

# Iraq

December 2022

**> 8,000**

Refugee families received monthly cash assistance since the start of 2022

**> 250,000**

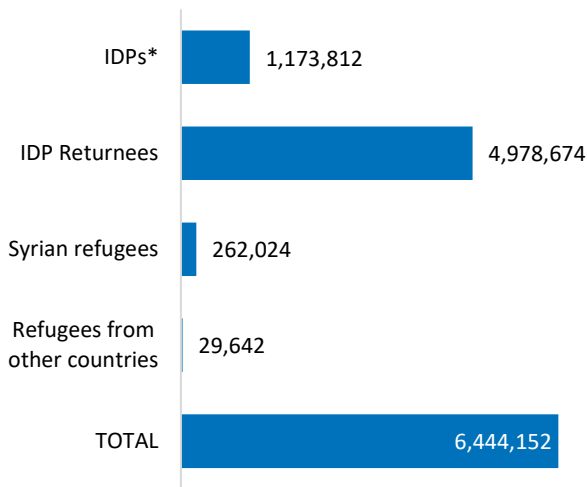
Medical consultations delivered to Syrian refugees since the start of 2022

**> 21,100**

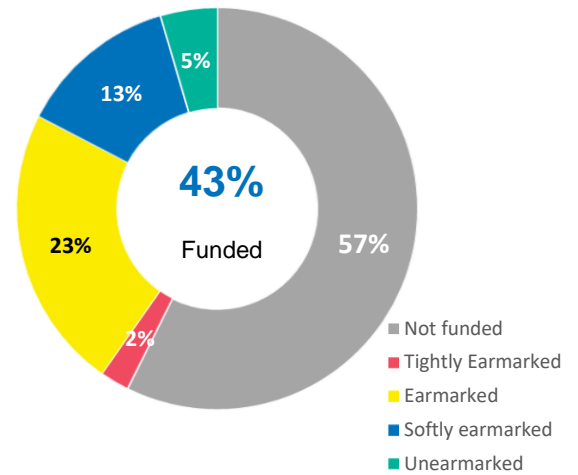
IDP families received one-time cash assistance since the start of 2022

**> 26,000**

Syrian refugee children grades one to four enrolled in public KR-I schools

**POPULATION OF CONCERN**


\* Internally displaced people (IDPs) since 2014 as of 30 September 2022 (IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM))

**FUNDING (AS OF 8 DECEMBER 2022)**
**USD 148 million received** by the Iraq operation of the **USD 347.4 million required** for 2022

**UNHCR PRESENCE**
**Staff:**

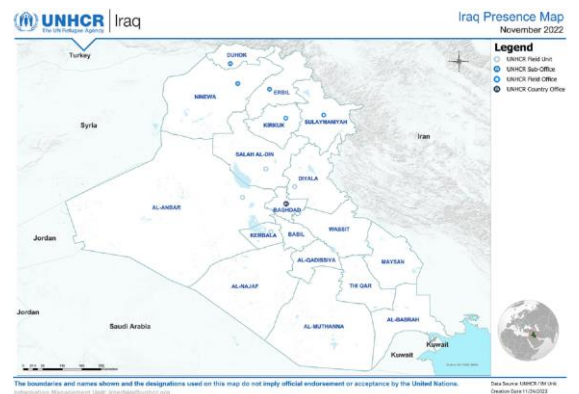
397 National Staff

77 International Staff

**Offices:**

Six Offices located in Baghdad, Duhok, Erbil, Kirkuk, Mosul and Sulaymaniyah

Field presence in Samarra, Tikrit (Salah al-Din), Ba'quba (Diyala), Ramadi, and Al-Qaim (Anbar).


**Special thanks to donors**


UNHCR thanks its major donors of un-earmarked and broadly earmarked funds, as well as those who contributed directly to the Iraq Operation in 2022.

