active presence, those who have a current personal association with local or national government or the security apparatus are likely to be at enhanced risk' (para 425 (33).

2.3.33 Even though there is no general Article 15(c) risk, decision makers must consider whether there are particular factors relevant to the person's individual circumstances which might nevertheless place them at risk.

2.3.34 For general guidance on assessing risk, see Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status and for guidance on Article 15(c), including consideration of the sliding scale and enhanced risk factors, see the Asylum Instruction on Humanitarian Protection.

2.4 Internal relocation

a. General

2.4.1 For information and assessment of risk regarding documentation and return see the country policy and information note on Iraq: internal relocation, civil documentation and returns.

b. Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)

2.4.2 In the Country Guidance case SMO, the UT held:

'If … [a person] has family members living in the IKR [Iraqi Kurdistan Region] cultural norms would require that family to accommodate … [the person]. In such circumstances … [a person] would, in general, have sufficient assistance from the family so as to lead a "relatively normal life", which would not be unduly harsh. It is nevertheless important for decision-makers to determine the extent of any assistance likely to be provided by … [a person's] family on a case by case basis.' (paragraph 425 (55))

2.4.3 The UT in SMO further held:

'For Kurds without the assistance of family in the IKR [Iraqi Kurdish Region] the accommodation options are limited:

'(i) Absent special circumstances it is not reasonably likely that … [a person] will be able to gain access to one of the refugee camps in the IKR; these camps are already extremely overcrowded and are closed to newcomers. 64% of IDPs are accommodated in private settings with the vast majority living with family members;

'(ii) If … [a person] cannot live with a family member, apartments in a modern block in a new neighbourhood are available for rent at a cost of between [US]$300 and $400 per month;

'(iii) [A person] … could resort to a "critical shelter arrangement", living in an unfinished or abandoned structure, makeshift shelter, tent, mosque, church or squatting in a government building. It would be unduly harsh to require … [a person] to relocate to the IKR if … [the person] will live in a critical housing

shelter without access to basic necessities such as   food, clean water and clothing;

'(iv) In considering whether … [a person] would be able to access basic necessities, account must be taken of the fact that failed asylum seekers are entitled to apply for a grant under the Voluntary Returns Scheme, which could give … [a person] access to £1500. Consideration should also be given to whether … [a person] can obtain financial support from other sources such as (a) employment, (b) remittances from relatives abroad, (c) the availability of ad hoc charity or by being able to access PDS rations.' (paragraph 425 (56))

2.4.4   The UT in SMO also held:

'Whether … [a person] is able to secure employment must be assessed on a case-by-case basis taking the following matters into account:

'(i) Gender. Lone women are very unlikely to be able to secure legitimate employment;

'(ii) The unemployment rate for Iraqi IDPs living in the IKR is 70%;

'(iii) [A person] … cannot work without a CSID [Civil Status ID] or INID [Iraqi National Identity Card];

'(iv) Patronage and nepotism continue to be important factors in securing employment. A returnee with family connections to the region will have a significant advantage in that he would ordinarily be able to call upon those contacts to make introductions to prospective employers and to vouch for him;

'(v) Skills, education and experience. Unskilled workers are at the greatest disadvantage, with the decline in the construction industry reducing the number of labouring jobs available;

'(vi) If … [a person] is from an area with a marked association with ISIL, that may deter prospective employers.' (paragraph 425 (57))

2.4.5   The UT in SMO additionally held that:

'The ability of non-Kurdish returnees to relocate to the IKR is to be distinguished. There are no sponsorship requirements for entry or residence in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, although single Arab and Turkmen citizens require regular employment in order to secure residency. Arabs from former conflict areas and Turkmen from Tal Afar are subject to sponsorship requirements to enter or reside in Dohuk. Although Erbil and Sulaymaniyah are accessible for such individuals, particular care must be taken in evaluating whether internal relocation to the IKR for a non-Kurd would be reasonable. Given the economic and humanitarian conditions in the IKR at present, an Arab with no viable support network in the IKR is likely to experience unduly harsh conditions upon relocation there.' (paragraph 425(58))

2.4.6   For further guidance on considering internal relocation and factors to be taken into account, see the Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status.

2.5   Certification

2.5.1   Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

2.5.2   For guidance on certification, see the Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 (clearly unfounded claims).

Country Information

3.   Demography

3.1.1   The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) estimated the population of Iraq as 40.1 million in July 2018[1].

3.1.2   The Iraqi Central Statistical Organisation (CSO)'s Annual Statistical Abstract for 2017[2] produced projected population figures per governorate:

اسقاطات السكان حسب المحافظات والبيئة لسنة 2018

POPULATION PROJECTION BY GOVERNORATES AND REGION FOR 2018

Table (2/6) E			جدول (6/2) ح
Governorate	Total مجموع	Rural ريف	Urban حضر	المحافظة
	مجموع Total	مجموع Total	مجموع Total	
Ninevah	3729998	1468069	2261929	نينوى
Kirkuk	1597876	416770	1181106	كركوك
Diala	1637226	831689	805537	ديالى
Al-Anbar	1771656	885541	886115	الانبار
Baghdad	8126755	1016521	7110234	بغداد
Babylon	2065042	1068157	996885	بابل
Kerbala	1218732	403860	814872	كربلاء
Wasit	1378723	548940	829783	واسط
Salah AL- Deen	1595235	875894	719341	صلاح الدين
Al-Najaf	1471592	420626	1050966	النجف
Al-Qadisiya	1291048	551447	739601	القادسية
Al-Muthanna	814371	444538	369833	المثنى
Thi Qar	2095172	750362	1344810	ذي قار
Maysan	1112673	290820	821853	ميسان
Basrah	2908491	546368	2362123	البصرة
(15) Governorate Total	32814590	10519602	22294988	مجموع 15 محافظة
Kurdistan Region:				محافظات اقليم كردستان:
Erbil	1854778	310687	1544091	اربيل
Duhouk	1292535	335400	957135	دهوك
AL-Sulaimaniya	2162279	330160	1832119	السليمانية
Total of K.R	5309592	976247	4333345	مجموع محافظات الاقليم
Iraq Grand total	38124182	11495849	26628333	المجموع الكلي للعراق

Note :population projection calculated according to numbering & listing results 2009 .

ملاحظة : اسقاطات السكان محتسبة حسب نتائج الترقيم والحصر 2009

3.1.3   Iraq is due to have a census every ten years but it has been continually postponed because of the violence in the country; the last official census was held in 1987, which showed a population of just over 16 million[3].

3.1.4   See Annex A for a map of Iraq.

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[1] CIA World Factbook – Iraq (People and Society), 17 December 2019, url
[2] Iraq CSO, Annual Statistical Abstract 2017 (p. 56), url
[3] Niqash, 'Counting Iraqis', 20 June 2013, url

4. Conflict in Iraq: 2003 to present

4.1.1 To see how the conflict has evolved, see the [BBC's timeline of events](url)[4]. See also the [United States Institute of Peace's Iraqi Timeline: Since the 2003 War](url)[5].

5. Humanitarian situation

For the latest data and information, see the [UN Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)'s Humanitarian Response webpage on Iraq](url)[6] and the [International Organisation for Migration (IOM)'s Displacement Tracking Matrix](url)[7]

5.1 General living standards and conditions

5.1.1 The 2019 UN Human Development Index, which measures factors such as length and health of life, level of education and standard of living, ranked Iraq as 120 out of 188 countries, in the category of 'medium human development'.[8] The Human Development Index uses 4 categories of human development: very high, high, medium and low.

5.1.2 Using data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the following graph[9] shows Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, in constant prices (adjusting for price inflation) from 2003 to 2023 (figures from 2014 onwards are projected estimates).

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, constant prices (national currency) (millions)
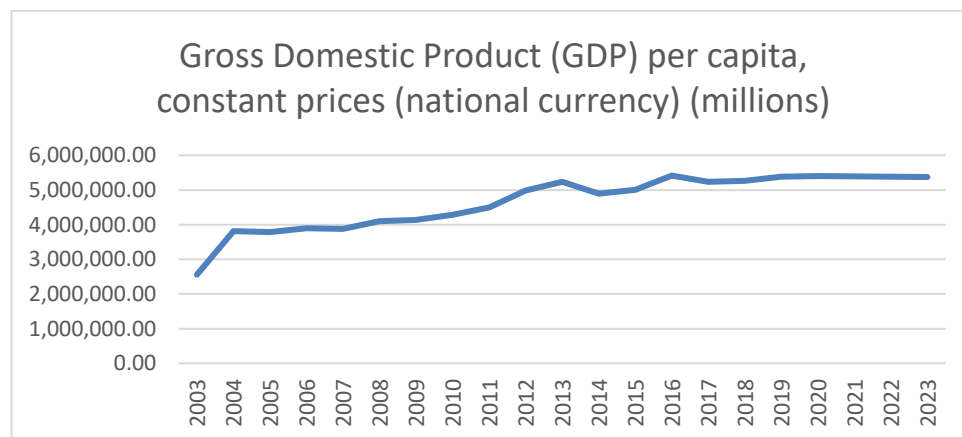
5.1.3 According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Iraq's GDP was projected to grow by 4.7% in 2020[10].

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[4] BBC News, 'Iraq profile', 3 October 2018, [url](url)
[5] United States Institute of Peace, 'Iraq Timeline: Since the 2003 War', 9 July 2019, [url](url).
[6] OCHA, Humanitarian Response page, [url](url)
[7] International Organisation for Migration's Displacement Tracking Matrix, [url](url)
[8] UN Development Programme, 'Human Development Report 2019', 2019, [url](url)
[9] IMF, World Economic Outlook Database, [url](url)
[10] IMF, 'Iraq -At a glance', undated, [url](url)

5.1.4 The [World Bank](url) published several statistics on Iraq's economy[11].

5.2 Numbers and profile of people in need

5.2.1 In February 2019 OCHA assessed that there 6.7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in Iraq[12]. In January 2020 this figure decreased to 4.1 million and included:

- 916,750 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) outside of camps

- 370,030 Internally Displaced Persons in camps

- 2.85 million returnees (i.e. formally IDPs who have returned to their home area)[13]

5.2.2 OCHA explained that this number 'represents the aggregate, rather than absolute number of people who will need some form of assistance' (as some people who fall into more than one category could be counted more than once)[14].

5.3 Location of people in need

5.3.1 OCHA's 'Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020' for Iraq published in November 2019 explained:

'Out of the 6 million people displaced during the 2014-2017 conflict against ISIL, humanitarian partners estimate that 4.1 million people require some form of humanitarian assistance. Of the people in acute need, 50 per cent are concentrated in only two governorates – Ninewa and Al-Anbar. Approximately 1.5 million people remain internally displaced, 70 per cent of whom have been displaced for more than three years. Return rates have also slowed from the peak period, but the vulnerabilities of the returnees remain -- overall, an estimated 514,000 returnees across 286 locations in eight governates live in areas of high severity. Some 23 per cent of all people in acute need are concentrated in three districts of 63 assessed: Al-Mosul and Telafar in Ninewa and Al-Falluja in Al-Anbar.'[15]

5.3.2 The same source further stated:

'Nearly half of all people in need – more than 1.77 million people – have acute humanitarian needs. IDPs in and out of camps, and returnees, experienced partial or full collapse of living standards and disrupted access to basic goods and services, exhausting their capacities to cope and frequently resorting to negative coping strategies, including liquidation of livelihoods assets. The most acute needs continue to be found in governorates that witnessed direct conflict, such as Al-Anbar, Ninewa, Kirkuk

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[11] World Bank, Country Profile – Iraq, undated, [url](url)

[12] OCHA, '2019 Humanitarian Response Plan – Iraq', (p.5), February 2019, [url](url)

[13] OCHA, '2020 Humanitarian Response Plan – Iraq', (p.9), January 2020, [url](url)

[14] OCHA, '2018 Humanitarian Response Plan – Iraq', (p.8), February 2018, [url](url)

[15] OCHA, 'Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020 – Iraq', (p.5), November 2019, [url](url)

and Salah Al-Din, and in governorates that received significant numbers of the displaced, such as Duhok.'[16]