**Belgium | Canada | Denmark | European Union | France | Germany | Ireland | Italy | Japan | Luxembourg | Netherlands | Norway | Private Donors | Qatar | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | United States of America**

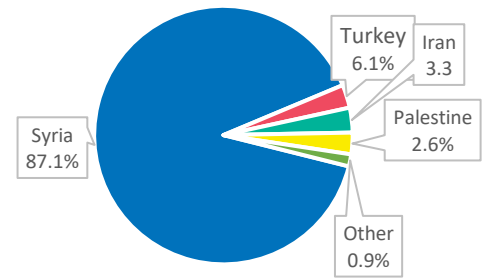
 UNHCR produces regular updates on its response in Iraq, which can be found at [UNHCR Global Focus](#)

## Operational context

Although Iraq is experiencing relative stability and an expansion in its fiscal space, the country continues to face protracted humanitarian and development needs, a complex political environment, and a volatile security situation. In October 2022, the Parliament elected a President, breaking a year-long political deadlock which paved the way for a new government.

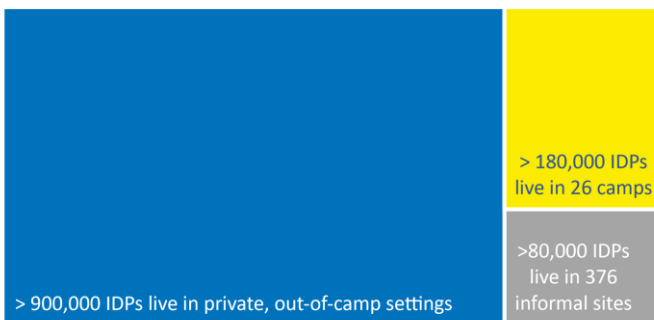
Iraq generously hosts over **290,000 refugees and asylum-seekers**, mostly Kurdish Syrians (over 260,000) residing in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I). They face limited immediate return prospects, particularly in view of the deteriorating security situation in north-east Syria, where most of the refugees originate from. **Some 65% of Syrian refugees live**

**REFUGEES IN IRAQ: COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**



in urban areas, while the rest reside in nine refugee camps and one transit facility.

**IDP POPULATION BY SETTING**



Iraq has an IDP population of 1.2 million, some of whom face significant barriers to return or to effective local integration. Most of the 5 million IDPs that have already returned exercise similar rights to the rest of the Iraqi population, but also face similar challenges. IDPs reported insecurity, lack of livelihood opportunities and financial resources, as well as damaged housing in areas of origin as the main reasons for not wanting to return.

Given that significant protection concerns and harmful coping mechanisms affecting displaced populations are largely

driven by socio-economic factors, human rights deficits, and the absence of the rule of law, **UNHCR is scaling up its efforts to empower displaced and host communities to become more resilient and better equipped to mitigate protection risks and access solutions.** Such efforts include promoting social protection systems, promoting refugee and IDP access to public services as well as improving access to the labour market and livelihood opportunities.

## Main activities

### Protection



UNHCR is the mandated agency for the protection of refugees and stateless people and the lead of the protection cluster for IDPs in Iraq. The Office plays a critical role through direct interventions and working with local, regional and national authorities, other UN agencies, NGOs, and civil society partners to ensure that displaced people and host communities are safe and live in dignity. **UNHCR and partners provide legal assistance to individuals to secure their civil documentation; provide counselling and assistance for survivors of gender-based violence, such as mental health and psychosocial support; assist children in need of specialised services, such as alternative care arrangements; and build the capacities of partners and authorities to respond to protection issues.**

### Registration and documentation



Registration (refugees) and access to civil documentation (IDPs) are key protection interventions, mitigating against the risk of detention/deprivation of movements, refoulement (refugees), and enabling access to public and humanitarian services.

In Iraq, UNHCR issues certificates to people seeking international protection. Further, UNHCR supports the Permanent Committee of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) to register refugees and asylum seekers; and facilitates their access to humanitarian residency permits issued by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) for refugees in the KR-I.

UNHCR supports IDPs and IDP returnees to obtain or renew their civil documentation, including through legal advice and representation. UNHCR supports mobile court and Civil Affairs Directorates (CAD) missions, as well as Ad Hoc Committee of the MoI missions to IDP camps and urban areas with large IDP/returnee population groups to process civil document applications. In 2023, **UNHCR will expand its civil documentation assistance to other vulnerable populations, including illiterate persons, individuals suspected of affiliation with extremist groups including Al-Hol returnees in Jeddah 1 (J1) transit centre in Ninewa governorate, patients with mental health issues and at risk of statelessness groups.**