5.3.3 The below map, published by OCHA in November 2019, shows the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in each governorate[17].
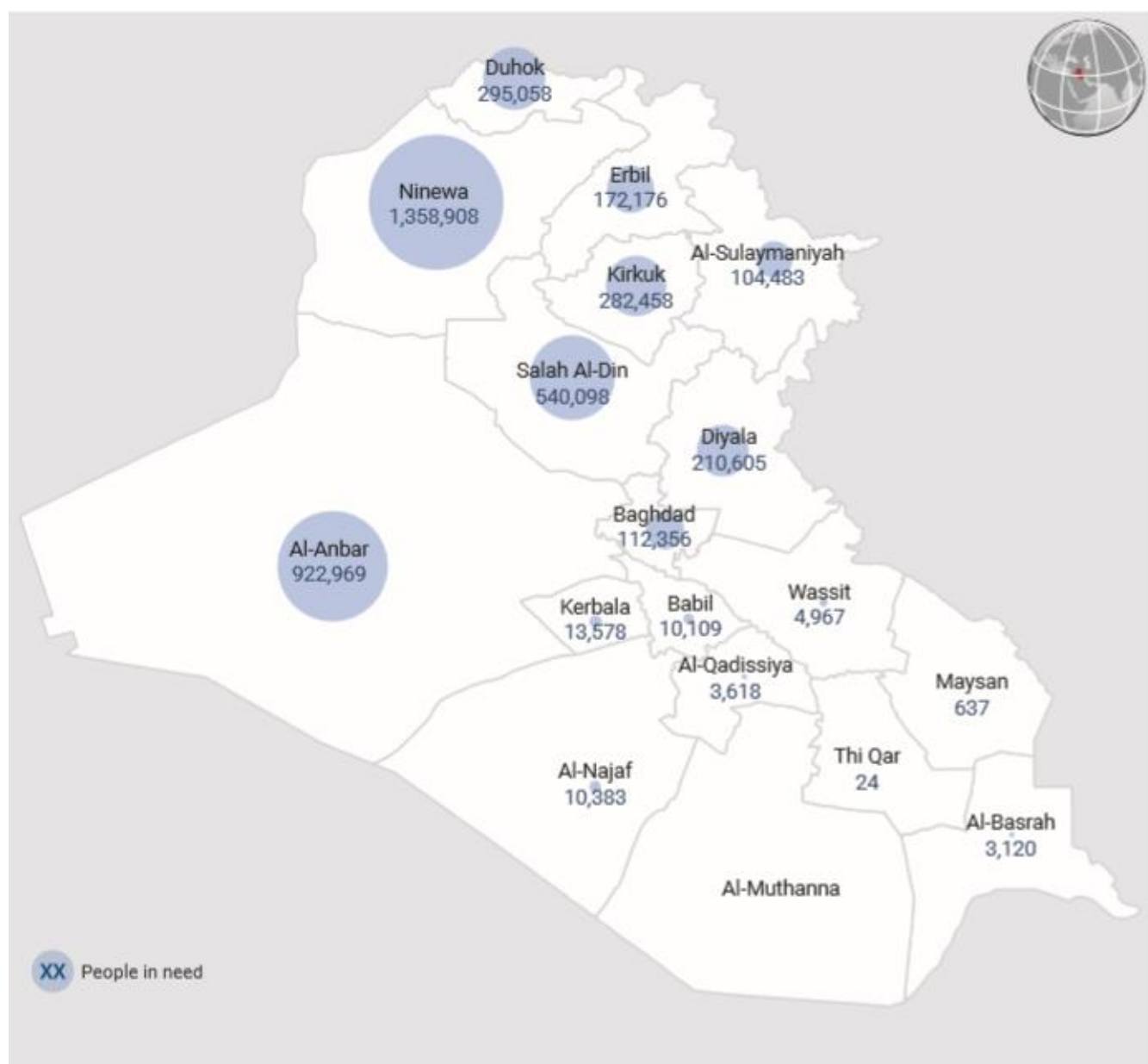
5.4 Vulnerable groups

5.4.1 OCHA stated in January 2020 that of the 4.1 million people in need of humanitarian assistance:

- 1.9 million are children

- 165,360 are elderly (defined as 59 and over)

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[16] OCHA, 'Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020 – Iraq', (p.5), November 2019, url
[17] OCHA, 'Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020 – Iraq', (p.6), November 2019, url

- 1.12 million are female[18]

5.4.2   In addition to the above, the 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview published in November 2019 by OCHA stated 'The most vulnerable include people with perceived affiliation to extremist groups, who are unwelcome in their areas of origin, face stigma and discrimination, and have significant protection needs.'[19]

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5.5   Numbers of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

5.5.1   As of 31 December 2019 1,414,632 individuals were displaced in Iraq across 3,041 locations[20].

5.5.2   The International Organization for Migration (IOM) used its Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) to produce the following graph[21] showing the number of IDPs from May 2014 to December 2019:

<div align="right">
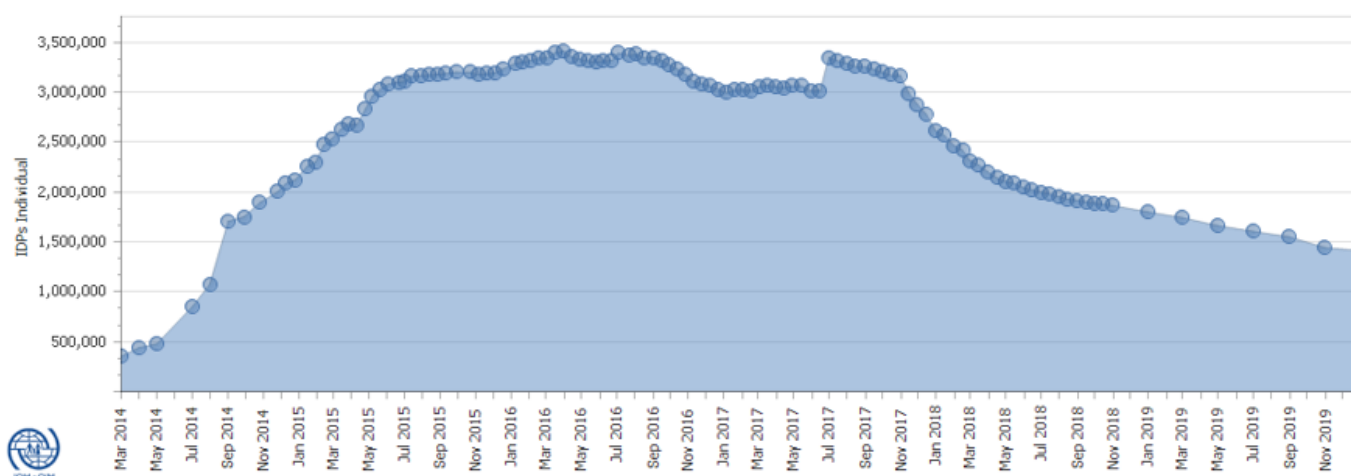
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[18] OCHA, '2020 Humanitarian Response Plan – Iraq', (p.9), January 2020, url
[19] OCHA, 'Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020 – Iraq', (p.5), November 2019, url
[20] IOM, DTM, updated December 2019, url
[21] IOM, DTM, IDPs, updated December 2019, url

5.6 Origin and location of IDPs

5.6.1 The IOM provided the following chart[22] showing the origin of IDPs and their current location, as at September 2019:

GOVERNORATE OF DISPLACEMENT	GOVERNORATE OF ORIGIN									
	Ninewa	Salah al-Din	Anbar	Kirkuk	Diyala	Babylon	Baghdad	Erbil	Dahuk	Total
Anbar	90	0	31,716	0	0	74,04	60	0	0	39,270
Babylon	1,890	42	444	18	42	14,832	186	0	0	17,454
Baghdad	11,358	3,858	28,632	246	1,248	4,854	354	0	0	50,550
Basrah	2,196	2,250	1,338	660	204	120	198	0	0	6,966
Dahuk	322,314	366	342	66	0	0	60	0	0	323,148
Diyala	600	4,590	1,098	102	46,944	570	672	0	0	54,576
Erbil	97,650	20,970	66,648	10,824	726	0	10,296	10,380	0	217,494
Kerbala	18,420	126	588	240	162	1,308	36	0	0	20,880
Kirkuk	11,688	22,764	2,766	56,586	4,740	162	1,002	0	0	99,708
Missan	1,158	324	144	450	90	36	150	0	0	2,352
Muthanna	648	90	108	84	30	0	132	0	0	1,092
Najaf	10,890	36	18	6	42	0	0	0	0	10,992
Ninewa	420,822	18,792	552	3,942	0	0	0	9,060	0	453,168
Qadissiya	31,08	48	0	1,212	0	0	126	0	0	4,494
Salah al-Din	756	83,016	474	10,752	1,308	0	0	0	0	96,306
Sulaymaniyah	14,754	38,178	24,054	6,768	26,952	10,038	22,290	0	0	143,034
Thi-Qar	2,064	198	606	492	54	24	42	0	0	3,480
Wassit	6,042	330	360	750	408	0	60	0	0	7,950
Grand Total	926,448	195,978	159,888	93,198	82,950	39,348	35,664	19,440	0	1,552,914

5.7 Shelter types of IDPs

5.7.1 The IOM, in November 2019, summarised that approximately:

- 67% live in private settings

- 25% live in camps

- 8% live in 'critical shelters' (informal settlements, religious buildings, schools and unfinished or abandoned buildings)[23]
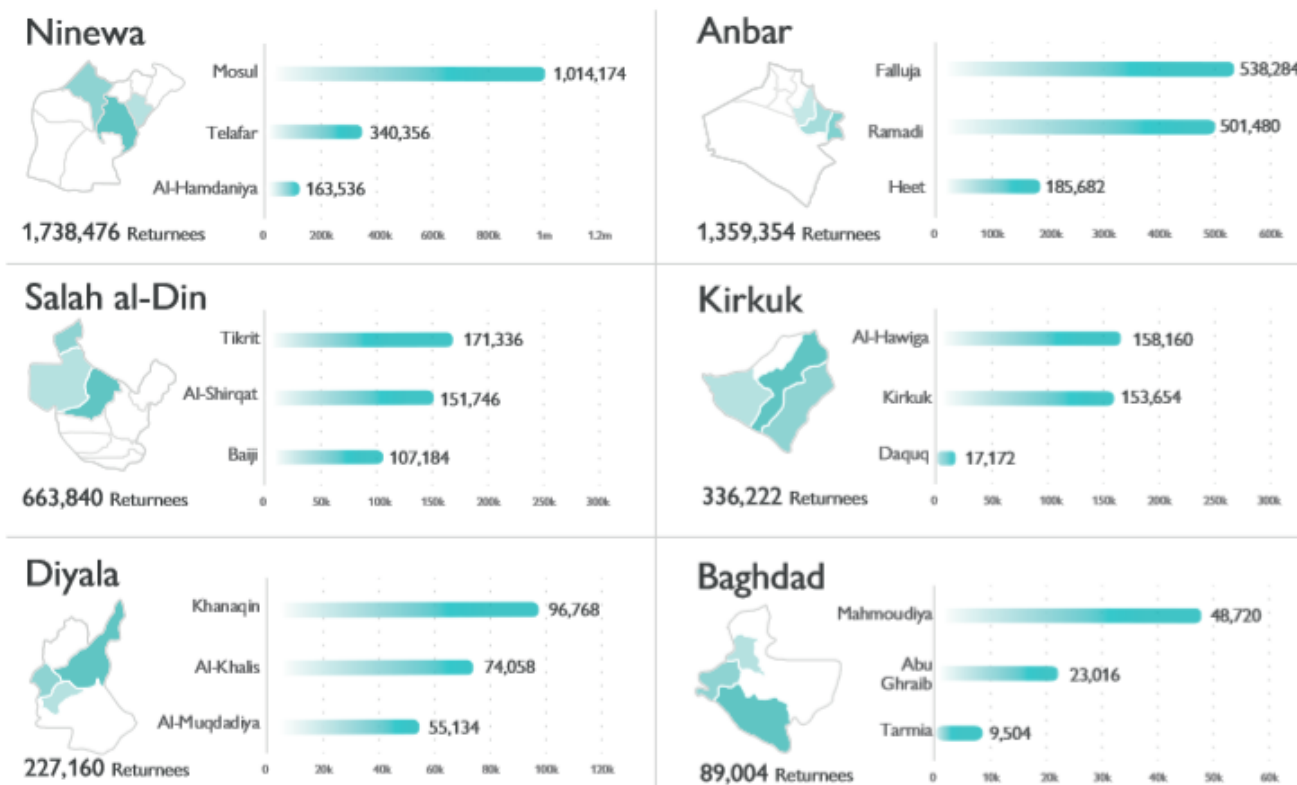
5.8 Numbers of returnees and places of return

5.8.1 The IOM, in November 2019, identified that 4,460,808 people (743,468 families) had returned to their places of origin. The top governorates (and districts) of return are:

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[22] IOM, DTM Round 111, September 2019 (p. 5), url
[23] IOM, DTM Round 112, November 2019 (p. 4), url

TOP GOVERNORATES OF RETURN

Ninewa

Mosul	1,014,174
Telafar	340,356
Al-Hamdaniya	163,536

1,738,476 Returnees

Anbar

Falluja	538,284
Ramadi	501,480
Heet	185,682

1,359,354 Returnees

Salah al-Din

Tikrit	171,336
Al-Shirqat	151,746
Baiji	107,184

663,840 Returnees

Kirkuk

Al-Hawiga	158,160
Kirkuk	153,654
Daquq	17,172

336,222 Returnees

Diyala

Khanaqin	96,768
Al-Khalis	74,058
Al-Muqdadiya	55,134

227,160 Returnees

Baghdad

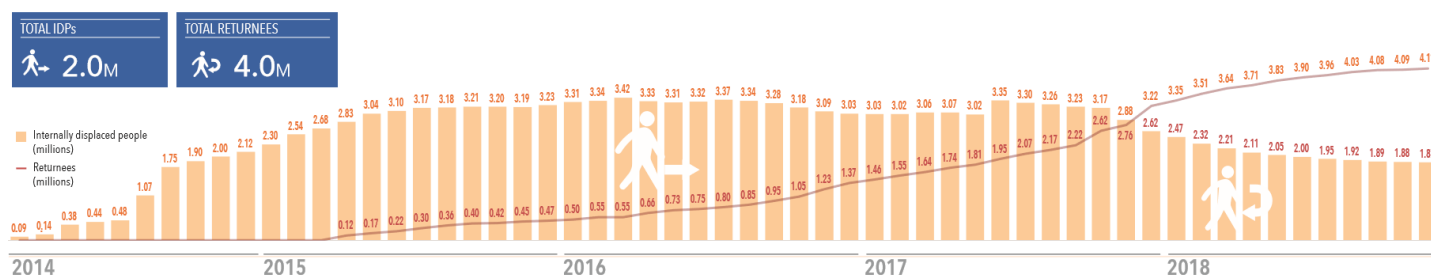|	
Mahmoudiya	48,720
Abu Ghraib	23,016
Tarmia	9,504

89,004 Returnees

24

5.8.2   The IOM noted that, of returnees:

- 95% have returned to their habitual residence
- 2% live in private settings
- 3% live in critical shelters[25]

5.8.3   OCHA provided a timeline of returns (and IDPs)[26], as of 31 October 2018:

5.8.4   In November 2019, the IOM:

'identified 4,460,808 returnees (743,468 households) across 8 governorates, 38 districts and 1,773 locations in Round 112. Ninewa, Anbar and Salah al-

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[24] IOM, DTM Round 112, November 2019 (p. 3), url
[25] IOM, DTM Round 112, November 2019 (p. 2), url
[26] OCHA, Iraq: Timeline of displacement and returns (as of 31 October 2018), url

Din are the governorates which have both the highest number of returnees and the highest increases in the numbers of returnees since the previous round, hosting a total of 1,738,476 individuals (including an additional 42,090 new returns since August 2019) in Ninewa, 1,359,354 (42,180 new returns) in Anbar and 663,840 (16,980 new returns) in Salah al-Din.

'At the district level in the top three governorates, Mosul in Ninewa remains the district hosting the highest number of returnees: 23 per cent of all returnees (1,014,174 individuals). It also had one of the largest influx of returnees in terms of raw numbers during this round (10,746 individuals). By comparison, the largest percent increase of returnees took place in Al-Ba'aj, which witnessed a 72 per cent increase since August (7,716 individuals) followed by Hatra and Sinjar with a 52 per cent (11,454) and 10 per cent (6,438) increase respectively. Falluja district in Anbar has the second highest number of returnees, followed by Ramadi in Anbar with 12 per cent (538,284 individuals) and 11 per cent (501,480) of all returnees respectively.'[27]

5.8.5   The same source also stated that 'In addition to the regular reasons for returning such as improvements in the security situation and provision of services, including schools, employment, and rehabilitation of houses in areas of origin, […] DTM recorded returns due to camps closures.'[28]

5.9   Prevented returns

5.9.1   The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in a briefing dated July 2019, explained:

'IDPs living in camps and informal settlements continue to cite security concerns, explosive hazard contamination, destruction of houses, tribal conflicts, and lack of livelihood opportunities, basic services and civil documentation as the main reasons preventing their return to their place of origin. For instance, in Anbar Governorate, IDPs from Rawa District, to where only 30 per cent of IDPs returned, cited that unexploded ordnance is still the primary reason hindering return.

'In Babil Governorate, approximately 530 IDP families in Al-Askandaria (north of Babil), originally from Jurf Al-Sakhar, Al-Buhairat, and Al-Khudhir areas are being prevented from returning to their areas of origin due to tribal and political reasons. IDP families, many headed by women, expressed their willingness to return but claimed they are unable to do so due to tribal disputes and missing civil documentation. In Salah Al-Din Governorate, IDPs living in Al Karama Camp and Al Qadissiyah Complex, most of whom originate from Baiji and Senya, have expressed that they are unable to return due to infrastructure damage and lack of basic services in their areas of origin. Furthermore, IDPs living in Al Alam camp, where most of the families are from Hawija District in Kirkuk Governorate, stated that they could

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[27] IOM, DTM Round 112, November 2019 (pp. 2), url
[28] IOM, DTM Round 112, November 2019 (pp. 2), url

not return due to infrastructure damage, tribal disputes, and lack of job opportunities, medical care and other basic services.'[29]

5.9.2 The same source further stated that:

'UNHCR continues to receive reports of collective punishment of families due to accusations of perceived affiliation with extremists. […] [T]wo families who returned from HAA [Hamam Al-Alil] camps to Al-Salahya village in Rabeea Sub-District, Tel Afar District, reportedly were re-displaced to Haj Ali camp after returning to their house for one day. An unknown person threw a grenade in their house, allegedly targeting the families in the belief that they have family members affiliated with extremists. Moreover, a family originally from Al-Qayarah Sub-District, Mosul District were prevented from returning to their place of origin as a government-affiliated armed group abused them verbally and threatened them that they would kill them if they attempt to return again. Likewise, three families in Jed'ah camp 4 originally from Al-Shirqat District reported that a government-affiliated armed group evicted them from their house on 5 July, citing their family members' alleged affiliation with extremists as the reason.'[30]

5.10 Conditions in places of return

5.10.1 The OCHA 2019 Periodic Monitoring report published in August 2019 stated:

'IDPs are fairly consistent in their motives for remaining displaced, citing damaged or destroyed housing as the primary factor, followed by lack of livelihoods and basic services, concerns about security and/or social cohesion, and perceived presence of unexploded ordinance. […] Nearly all families who have returned to their areas of origin (an estimated 95 per cent) have returned to a habitual residence that is in a good condition; two per cent are living in other private settings (host families or rented accommodation); and three per cent are living in critical shelters. Reasons given for return have remained constant and include improvements in the security situation, provision of services and rehabilitation of houses in areas of origin.

'A general appraisal of the data, therefore, would suggest that those who have returned did so because they had a home in good condition to return to, felt safe in doing so, and believed that there were adequate schools, hospitals and employment opportunities to support their families in the areas of origin. However, the inverse is also true: those who remain in, or are at risk of, protracted displacement do so not out of preference, but due to a lack of feasible alternatives. Moreover, conditions in areas of return are not uniformly suitable to support sustainable returns. Of the approximately 4.3 million people who have returned to areas of origin after displacement during the armed conflict against ISIL, 12 per cent (508,000 people) are assessed to be living in conditions of high or very high severity across eight governorates (indicating a lack of livelihoods, services, social cohesion and

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[29] UNHCR, Iraq Protection Update, July 2019, url
[30] UNHCR, Iraq Protection Update, July 2019, url

security). The top five locations with the most severe conditions are in Salah Al-Din Governorate.'[31]

5.10.2 The OCHA Humanitarian Bulletin, dated July 2018, commented on the situation in Ninewah governorate:

'Drawing on damage and loss assessments conducted by the Ministry of Planning, the World Bank estimates that reconstruction [of Mosul] will take at least 10 years, with a financial requirement of at least $80 billion…

'UNICEF has supported the rehabilitation of one third of the 638 schools that have reopened, enabling more than half a million girls and boys to return to local schools. Moreover, 107,217 children under the age of five have been vaccinated against polio in coordination with WHO [World Health Organisation] and the Ministry of Health. UNICEF [United Nations Children's Fund] has also supported the local authorities with the repair of damaged water supply systems. As a result, clean drinking water was provided to 800,000 residents in Ninewa governorate…

'WHO has restored basic primary healthcare services for returnees in Ba'aj, Hatra, Mosul, Talafar, and Sinjar districts and established six primary health care centres. Basic health consultations were offered to more than 216,000 people and at least 532,000 people were reached in remote areas through the provision of 17 mobile medical clinics.

'As ISIL had closed most maternity wards and hospitals during its occupation of Mosul, UNFPA [United Nations Population Fund] responded to the staggering reproductive health and protection needs and was already supporting a delivery room in East Mosul in December 2016. UNFPA also established 55 reproductive health facilities in and around Mosul between October 2016 and July 2017. During the last three months of 2017, UNFPA provided reproductive health consultations to more than 472,000 displaced women and girls…

'Between July 2017 and June 2018, UNMAS [United Nations Mine Action Service] removed from Mosul more than 44,000 explosive hazards, including 1,000 IEDs [Improvised Explosive Devices], from roads, bridges, schools, universities, hospitals, clinics, water treatment plants and municipal buildings in Mosul city. In addition, 450 suicide belts were discovered, many from human remains that are still being found. UNMAS has also cleared to date 550 critical infrastructure locations of explosive hazards, allowing for the resumption of basic services for Mosul residents and returnees.

'More than 1,200 households in 12 neighbourhoods in East Mosul have benefitted from UNHabitat's provision of legal assistance, thereby helping returning residents to address housing, land and property issues. In addition, UN-Habitat has rehabilitated 257 conflict damaged houses in West Mosul, which allowed almost 3,000 people to return home.'[32]

5.10.3 The 2018 OCHA Humanitarian Response Plan explained:

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[31] OCHA, 'Iraq: 2019 Periodic Monitoring Report', (p.8) 27 August 2019, url.
[32] OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin (pp.1-4), July 2018, url

'Retaken areas are being cleared of explosive hazards and rubble and major efforts are underway to restore electricity, water and sewage grids, re-establish the Government's social protection floor, jump-start local economies and open schools and health centres. Displaced camps are being consolidated and decommissioned and modalities are being put in place for ensuring that the highly vulnerable families who are currently receiving assistance from humanitarian partners are covered under the Government's new Poverty Reduction Strategy…

'It will take years to rebuild Iraq. Damage and loss assessments conducted by the Ministry of Planning and analysed by the World Bank estimate that reconstruction will take at least 10 years and cost well over US$88 billion…

'Although major efforts are being made by the Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government to incentivize and facilitate returns, many vulnerable families are unable to return without assistance. Displaced people from areas which are not yet stable are likely to delay going home until conditions improve and will continue to need support. Families living in camps and substandard accommodation are highly vulnerable and host communities throughout the country, most particularly in the Kurdistan Region, are facing widespread unemployment and deteriorating public services.'[33]