The 2022 multi-cluster needs assessment (MCNA) shows that **over 430,000 IDPs and returnees out of the baseline of 6.2 million are still missing at least one core civil document** (26% of IDP households in camps, 15% of IDPs in urban settings, and 12% of returnees). Missing civil documentation impedes people's ability to access basic public services such as education, healthcare and social security benefits, and can lead to restricted freedom of movement, increased risk of arrest and detention, exclusion from restitution and/or reconstruction programmes, and an inability to participate in public affairs in the country. **The main barriers to accessing civil documentation reported in the MCNA include the high cost of obtaining/renewing documents and the complexity of procedures**, which may also be obstacles faced by other vulnerable populations in Iraq not displaced or directly affected by Da'esh violence. While needs assessments for other Iraqi populations are currently unavailable, targeted area-based assessments will be part of UNHCR's strategy moving forward to ensure that vulnerable groups have access to civil documents, including people at risk of statelessness.

In November, UNHCR and partner Heartland Alliance International coordinated a five-day mission for the Ad Hoc Committee of the MoI for Civil Documentation to ten urban and camp-based locations in Sulaymaniyah governorate in the KR-I. **The mission processed and issued 1,094 Iraqi nationality certificates, 41 civil IDs and 19 housing cards.**

Also in November, UNHCR and partner SWEDO supported an Ad Hoc Committee of the MoI civil documentation mission in three IDP camps and urban locations in Erbil governorate in the KR-I, as well as in three IDP camps located in East Mosul, Ninewa governorate. **The mission processed and issued some 2,100 nationality certificates, 145 civil IDs, and 24 housing cards.**

**UNHCR leads civil documentation efforts in J1 centre in Ninewa governorate, which hosts Iraqi returnees from Al-Hol camp in north-east Syria.** In October, UNHCR coordinated a mobile court mission to process proof of marriage cases – the first time such cases have been processed since the establishment of J1. Also in a first, the court accepted to process proof of birth cases of children who were born in Al-Hol camp and whose birth certificates were issued by Al-Hol camp administration. UNHCR's legal assessment of the last round of arrivals in October to J1 indicates that **587 out of 654 individuals are missing key civil documentation, with the majority missing unified IDs; proof of kinship; nationality certificates; and civil IDs.** Most of the individuals missing documentation are women (68%).

## Cash-based interventions



For individuals and families assessed as socio-economically vulnerable, UNHCR provides cash assistance to enable them to pay rent, buy food and other essentials, thus decreasing the use of harmful coping mechanisms such as reducing food intake, accumulating debt, child labour or forced marriage. Cash assistance allows families to determine what they most need and contributes directly to the local economy. UNHCR Iraq provides several types of cash assistance, including multi-purpose and winterization cash assistance for refugees, IDPs and IDP returnees.

In October and November, **over 5,500 vulnerable refugee households each received multipurpose cash assistance covering two months and amounting to 740,000 IQD (\$500).** Meanwhile, 3,200 IDP households also received 1,740,000 IQD (\$1,200) per household covering a period of four months.

As part of the DAFI scholarship programme for refugee students, **96 refugee scholars continue receiving a monthly allowance of the DAFI scholarship, with each scholar receiving 400,000 IQD (\$270) per month.**

## Advocacy




UNHCR advocates with the government to develop legislative and policy frameworks aligned with international law/protection standards and best practices, as well as with humanitarian and development actors to include displaced populations in their programmes. In addition, UNHCR intervenes in cases of risks of refoulement, and advocates on behalf of individuals seeking asylum in Iraq.

Iraq is not party to the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, and currently lacks a comprehensive refugee legal framework that aligns with international standards. **In a welcome development, the Ministry of Interior of Iraq informed UNHCR of the establishment of a new Committee tasked with drafting a refugee law in line with international standards, in consultation with the State Council of Iraq and UNHCR.**


In parallel, UNHCR has been supporting the MoI with the drafting of Federal Administrative Instructions related to the 1971 Political Refugee Act, which seek to provide further clarity on the procedural safeguards related to asylum applications in line with international law, pending the adoption of an updated refugee bill. Additionally, since 2021, to strengthen the protection environment in the KR-I, UNHCR has been supporting the KRG MoI in developing Administrative Instructions aimed at harmonizing and codifying procedures for issuing humanitarian cards to asylum seekers and refugees of all nationalities across KR-I governorates.

## Solutions and inclusion

 Given the protracted nature of displacement in Iraq, UNHCR is working to promote longer-term solutions and enhance social and economic inclusion. Efforts include enhancing displaced families' access to quality public services such as healthcare and education, as well as promoting access to livelihoods through support to public service providers.