5.10.4 The 2018 OCHR Humanitarian Response Plan explained the situation in the KRI:

'Pressures on local services, including schools, water and sanitation, solid waste management, health facilities and competition for jobs have increased each year, contributing to a sharp decline in living standards across the three governorates. Conditions worsened in the aftermath of the Kurdish referendum in late September [2017] when international flights to the airports in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah were suspended, impacting economic activity and commerce. In mid-October [2017], as security forces realigned in Kirkuk and a number of disputed districts, more than 180,000 people fled their homes, the majority seeking safety and support in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah.'[34]
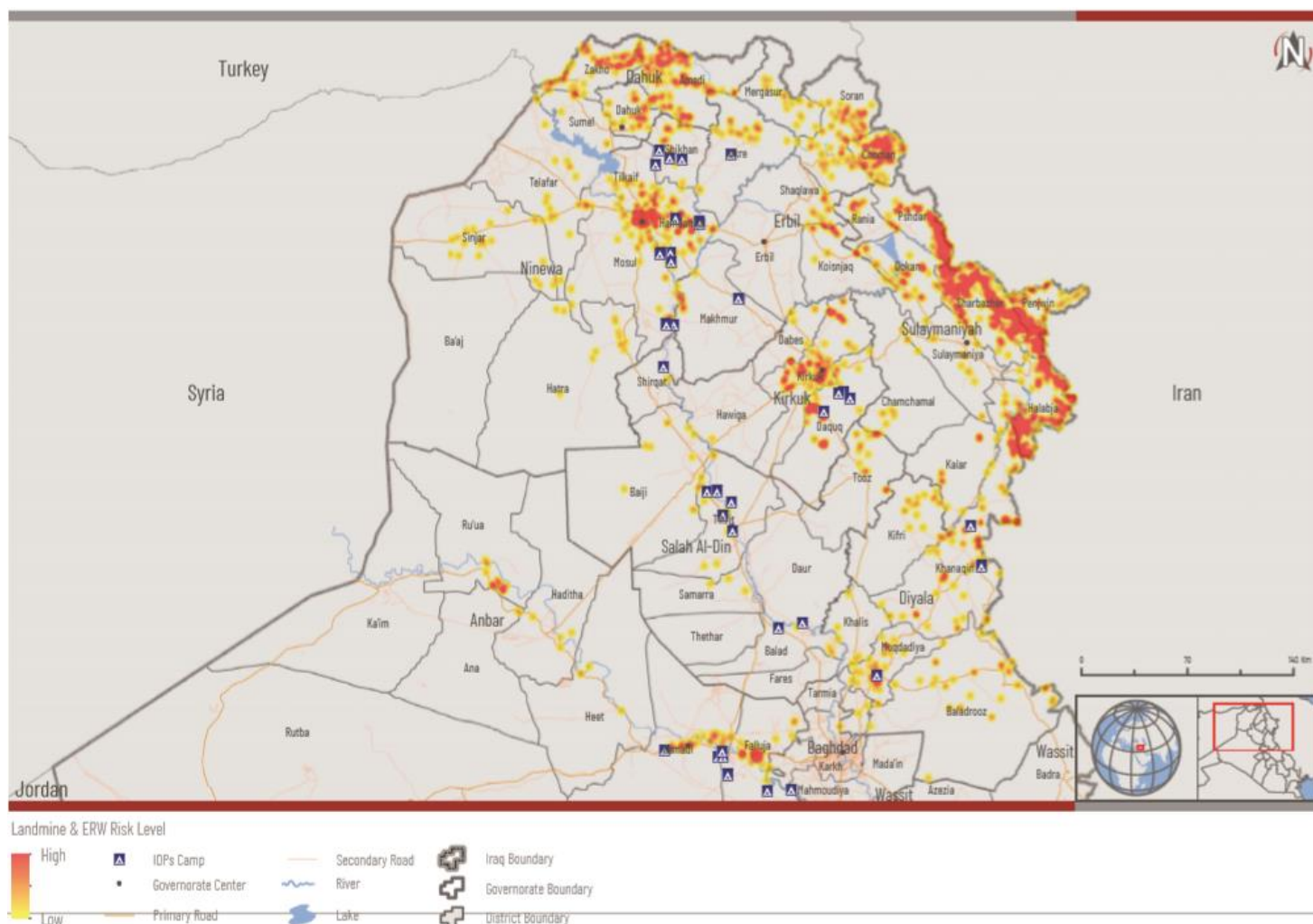
5.10.5 In January 2019, iMMAP produced the following map showing landmine and explosive remnants of war (ERW) contamination areas[35]:

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[33] OCHA, 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan – Iraq (p.5), February 2018, url
[34] OCHA, 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan – Iraq (p.32), February 2018, url
[35] iMMAP, 'Humanitarian Access Response January 2019', 5 February 2019 (section 1.2), url

Landmine & ERW Risk Level

High — IDPs Camp — Secondary Road — Iraq Boundary
  • Governorate Center — River — Governorate Boundary
Low — Primary Road — Lake — District Boundary

5.10.6 In January 2020 iMMAP published a map showing explosive hazard incidents between January and December 2019 in Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Erbil, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din Governorates[36].

5.11   Employment and financial security

5.11.1 The OCHA 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview published in November 2019 stated:

'According to the World Bank DNA report, approximately 27 per cent of IDPs are unemployed, and within that group, the most vulnerable are women and children, 49 per cent of whom are less than 18 years old. […] Barriers to much needed employment remain high with the top reported issue being lack of employment opportunities (78 per cent among households with at least one adult looking for employment).

'[…] Approximately 2.39 million people in Iraq need Emergency Livelihoods (EL) support in 2020, an increase of approximately 100,000 people from 2019. Limited employment opportunities remain high in areas of return, specifically in Ninewa, Al-Anbar and Salah Al-Din governorates. While the

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[36] iMMAP, 'Iraq: Explosive Hazard Incidents', 12 January 2020, url.

situation remains equally severe among IDPs, with almost 24 per cent unemployed or underemployed.'[37]

5.11.2 The same source stated:

'Emergency livelihoods are directly linked to other humanitarian vulnerabilities. In Iraq, unemployment is linked to reduced education, sale of assets and taking on debt to afford food. Creating employment opportunities is critical for IDPs and returnees most in-need of income, specifically female-headed IDP households in camps and marginalized groups of youth and female-headed households among returnees in areas of origin and host communities primarily in Ninewa, Al-Anbar, Salah Al-Din, Diyala and Kirkuk.

'The main reasons for taking on debt are to meet basic non-food needs (48 per cent) and food needs (27 per cent). Female heads of households, especially widows, are the most vulnerable to adopting negative coping strategies as their access to income is reduced for a range of economic and social reasons. Female-headed households in debt represent 5 per cent of the 2.39 million people in need of livelihoods assistance.'[38]

5.12 Food security

5.12.1 OCHA stated in the 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview:

'[…] an estimated at 1.77 million people need food and livelihoods assistance, with the majority of needs concentrated in Al-Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Salah Al-Din and Ninewa.

'A total of 425,000 returnees and 125,000 out-of-camp IDPs are food insecure. Governorates with the highest number of food insecure returnees are Ninewa (224,434), Salah Al-Din (93,450), Al-Anbar (35,637) and Diyala (29,112). […] All camp-based IDPs (370,000) are considered in need of food assistance or income-generating activities.'[39]

5.12.2 OCHA further stated in their Humanitarian Response plan published in January 2020 that the number of people in need of food security assistance was 0.92 million[40].

5.12.3 The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) country guidance note and common analysis on Iraq published in June 2019 stated:

'All food commodities tracked by the UN World Food Programme were "widely available" in Babylon, Baghdad, Najaf, Qadissiya, and Salah Al-Din; and 'available' in Kirkuk and in Ninewa. In June 2018, an abnormal high price level was indicated in Baghdad compared to the long-term seasonal trend. Food commodities and prices are relatively stable and available in Basrah for more than 80 % of agricultural products. Markets in the city,

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[37] OCHA, 'Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020 – Iraq', (p.23,45), November 2019, url
[38] OCHA, 'Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020 – Iraq', (p.45), November 2019, url
[39] OCHA, 'Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020 – Iraq', (p.47), November 2019, url
[40] OCHA, '2020 Humanitarian Response Plan – Iraq', (p.55), January 2020, url

where most people access their food needs, are functional, although prices were 'relatively higher' than in surrounding areas.'[41]

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5.13 Health and healthcare

5.13.1 In February 2019, OCHA reported that the number of people requiring healthcare was 5.5 million[42]. In January 2020, OCHA reported that this number had dropped to 2.8 million[43].

5.13.2 In its 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview for Iraq, the OCHA stated:

'Some 324,533 individuals in camps, 493,050 individuals out-of-camps, 17,455 individuals among host communities and 1,974,543 returnees need essential primary health care services provided by humanitarian partners.

'[…] Among the total number of people in need, around 1.4 million children of different age groups require, different services including, immunization and neonatal health care services in order to prevent vaccine-preventable diseases and fatal childhood illnesses.

'Based on preliminary analysis, the priority governorates remain those affected by the conflict, as well as some affected by past outbreaks: Al-Anbar, Babil, Baghdad, Duhok, Diyala, Erbil, Kirkuk, Al-Najaf, Ninewa, Salah Al-Din, and Al-Sulaymaniyah.'[44]

5.13.3 The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) country guidance note and common analysis on Iraq published in June 2019 stated:

'As a result of the conflict, the healthcare system in Iraq, including in Baghdad, has seen a significant deterioration. Both health services and medication are available in a public and a private sector system. Hospitals and other health services are heavily concentrated in urban areas. As a consequence, hospitals and other medical facilities are either scarcely or not at all available for inhabitants of the poorer governorates. Medical staff are not evenly distributed across the country; disproportionately large numbers of doctors, healthcare professionals and beds are located in Baghdad while poorer governorates have fewer available medical resources.'[45]

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5.14 Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

5.14.1 In February 2018, OCHA reported that 5.4 million needed water and sanitation assistance[46], down from 8.3 million in December 2016[47]. In February 2019 OCHA reported that this figure was 2.3 million[48]. In January

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[41] EASO, 'Country Guidance: Iraq', (p.135), June 2019, url.
[42] OCHA, 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan - Iraq, (p.43), February 2019, url
[43] OCHA, '2020 Humanitarian Response Plan – Iraq', (p.56), January 2020, url
[44] OCHA, 'Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020 – Iraq', (p.49), November 2019, url
[45] EASO, 'Country Guidance: Iraq', (p.136), June 2019, url.
[46] OCHA, 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan – Iraq (p.5), February 2018, url
[47] OCHA, 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan – Iraq (p.4), 16 December 2016, url
[48] OCHA, 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan - Iraq, (p.46), February 2019, url

2020, OCHA reported that this figure had dropped again, down to 1.85 million[49].

5.14.2 OCHA's 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview published in November 2019 stated:

'An estimated 1.85 million people across Iraq remain in critical need of sustained, equitable access to safe and appropriate WASH [water, sanitation and hygiene] services, of which women and girls account for 49 per cent, children 38 per cent and the older people for 4 per cent. This is a decrease of 20 per cent from 2018 to 2019, when 2.3 million people needed humanitarian WASH assistance. The number of people in need of WASH assistance in 2020 includes 653,685 IDPs (of whom 283,048 reside in out-of-camp locations) and 1.06 million returnees; 14,724 people highly vulnerable host communities; and 113,019 refugees in nine refugee camps and out-of-camp locations.

'Access to sufficient quantity and quality of water, and of sanitation and hygiene services, are vital needs of people affected by the conflict. Approximately 1.67 million people including IDPs (in and out of camps), returnees and host communities lack access to potable water. Of this, 317,663 people lack access to an improved water source, while 679,751 people lack access to sufficient quantities of water, 723,123 people lack access to soap and handwashing facilities, and 195,913 people lack access to a functioning improved sanitation facility. The overall need compared has reduced in 2019 across all WASH sectors. However, the need for improving access to water, sanitation and hygiene services and facilities still exists.'[50]

5.15   Education

5.15.1 In February 2018, the OCHA noted: 'Schools in conflict-affected areas are operating double and triple shifts. Last year alone, more than 150 schools were damaged or destroyed. Nearly 50 per cent of children in displaced camps do not have access to quality education and 3.2 million children attend school irregularly or not at all.'[51] In February 2019, OCHA noted that 2.6 million children lack access to education[52]. In January 2020 OCHA assessed that this figure had decreased to 1.22 million[53].

5.15.2 OCHA's 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview published in November 2019 stated:

'Though access to education has improved for conflict-affected children in Iraq since 2015, gaps in access to quality of education remain for the most vulnerable groups of children. In IDP camps, 18 per cent of children (38,579) face major challenges in accessing both formal and non-formal education. For out-of-camp IDPs, 13 per cent of children (74,072) have little to no access to education. Key barriers include insufficient quantity and

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[49] OCHA, '2020 Humanitarian Response Plan – Iraq', (p.74), January 2020, url
[50] OCHA, 'Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020 – Iraq', (p.59), November 2019, url
[51] OCHA, 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan – Iraq (p.5), February 2018, url
[52] OCHA, 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan - Iraq, (p.7), February 2019, url
[53] OCHA, '2020 Humanitarian Response Plan – Iraq', (p.48), January 2020, url

inadequate training of teachers, shortages of learning materials and large class sizes, resulting in poor education outcomes. The poor condition of school buildings creates school environments which are not conducive to learning, especially in returns areas, where many schools have been damaged or destroyed. Participation in secondary education is particularly low in conflict affected areas due to limited service provision and economic pressures resulting in low retention rates. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2019 data shows a net attendance rate of just 62 per cent at lower secondary level. For students in attendance, the quality of teaching and learning is inadequate, with 14 per cent of IDP students in-camps passing the grade six threshold exam required to progress to lower secondary school.