For especially vulnerable refugees, UNHCR pursues resettlement to third countries. Since the start of 2022, UNHCR has submitted 2,477 of the most vulnerable refugees for resettlement, with 686 having departed to resettlement countries as of the end of November. UNHCR also works to expand complementary pathways such as scholarships and labour mobility opportunities abroad. So far in 2022, some 463 refugees have been assisted to access complementary pathways, and 112 individuals have departed to 12 different countries.

## Coordination and working with partners

 UNHCR coordinates the response for all refugees in Iraq with the relevant authorities, UN agencies, and international and local partners. For Syrian refugees, under the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), UNHCR leads the Protection, Basic Needs and Shelter sectors, co-leads the Health sector with WHO, and works closely with the Ministry of Planning. For IDPs and IDP returnees, UNHCR leads the Protection, Camp Coordination and Camp Management, and Shelter/Non-Food Items Clusters, deactivated in December 2022 as part of the shift toward development interventions. UNHCR is engaged with the durable solutions architecture in Iraq, including the Durable Solutions Technical Working Group and Area-Based Coordination bodies.

## Cluster transition update – Protection Platform activation and post cluster-transition services

The Protection Platform, the new coordination mechanism superseding the Protection Cluster was activated on 17 October to ensure a smooth and responsible transition. The Platform is co-led by UNHCR and OHCHR, with the participation of UN entities as well as NNGO and INGO representatives. The Platform aims to provide strategic guidance, advice and technical support to actors supporting protection efforts for all vulnerable population groups, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in Iraq.

Meanwhile, the UNHCR-led protection cluster conducted two surveys to measure partners' funding situation for general protection and case management post cluster deactivation. The **first survey** results measuring general protection activities indicate that 40% of reported projects would end by December 2022, while 60% (primarily legal assistance, followed by community based protection and referrals) will continue in 2023.

Results of the **second survey** indicate that for case management activities (mostly composed of child protection and gender based violence) 50% will end by December 2022, while another 32% will end by the first and second quarters of 2023. All governorates in Iraq will continue to be covered by case management activities until mid-2023, with some activities continuing beyond this date but will not have country-wide coverage. Therefore, no critical gaps in case management services are expected before July 2023. UNHCR works with relevant authorities to build their protection capacities, supporting UNICEF and UNFPA's efforts.

**90% of Syrian refugee children in grades one to four and 70% of Syrian refugee teachers enrolled KR-I public schools thanks to the Refugee Education Integration Policy**



*Two Syrian refugee children on their way to a public school in Duhok, KR-I. Read their story [here](#) © UNHCR | J. Cheewasrirungruang*

Findings of UNHCR's monitoring at the 3-month point of implementation of the Refugee Education Integration Policy (REIP) indicate that 86% of UNHCR's target for the 2022-23 academic year (30,105 children aged six to ten years old enrolled in public schools in the KR-I) has been reached, with 25,953 Syrian refugee children enrolled in KR-I schools as of November 2022. Some 400 Syrian refugee teachers (68%) have also been recruited. School visits and focus group discussions show that in most locations, the REIP is accepted by both refugees and the host community, with both seeing its positive impact on social cohesion.

Despite the achievements, challenges remain. The increase in the number of children in KR-I schools has led to congested classrooms, the need for extra learning materials and additional WASH facilities. Moreover, some parents expressed concerns that the change in the language of instruction (from Arabic to Kurdish) risks causing school dropouts. To address these issues, UNHCR is in the process of constructing two additional schools, 18 classrooms and six WASH facilities, as well as rehabilitating four schools. UNHCR is also planning to enhance and expand Kurdish language courses for refugee teachers, children and parents, and expand remedial classes.

As of November, UNHCR had supported some 2,2500 refugee children with remedial and catch-up classes. Since June 2022, 444 refugee teachers, over 700 parents and 3,500 children benefitted from Kurdish Language courses. From September to November, UNHCR has supported 800 refugee children and over 30 refugee teachers with transportation. UNHCR also supports the distribution of teaching and learning materials, with over 100 schools having received education teaching kits.

UNHCR continues to advocate with the KRG for the implementation of the second phase of the REIP (enrolment of refugee children grades five to nine as of the school year 2023-24).