'An estimated 1.2 million IDP and returnee children aged 6-17 (including 578,004 girl and 39,000 children with special needs) will need emergency and specialized education services from the government, as well as national and international NGOs in Iraq in 2020.'[54]

Section 6 updated: 12 May 2020

6.   Humanitarian support

6.1   UN Humanitarian Response Plan

6.1.1   The 2020 OCHA Humanitarian Response Plan stated:

'In 2020, humanitarian partners in Iraq will continue to focus on the residual impact of the 2014-2017 conflict with Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), aiming to assist the 1.77 million people in acute need of humanitarian assistance. Priorities will include vulnerable IDPs who have not been able to achieve durable solutions and continue to have acute humanitarian needs, returnees living in areas of high severity and people with critical protection needs. Strategic objectives have been designed to address humanitarian consequences and associated needs identified during the assessment and joint analysis process, including context and access analyses, population movement trends, and careful consideration of recent events, including declared positions, behaviours and statements of regional, national and local actors which may impact the humanitarian environment.

'The response is guided by several planning assumptions: the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in formal camps is expected to continue to decline, especially given stated positions of the Government of Iraq to close all camps. However, in the absence of durable solutions, the caseload of out-of-camp IDPs is expected to persist or even increase, as is the number of returnees living in areas of high severity and who require humanitarian assistance. The needs analysis also identified vulnerabilities among host communities. However, these vulnerabilities are linked to the needs of IDPs in displacement or returns areas and are therefore addressed through broader community programming rather than targeted host community programming. Similarly, the 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview

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[54] OCHA, 'Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020 – Iraq', (p.43), November 2019, url

(HNO) identified critical issues related to resilience and recovery, but through the strategic planning process, humanitarians have recognized that resilience and recovery issues should primarily be addressed by development and stabilization actors.

'The response might be impacted by unpredictable elements. Sustained demonstrations against the Government of Iraq in the last quarter of 2019 have seen considerable impact on humanitarian operations towards the end of 2019. Continuing unrest in neighbouring north-east Syria may impact the humanitarian landscape. Political division or paralysis among government counterparts is expected to strain humanitarian partners' capacity to serve those most in need. With the formerly regular and predictable authorization letter mechanism becoming dysfunctional in 2019, access to areas with high severity of needs is uncertain. A potentially growing ISIL insurgency could see a further deterioration of the security environment. In parallel, unexpected needs may arise from natural hazards such as floods and earthquakes.'[55]

6.2   Numbers and reach of humanitarian partners

6.2.1   The 2020 OCHA Humanitarian Response Plan stated:

'In 2019, conflict-related access restrictions had mostly subsided as the country transitioned to a post-conflict phase. Yet, humanitarian organizations continue to navigate significant administrative constraints on their movements and operations.

'[…] As of the end of November 2019, more than 78 per cent of districts covered by the 2019 HRP [Humanitarian Response Plan] had reports of access constraints, and almost half of the districts were considered by humanitarian partners as having moderate to high access difficulties; more than 2.1 million people in need live in these areas, including almost one million people in acute need of humanitarian assistance.

'Despite considerable administrative access challenges, the scale of reach of humanitarian interventions significantly improved in 2019, with a threefold increase in geographic reach compared to 2018. Some 105 organizations, including 45 national NGOs, 49 international NGOs, five UN entities and six government departments and directorates reported implementing humanitarian activities in 1,258 locations spanning 93 districts in the 18 governorates of Iraq. Approximately 51 per cent of humanitarian organizations conducted activities in districts with moderate to high levels of access constraints, with 85 per cent of the beneficiaries reached, located in Ninewa and Al-Anbar governorates where moderate to high levels of access constraints are regularly reported.

'The improved response footprint reflects the high prioritization of underserved locations in 30 districts in the 2019 HRP, which targeted more than one million people for assistance, and resulted in 1.1 million people being reached. Most cluster activities reached IDPs living in camps, with 91

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[55] OCHA, '2020 Humanitarian Response Plan – Iraq', (p.7), January 2020, url

per cent of the 500,000 IDPs targeted within camps receiving assistance. Approximately 181,000 IDPs living outside of camps and 165,000 returnees (approximately 33 per cent of targets) also received humanitarian assistance. Slightly fewer than 20 per cent of the 200,000-people targeted in vulnerable host communities were reached in 2019.'[56]

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6.3 Numbers and profile of people targeted for assistance

6.3.1 OCHA's 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan stated:

'Humanitarian partners will complement government humanitarian response in reaching the most vulnerable people. Of the 4.1 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, humanitarian partners aim to reach 1.77 million IDPs in acute need in camps, in out-of-camp locations, and returnees with a variety of humanitarian packages and services. Eight humanitarian clusters and two operational service sectors will require an estimated $520 million to deliver lifesaving coordination and operational services, including basic social services such as SNFI [Shelter and Non-Food Items], WASH, Health and Education, Food Security, Emergency Livelihoods and Protection. The assistance will target 938,000 women and girls, 885,000 children and 266,000 people with disabilities.'[57]

6.3.2 The same source also published the following table which indicates the number of people targeted for each different type of humanitarian assistance:

CLUSTERS	PEOPLE IN NEED	PEOPLE TARGETED	REQUIREMENTS (US$)	OPERATIONAL PARTNERS	NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES
Camp Coordination and Camp Management	770.00 K	539.88 K	23.96 M	15	4
Education	1.22 M	330.50 K	28.37 M	15	15
Emergency Livelihoods	2.40 M	54.00 K	15.67 M	8	10
Food Security	920.00 K	462.40 K	65.26 M	4	8
Health	2.80 M	1.26 M	60.31 M	22	10
Protection, Mine Action and Housing, Land and Property	2.92 M	883.00 K	82.75 M	31	22
Protection: Child Protection	1.64 M	589.28 K	38.88 M	38	12
Protection: Gender-Based Violence	1.29 M	403.29 K	29.51 M	32	10
Shelter and Non-Food Items	2.40 M	524.75 K	43.18 M	17	11
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	1.85 M	889.36 K	43.76 M	23	9
Coordination and Common Services		-	15.00 M	-	-
Multi-purpose Cash Assistance	-	368.85 K	73.16 M	7	1
Total	**4.10 M**	**1.77 M**	**519.80 M**	**212**	**112**

[58]

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[56] OCHA, '2020 Humanitarian Response Plan – Iraq', (p.27), January 2020, <u>url</u>
[57] OCHA, '2020 Humanitarian Response Plan – Iraq', (p.86), January 2020, <u>url</u>
[58] OCHA, '2020 Humanitarian Response Plan – Iraq', (p.86), January 2020, <u>url</u>

6.4 Public Distribution System (PDS)

6.4.1 The US State Department (USSD)'s human rights report covering 2019 reported:

'All citizens were eligible to receive food under the Public Distribution System (PDS), but authorities implemented the PDS sporadically and irregularly, with limited access in recently liberated areas. Authorities did not distribute all commodities each month, and not all IDPs could access the PDS in each governorate. Low oil prices reduced government revenues and further limited funds available for the PDS. There were reports of IDPs losing access and entitlement to PDS distributions and other services due to requirements that citizens could redeem PDS rations or other services only at their registered place of residence.'[59]

6.4.2 A report published in May 2019 by United Nations Iraq stated that the PDS is now digital, supported by the World Food Programme (WFP):

'After decades of manual, paper-driven and overwhelming food distribution processes, today Iraqi citizens started receiving their food entitlement provided by the government through biometrically protected smart cards.

'[…] WFP smart cards are being used to manage citizen's data and entitlements. The distribution will expand to 10 more locations impacting around 35,000 citizens as part of the trial phase that was jointly launched by WFP and the Iraqi Ministry of Trade to digitise the national PDS, i.e. the biggest social protection system providing food entitlements to 39 million citizens.

'WFP will continue to support the government throughout the trial phase, while working simultaneously on citizen's empowerment through developing a smart mobile application that enables citizens to update their data, and access government services conveniently.'[60]

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6.5 Effectiveness of humanitarian support

6.5.1 OCHA's 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview published in November 2019 stated that 'The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in Iraq decreased 40 per cent in 2020 compared to 2019.'[61]

6.5.2 The Iraq: Humanitarian Dashboard for January to November 2019, published by OCHA in January 2020 stated:

'After 11 months of programming, humanitarian actors in Iraq have reached 1.3 million people with some form of assistance, or 74 per cent of the 1.75 targeted under the 2019 HRP. As scoping missions and visits have continued to areas previously inaccessible or underserved, the number of locations being served by partners has increased 62 percent over the past six months (from 823 in May to 1332 in November), although the number of partners active has remained relatively stable.

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[59] USSD, 'Country Reports on Human Right Practices for 2018 – Iraq', (Section E),11 March 2020, url
[60] UN Iraq, 'Iraq Public Distribution System (PDS) goes digital', 28 May 2019, url
[61] OCHA, 'Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020 – Iraq', (p6), November 2019, url

'Programming to in-camp IDPs continues to attract the most attention from the humanitarian community in Iraq, even as the population of IDP camps steadily decreases due to camp closures and consolidations at the behest of the Government of Iraq. It is anticipated in that the focus will shift to out-of-camp IDPs and returnees in 2020.

'Per their submitted data, the WASH and Health clusters have overall reached the most people with humanitarian aid during the reporting period, meeting between 70 and 80 per cent of their target. This could be attributed to being among two of the best resourced clusters. The Food Security cluster, meanwhile, has reached significantly fewer beneficiaries through the end of November than during previous reporting periods, which may be attributed to the difficulties in access authorizations which are affecting numerous partners.

'The 2019 HRP has attracted almost 90 per cent of its requested funding as of 28 November, making Iraq the top-funded appeal globally for the third year in a row.'[62]

6.5.3 UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) all published reports on their humanitarian aid efforts toward the end of 2019[63],[64],[65].

Section 7 updated: 12 May 2020

7. Security situation

7.1 Overview: the war against Daesh (Islamic State)

7.1.1 A March 2019 report produced by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) citing various sources, looked at the security situation in Iraq and stated:

'By the end of 2017, the Iraqi security forces succeeded in taking back control of the territories which had been seized by ISIL [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant] in 2014. After three years of military campaigns against ISIL in different areas of Iraq, in December 2017, PM al-Abadi declared that ISIL was militarily defeated. Between June 2014 and the end of 2017, 85123 civilian casualties were recorded by UNAMI [United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq] due to the conflict.

'As of November 2018, the UN reported that 202 mass graves have been discovered across former ISIL held areas, mainly in Ninewa, containing the human remains of thousands of people; unverified estimates published said that there were unverified estimates 6 000 to 12 000 people found in the 202 graves, suspected to be ISIL victims. Since the declared military victory against ISIL a significant decline in violence has been noted. In addition to the Iraqi government's inability to establish firm control over rural areas, ISIL is regrouping to launch attacks again, switching to insurgent tactics. ISIL is

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[62] OCHA, 'Iraq: Humanitarian Dashboard (January to November 2019), 11 January 2020, url
[63] UNICEF, 'Humanitarian Action for Children 2020 – Iraq', 3 December 2019, url
[64] WHO, 'Iraq: Health Cluster Bulletin No.11 – November 2019', 19 December 2019, url
[65] WFP, 'WFP Iraq Country Brief, November 2019', 30 November 2019, url

described in December 2018 by analyst Michael Knights [a specialist of security issues in Iraq] as still being a "highly active and aggressive insurgent movement", though following its territorial defeat in 2017, it was operating at its "lowest operational tempo" nationally since 2010.'[66]

7.1.2 The Congressional Research Service (CRS) published an updated version of its report entitled 'Iraq: Issues in the 116th Congress' on 10 January 2020. Within the update the CRS published a map which shows the locations of Islamic State related security incidents that were reported between 1 January 2019 and 30 September 2019 and is shown below[67]:

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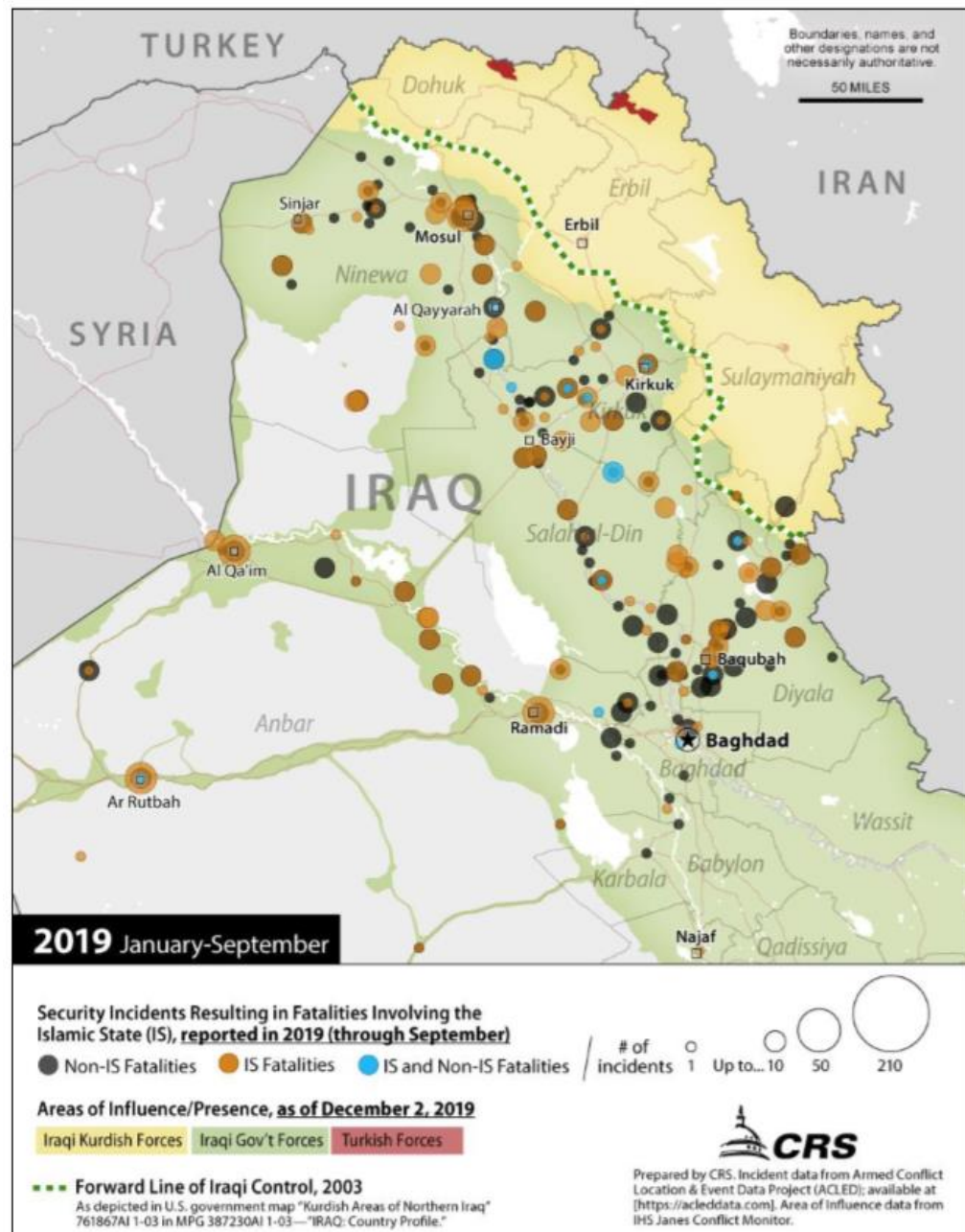
[66] EASO, 'Country of Origin Report Iraq: Security Situation', (p18), March 2019, url
[67] CRS, 'Iraq: Issues in the 116th Congress', (p.22), 10 January 2020, url

7.1.3 On 22 October 2019 Joel Wing's Musings on Iraq published a series of tables representing Daesh activity across the Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salahaddin governorates in 2018 and 2019. Joel Wing's Musings on Iraq is seen as an independent reliable source and has information obtained from the site has been used as evidence in a number of Country Guidance cases, including the recent case of SMO. These figures are combined and shown in the table below:

Table showing ISIS Activity in Iraq 2018-2019 (up to 14 October 2019)

|	Shootings (Totals)	IEDs/Sticky Bombs (Total)	Gun Battles	Attacks on Checkpoints	Attacks on Mukhtars/ Sheikhs	Kidnappings	Attacks on Towns	Suicide Bombers	Car Bombs
Diyala									
2018	219	198	47	43	5	13	25	3	1
2019	133	92	23	46	1	2	23	2	0
Kirkuk									
2018	172	182	39	18	10	14	29	9	6
2019	62	97	21	12	7	8	18	0	1
Ninewa									
2018	139	74	43	7	5	6	6	2	3
2019	44	39	7	2	7	6	17	0	3
Salahaddin									
2018	110	102	41	18	1	16	4	9	5
2019	45	46	22	4	2	6	8	1	4

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7.1.4 The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) produced a map[69] showing ISIS 'operating areas', as of 19 August 2019:

Map showing ISIS operational areas, 19 August 2019

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[68] Table compiled by the author based on data from Musings on Iraq, found at url
[69] ISW, 'ISIS Sanctuary Map: August 2019, 12 October 2019, url

ISIS Operating Areas: August 19, 2019
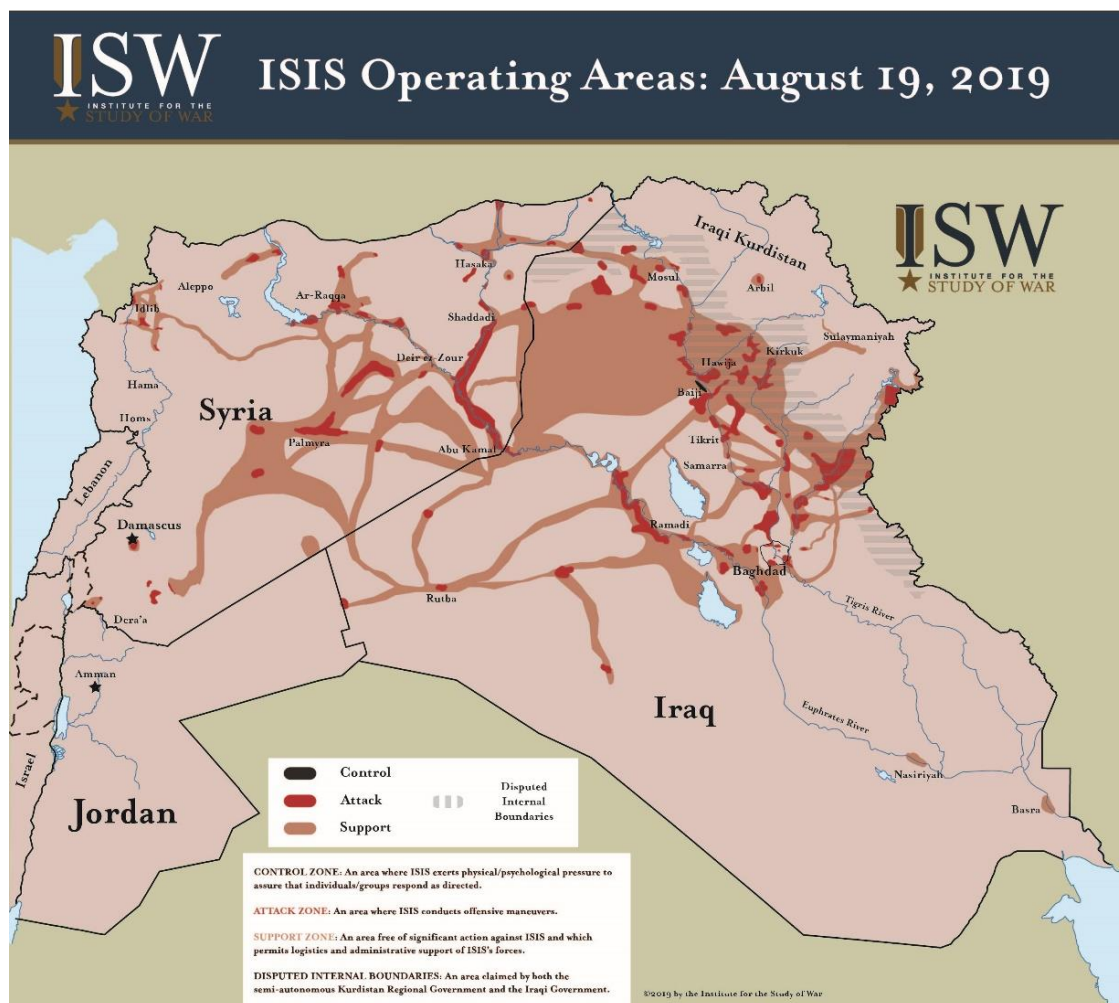
7.1.5 Also see regular updates in Joel Wing's blog, 'Musings on Iraq'.[70]

7.2 Situation in the 'Baghdad Belt'

7.2.1 The ISW, in an undated briefing, explained:

'The Baghdad belts are residential, agricultural, and industrial areas that encircle the city, and networks of roadways, rivers, and other lines of communication that lie within a twenty or thirty mile radius of Baghdad and connect the capital to the rest of Iraq. Beginning in the north, the belts include the cities of Taji [Baghdad governorate], clockwise to Tarmiyah [Baghdad governorate], Baqubah [Diyala governorate], Buhriz [Diyala governorate], Besmayah and Nahrwan [Baghdad governorate], Salman Pak [Baghdad governorate], Mahmudiyah [Baghdad governorate], Sadr al-Yusufiyah [Baghdad governorate], Fallujah [Anbar governorate], and Karmah [Anbar governorate]. This "clock" can be divided into quadrants: Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, and Northwest.'[71]

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[70] Joel Wing, 'Musings on Iraq', url
[71] ISW, 'Baghdad belts', undated, url

7.2.2　The EASO Iraq Country Guidance note published in June 2019 stated:

'The Baghdad belts are areas encircling the city of Baghdad, which share a border with Diyala, Anbar, Salah al-Din, and Babil governorates. For the purposes of IBC data, the Baghdad belts encompass the districts of Tarmia, Mada'in, Mahmoudiya, Abu Ghraib and Khadamiya.

'The Baghdad Operations Command (BOC) is responsible for security in both Baghdad and much of the Baghdad belts that surround the capital. Shia militias, including lethal proxy militias and Sadrist loyalists, operate outside the BOC's command and control. They have conducted crimes and kidnappings with impunity, established bases and unilateral control zones in north-eastern and southern Baghdad, and even clashed with the ISF [Iraqi Security Forces] on rare occasions.

'ISIL activity has declined in the belts, but the organisation retains active cells in the northern and western parts, including in Tarmia, Taji, Latifiyah/Yussufiyah, Jisr Diyala/Madain, and Radwaniyah/Abu Ghraib. From its traditional support zones in the belts, ISIL can still execute attacks into the urban centre of Baghdad.

'Sources observed that most incidents of IEDs and shootings occurred in the towns around the northern and southern parts of the Baghdad belts, and to a lesser extent, in the west. In terms of ISIL activity, hotspot areas with higher attack rates are in the belt areas of Tarmia, Taji and Latifiyah.'[72]

7.2.3　A report produced by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) published in May 2019 stated the following in regards to the security situation in Baghdad:

'Along with the general security improvements in 2018 and into 2019, security in Baghdad is reported to have largely stabilized. Throughout 2018, ISIS remnants remained active in the small towns in the outer regions of the governorate ("Baghdad Belts") and launched occasional IED attacks against civilian targets; however, its capacity to stage mass casualty attacks was reported to have significantly reduced. In early 2019, ISIS was reported to have largely pulled out while the ISF established greater control of the "Baghdad Belts", which resulted in a further reduction in security incidents. However, by April 2019, ISIS had reportedly sought to expand its support zone in the southwestern areas of the Baghdad Belts.

'While reports described near-daily kidnappings for political reasons or ransom in recent years, a decline has been reported in 2018 and into 2019. Baghdad continues to see instances of targeted assassinations of high-profile figures.'[73]

7.2.4　The EASO County of Origin Report published in March 2019 stated the following when analysing data obtained from Iraq Body Count (IBC) in relation to the number of civilians killed in Baghdad in 2018:

'In 2018 IBC data for Baghdad governorate recorded 392 security-related incidents leading to 566 civilian deaths (second highest to Ninewa, with 1596

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[72] EASO, 'Country Guidance: Iraq', (p.107), June 2019, url.

[73] UNHCR, 'Protection Considerations with Regard to People Fleeing Iraq', (p19-20) May 2019, url

killed in 217 incidents) during 2018, a decrease compared to 2017 when they reported 487 incidents leading to 1032 civilian deaths. Baghdad had an overall governorate 'intensity' of civilians killed/100k of 7.36, a drop from 14.38 in 2017.

'The districts with the highest number of security-related incidents leading to civilian deaths were Adhamiya – 78 security incidents leading to 94 civilian deaths, followed by Resafa (including Thawra 1 & 2) – 77 leading to 161 civilian deaths, followed by and Mada'in – 63 incidents leading to 69 civilian deaths. The highest intensity violent deaths of civilians (deaths per 100k of the population) was recorded in Tarmia (35.80), followed by Mada'in (15.91) and Adhamiya (8.25).

'Most incidents recorded by IBC during 2018 in Baghdad governorate involved gunfire (46.4%), followed by executions/summary killing (30.6%) and IEDs (20.7%).'[74]

7.2.5   The same report also went on to state:

'Several sources also noted an overall decline in violent incidents in Baghdad during the 2018 year, and in the belts, compared to the previous year. According to Michael Knights, in 2018, Baghdad witnessed the 'fewest salafi jihadist terrorist attacks' since 2003.

'ISIL activity capacity has "more or less disappeared" in the city itself, and has declined in the belts however, ISIL still has activity there. ISIL is keeping a low profile in Baghdad and the belts and has not carried out many campaigns in 2018. ISW remarked that as of January 2019, ISIS still does retain a general capability to conduct small-scale attacks in Baghdad and the Baghdad Belts, which are primarily IEDs, however, ISIL is "likely not responsible for the majority of the violence in Baghdad" and ISW continues to track violence linked to criminal and political disputes (i.e. political intimidation, targeted assassinations, etc), which is not ISIL-linked, across Baghdad. Michael Knights corroborated the above statement that most of the violence in Baghdad itself is not ISIL-linked.'[75]

7.3   Situation in the 'disputed' areas

7.3.1   In September 2017, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) held a referendum on the independence of the Kurdistan region and the areas disputed between the Kurdish authorities and the Iraqi government (GOI). In response to the referendum, the Iraqi government sent in troops to retake the "disputed" areas. The International Crisis Group (ICG), in a paper dated October 2017, explained how Kurdish forces left Kirkuk and Iraqi government forces were able to take the city with "relatively little resistance":

'In the early hours of 16 October [2017], Iraqi federal forces launched a drive toward Kirkuk city that Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said was aimed at retaking oil fields, an air base, the airport and federal installations lost in

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[74] EASO, 'Country of Origin Report Iraq: Security Situation', (p.78), March 2019, url
[75] EASO, 'Country of Origin Report Iraq: Security Situation', (p.78), March 2019, url

June 2014 when the Iraqi army collapsed in the face of an onslaught by the Islamic State (ISIS). The military move, which met with relatively little resistance, reportedly was enabled by a deal between the Abadi government and a faction of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The PUK mostly withdrew, while forces of the rival Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of Masoud Barzani, president of the Kurdish region, who staged a popular referendum on Kurdish independence in late September, fled. In the end, federal forces established control not only of the oil fields, but of an even more emotional prize, the city of Kirkuk.'[76]

7.3.2   The CRS paper explained about the situation in the areas 'disputed' between the GOI and the KRG, principally Kirkuk:

'The Kurdistan Region of northern Iraq (KRI) enjoys considerable administrative autonomy under the terms of Iraq's 2005 constitution, and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) held legislative elections on September 30, 2018. The KRG had held a controversial advisory referendum on independence in September 2017, amplifying political tensions with the national government, which moved to reassert security control of disputed areas that had been secured by Kurdish forces after the Islamic State's mid-2014 advance. Iraqi and Kurdish security forces remain deployed across from each other along contested lines of control, while their respective leaders are engaged in negotiations over a host of sensitive issues […]

'In October 2017, the national government imposed a ban on international flights to and from the KRI[[77]], and Iraqi security forces moved to reassert security control of disputed areas that had been secured by Kurdish forces after the Islamic State's mid-2014 advance. Much of the oil-rich governorate of Kirkuk—long claimed by Iraqi Kurds—returned to national government control, and resulting controversies have riven Kurdish politics. Iraqi and Kurdish security forces remain deployed across from each other along contested lines of control while their respective leaders are engaged in negotiations over a host of sensitive issues.'[78]

7.3.3   A report published in November 2018 produced by the Danish Immigration Service looked at the security situation in Northern Iraq and in particular areas in the IKR (Iraqi Kurdistan). The report stated the following when looking at the security situation in Kirkuk:

'It is the perception of the sources that the security situation, in general, has improved after the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) took over most of Kirkuk Governorate in October 2017. Under the previous rule by the Kurds there were more frequent attacks committed by ISIS directed at the Arab community. After the change of control, the opinion is that the Iraqi police are less stringent towards the civilian population than the Kurdish authorities. In general, there are still many security incidents in Kirkuk City and the level of violence, including assassinations, bombs (vehicle-borne improvised

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[76] ICG, 'Oil and Borders', 17 October 2017, url
[77] The suspension of international flights to the KRI has now been lifted. See the Country Policy Information Note (CPIN) on internal relocation, civil documentation and returns
[78] CRS, 'Iraq: Issues in the 115th Congress', 4 October 2018 (Summary, pp. 1-2), url

explosive (VBIED) in the city is relatively high, but the situation is somehow improving.'[79]

7.3.4 Further information about the security situation in other governorates including Ninewa and Salah al-Din can also be found in the [full report](#). For information about the security situation in the IKR see the EASO Iraq Country Guidance Note published in June 2019[80]. This EASO report assesses that there are no governorates in Iraq where the degree of indiscriminate violence reaches such a high level that substantial grounds are shown for believing that a civilian, returned to the relevant region, would, solely on account of his or her presence on the territory of that region, face a real risk of being subject to the serious threat referred to in Article 15(c) QD[81].

7.3.5 Also see updates in [Joel Wing's blog, 'Musings on Iraq'](#).[82]

7.4 Baghdad protests: 2019

7.4.1 On 2 December 2019, the BBC reported:

'The unrest started on 1 October [2019], when people took to the streets of Baghdad and in the south to express their anger at endemic corruption, high unemployment, dire public services and foreign interference.

'The prime minister has resigned in response, but protesters want to sweep away the entire political establishment.

'They have blocked roads, oil facilities and ports, and clashed with security forces, who have fired live ammunition in response. At least 420 people have reportedly been killed and 17,000 injured.

'The UN has urged the government to stop using violence against protesters, and pass electoral reforms and anti-corruption measures.'[83]

7.4.2 The same source stated:

'A government committee found 149 civilians died during the first wave of protests, mostly as a result of bullet wounds. At least 220 people have been killed since the second wave began, according to medics and security officials.

'More than a dozen security personnel have also died in clashes.

'Human rights activists say they have documented unlawful use of lethal force to disperse protesters, including with military-grade tear-gas grenades, live ammunition and sniper attacks.'[84]

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[79] DIS, 'Northern Iraq: Security situation', (p.16) 5 November 2018, url
[80] EASO, 'Country Guidance: Iraq', June 2019, url.
[81] EASO, 'Country Guidance: Iraq', (p.104) June 2019, url.
[82] Joel Wing, 'Musings on Iraq', url
[83] BBC, 'Iraq protests explained in 100 and 500 words', 2 December 2019, url
[84] BBC, 'Iraq protests explained in 100 and 500 words', 2 December 2019, url

7.4.3   The protests continued into February 2020 in a largely peaceful fashion with students staging a sit-in in Tahrir Square[85].

7.4.4   The CRS also provided an overview of events between October 2019 and January 2020[86].

7.5   Control of territory

7.5.1   The CRS provided the following map showing areas of influence in 'disputed' territories as of 17 December 2018[87]. Data comes from CRS using ArcGIS, IHS Markit Conflict Monitor, the US government and the UN.
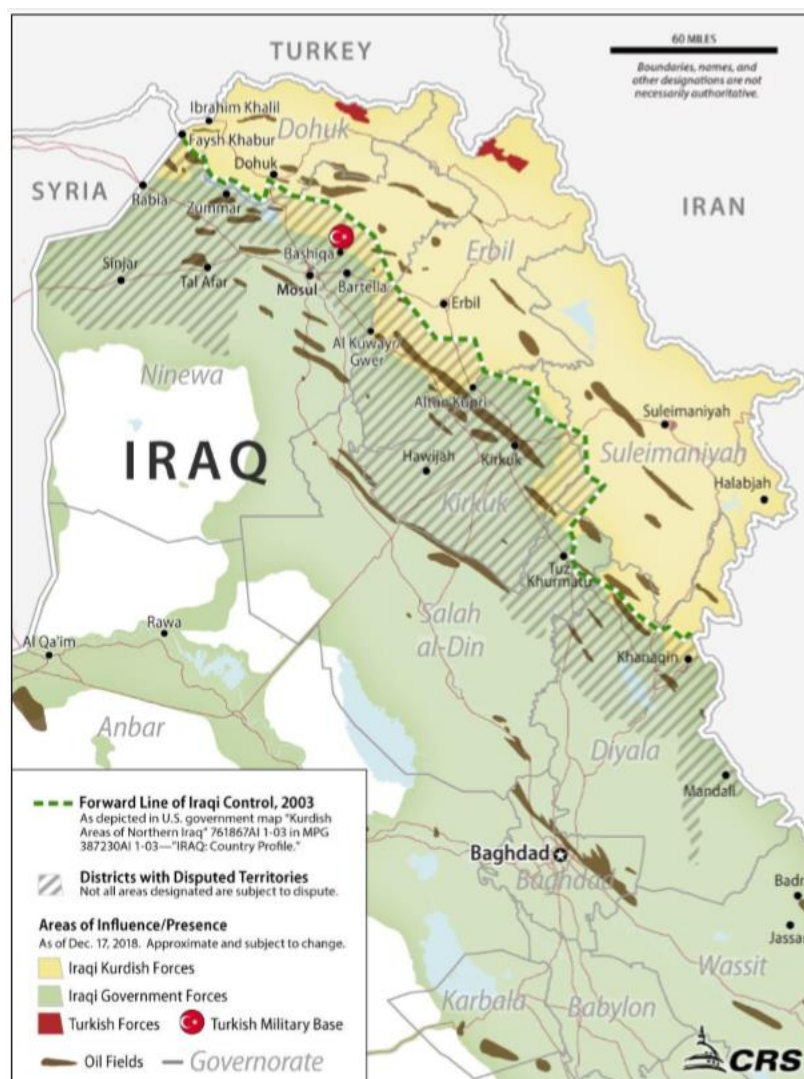
7.5.2   iMMAP, in their security report of October 2018, provided maps showing 'primary' and 'secondary' risks on roads and camps in Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Salah al Din and Ninewah. Refer to the maps directly for further information[88].

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[85] Aljazeera, Students are the 'backbone' of Iraq anti-government protests, 10 February 2020, url
[86] CRS, 'Iraq: Issues in the 116th Congress', (p.1), 10 January 2020, url
[87] CRS, 'Iraq: Issues in the 116th Congress', (p.27), 10 January 2020, url
[88] iMMAP, Humanitarian Access Response, 4 October 2018 (section 2), url

7.5.3   Also see regular updates in [Joel Wing's blog, 'Musings on Iraq'](url).[89]

7.6   Security incidents

7.6.1   The table below displays the number of security incidents and casualties between January 2018 and September 2019 (the latest data available) according to Joel Wing's Musings on Iraq[90].

Month/Year	Security Incidents (Total/By IS)	Deaths (Total/By IS)	Wounded (Total/By IS)
Jan 2018	265 / 250 by IS	417 / 409 by IS	366 / 361 by IS
Feb 2018	214 / 209 by IS	631 / 579 by IS	266 / 262 by IS
March 2018	280 / 257 by IS	591 / 414 by IS	331 / 326 by IS
April 2018	193 / 163 by IS	482 / 335 by IS	223 / 204 by IS
May 2018	200 / 181 by IS	286 / 207 by IS	250 / 242 by IS
June 2018	219 / 197 by IS	359 / 216 by IS	212 / 211 by IS
July 2018	194 / 178 by IS	257 / 207 by IS	214 / 210 by IS
Aug 2018	186 / 171 by IS	204 / 153 by IS	218 / 214 by IS
Sept 2018	175 / 158 by IS	237 / 200 by IS	307 / 302 by IS
Oct 2018	198 / 168 by IS	367 / 279 by IS	245 by IS
Nov 2018	136 / 118 by IS	276 / 204 by IS	141 by IS
Dec 2018	112 / 100 by IS	308 / 277 by IS	91 by IS
Jan 2019	125 / 114 by IS	174 / 139 by IS	130 / 128 by IS
Feb 2019	118 / 117 by IS	250 by IS	130 by IS
March 2019	63 / 61 by IS	179 / 147 by IS	111 / 101 by IS
April 2019	99	105	100
May 2019	137 / 136 by IS	163/125 by IS	200
June 2019	99 / 93 by IS	74	122 / 119 by IS
July 2019	82	83	119
Aug 2019	104 / 103 by IS	103	141
Sept 2019	123 / 119 by IS	122	131

7.6.2   The Austrian Centre for Country of Origin & Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD) published a report in December 2019 of incidents within the first half of 2019 according to data from the Armed

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[89] Joel Wing, 'Musings on Iraq', [url](url)
[90] Musings on Iraq, 'Security in Iraq Oct 1-14, 2019', 22 October 2019 [url](url)

Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED). The below table shows conflict incidents by category:

Category	Number of incidents	Number of incidents with at least one fatality	Number of fatalities
Explosions / Remote violence	624	247	814
Battles	359	277	1018
Protests	118	1	4
Strategic developments	85	2	2
Violence against civilians	74	54	117
Riots	7	1	2
Total	1267	582	1957 [91]

7.6.3 The same source also provided a table of conflict incidents and fatalities per province:

Province	Number of incidents	Number of incidents with fatalities	Number of fatalities
Al-Anbar	141	101	434
Al-Basrah	40	1	1
Al-Muthannia	9	1	1
Al-Qadisiyah	9	0	0
An-Najaf	5	1	4
Arbil	213	70	246
As-Sulaymaniyah	28	4	4
At-Ta'mim	134	82	311
Babil	18	4	24
Baghdad	58	22	72
Dhi-Qar	9	0	0
Dihok	161	21	66
Diyala	179	107	223
Karbala'	8	2	3
Maysan	2	1	1
Ninawa	135	83	295
Sala ad-Din	116	82	272
Wasit	2	0	0 [92]

7.6.4 The iMMAP-IHF Humanitarian Access Response published in February 2019 stated that 'The overall security situation is in constant improvement

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[91] ACCORD, 'Iraq, first halfyear 2019: updates according to ACLED', 19 December 2019, url
[92] ACCORD, 'Iraq, first halfyear 2019: updates according to ACLED', 19 December 2019, url

comparing to the era where ISIS had full control of the areas under their span.'[93]

7.7   Civilian fatalities and injuries

7.7.1   Iraq Body Count (IBC) is an organisation that:

'[r]ecords the violent deaths that have resulted from the 2003 military intervention in Iraq. Its detailed public database includes civilian deaths caused by US-led coalition and Iraqi government forces and paramilitary or criminal attacks by others.

'IBC's documentary evidence is drawn from crosschecked media reports of violence leading to deaths, or of bodies being found, and is supplemented by the careful review and integration of hospital, morgue, NGO and official figures or records.'[94]

7.7.2   The information in the table below is taken from the 'Database' section found on the IBC website[95]. The table indicates the figures of monthly civilian deaths from violence from 2003 onwards and is accurate as of 20 January 2020 (N.B the figures in light grey are 'preliminary data', based on approximate daily totals prior to full analysis):

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
2003	3	2	3977	3438	545	597	646	833	566	515	487	524	12,133
2004	610	663	1004	1303	655	910	834	878	1042	1033	1676	1129	11,737
2005	1222	1297	905	1145	1396	1347	1536	2352	1444	1311	1487	1141	16,583
2006	1546	1579	1957	1805	2279	2594	3298	2865	2567	3041	3095	2900	29,526
2007	3035	2680	2728	2573	2854	2219	2702	2483	1391	1326	1124	997	26,112
2008	861	1093	1669	1317	915	755	640	704	612	594	540	586	10,286
2009	372	409	438	590	428	564	431	653	352	441	226	478	5,382
2010	267	305	336	385	387	385	488	520	254	315	307	218	4,167
2011	389	254	311	289	381	386	308	401	397	366	288	392	4,162
2012	531	356	377	392	304	529	469	422	400	290	253	299	4,622
2013	357	360	403	545	888	659	1145	1013	1306	1180	870	1126	9,852
2014	1097	972	1029	1037	1100	4088	1580	3340	1474	1738	1436	1327	20,218
2015	1490	1625	1105	2013	1295	1355	1845	1991	1445	1297	1021	1096	17,578
2016	1374	1258	1459	1192	1276	1405	1280	1375	935	1970	1738	1131	16,393
2017	1119	982	1918	1816	1871	1858	1498	597	490	397	346	291	13,183
2018	474	410	402	303	229	209	230	201	241	305	160	155	3,319
2019	323	271	123	140	166	130	145	93	151	361	274	215	2,392

7.7.3   The following graph, using data from the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)[96], shows civilians killed and injured in the six worst-affected governorates between November 2012 and December 2018. The UN's data is collected from the worst-affected governorates, and therefore does not typically include the south or the KRI. For some months no data is available. UNAMI caveats the data as follows:

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[93] iMMAP, 'Humanitarian Access Response January 2019', (p.1) 5 February 2019, url
[94] Iraq Body Count, 'About the IBC project', [n.d], url
[95] IBC, 'Database - Monthly civilian deaths from violence, 2003 onwards'
[96] UNAMI, 'Civilian Casualties', [n.d], url

'UNAMI has been hindered in effectively verifying casualties in certain areas; in some cases, UNAMI could only partially verify certain incidents. For these reasons, the figures reported have to be considered as the absolute minimum.'[97]

Graph showing civilian fatalities and injuries in the six worst-affected governorates, November 2012 to December 2018[98]
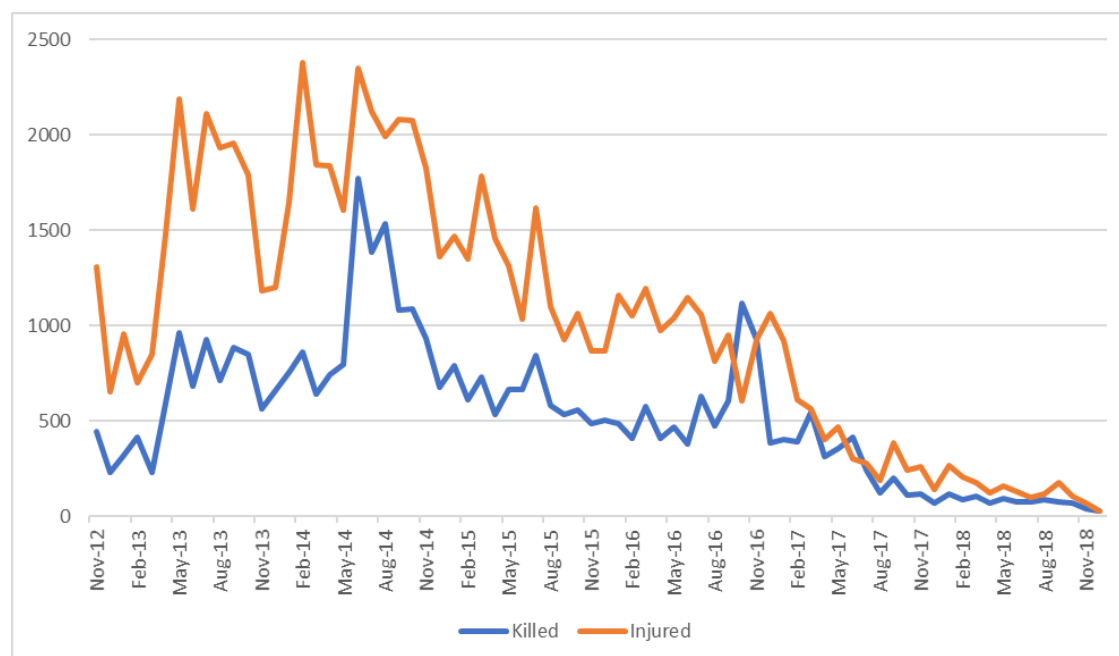
7.8   Nature of violence

7.8.1   Data on security incidents compiled by Joel's Wing's Musings on Iraq shows the nature of violent attacks. Shootings and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) are consistently the most common forms of violent attacks. Other forms include car bombs, sticky bombs, suicide bombs and mortars. Refer directly to the blog[99] for more information.

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[97] UNAMI, 'Casualty Figures for Iraq for the Month of December 2018', 3rd January 2019, url
[98] Graph compiled by the author based on data from UNAMI, found at url
[99] Joel Wing, 'Musings on Iraq', url

Annex A: Map of Iraq

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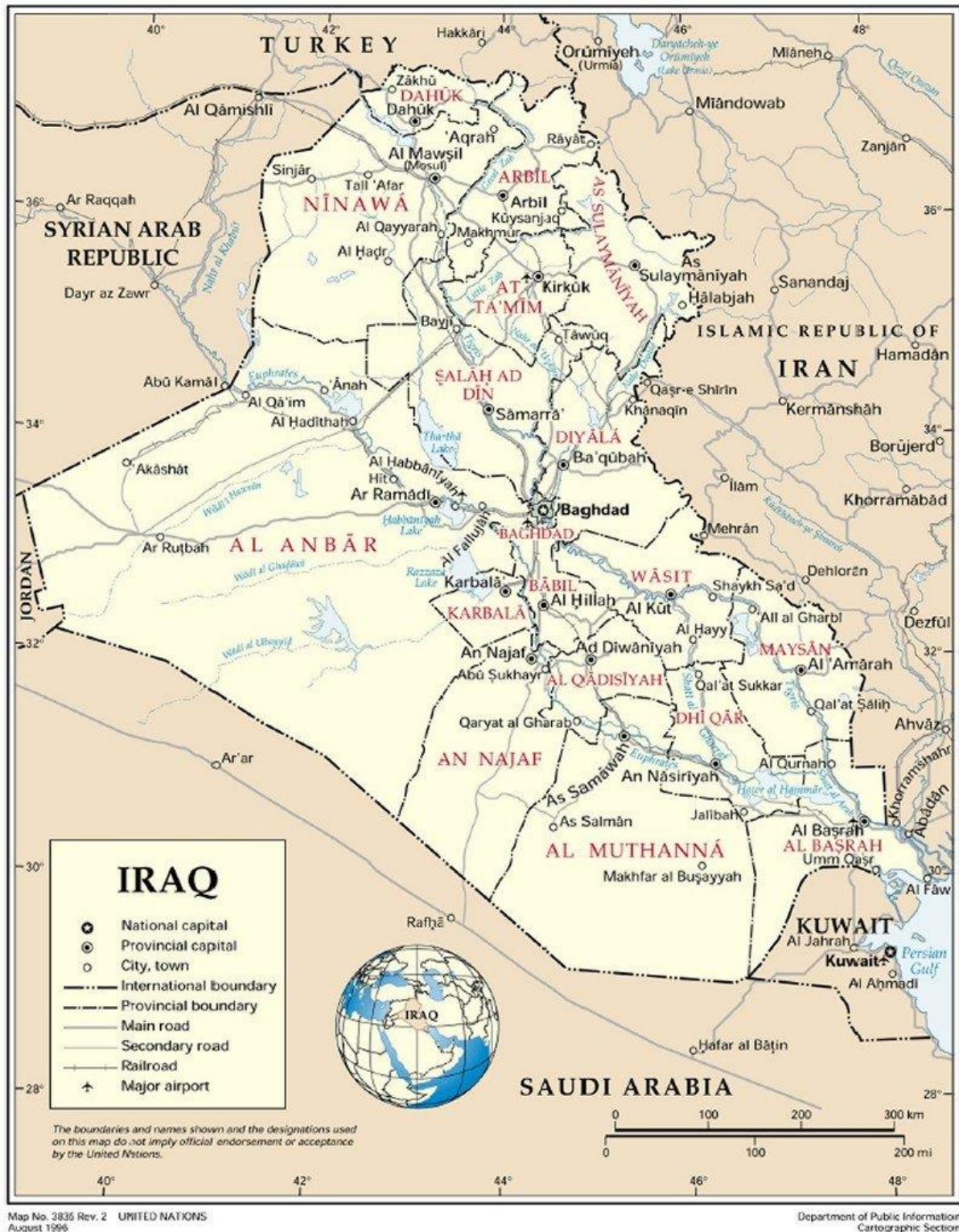
[100] Map of Iraq, Nations Online Project, url

Terms of reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of what the CPIN seeks to cover. They form the basis for the country information section. The Home Office's Country Policy and Information Team uses some standardised ToRs, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Demography

- Conflict and protagonists

- Humanitarian situation: general

  - Numbers and profile of people in need

  - Location of people in need

  - Vulnerable groups

- Humanitarian situation: Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

  - Numbers of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

  - Location of IDPs

  - Origin of IDPs

  - Shelter types of IDPs

  - Numbers of returnees and places of return

  - Prevented returns

  - Conditions in places of return

  - Employment and financial security

  - Food security

  - Health and healthcare

  - Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

  - Education

- Humanitarian support

  - Responses

  - Numbers and reach of humanitarian partners

  - People targeted for assistance

  - IDPs assisted

  - Public Distribution System (PDS)

  - Effectiveness of international support

- Security situation

  - Overview

- Control of territory

- Security incidents

- Civilian fatalities / injuries

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Version control and contacts

Clearance

Below is information on when this version of the note was cleared:

- version **6.0**
- valid from **12 May 2020**

Changes from last version of this guidance

Updated statistics, COI and guidance which reflects new caselaw (SMO)

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