

This report is produced by OCHA Iraq in collaboration with humanitarian partners and with the input of official institutions. It covers the events of 23 November – 11 December, and follows two earlier Flash Updates on flooding in Iraq. Additional Situation Reports may be issued if required.

I. HIGHLIGHTS

- Iraq has experienced several episodes of torrential rainfall and severe flooding over a three-week period, which has displaced tens of thousands of people and caused serious damage to infrastructure.
- Several IDP camps in Ninewa have been heavily impacted; humanitarian partners and camp management are responding; response efforts are focusing on addressing immediate needs as well as the improvements necessary to achieve and sustain minimum standards across 125 camps
- Urban areas have also been profoundly affected, notably Shirqat in Salah al-Din and Mosul in Ninewa; civil authorities, IRCS, the ISF and local NGOs are responding
- Concerns are growing over the ability of Iraq's aging infrastructure to withstand further severe weather

II. Situation Overview

Central and northwestern Iraq has experienced several episodes of torrential rainfall and severe flooding over a three-week period, most notably on 22/23 November, 30-November/1-December, and 6/7 December. These episodes were interspersed by rainy periods of lesser intensity, which nonetheless adversely affected clean-up efforts. Iraq often experiences heavy rains during winter, but storms this year have been more acute than usual. Ninewa bore the brunt of the severe weather, although other governorates were also affected.

The storms washed away buildings, roads, and bridges, and flooded IDP camps and urban areas. A temporary state of emergency was declared in Mosul on 2-December after several neighborhoods were inundated and multiple buildings collapsed. Debris clearance and rehabilitation efforts are underway, but concerns about unexploded ordinance (UXO) must be factored into response efforts.

After the initial floods on 22/23 November, camp management in several IDP camps in Ninewa instituted contingency planning which diminished the impact of subsequent storms; however, it is imperative to ensure that all 125 of Iraq's IDP camps are restored to minimally acceptable standards, including improved flood mitigation measures.

In all cases, affected people were reached within the first 24 - 48 hours after the onset of the rains. Response activities have been multi-faceted, and undertaken by United Nations humanitarian agencies, NGO partners, government ministries, the Iraqi Security Forces, civil defense actors, and the Iraqi Red Crescent Society. The humanitarian response has included the provision of thousands of food baskets, non-food item (NFI) kits (including essential household items such as mattresses, blankets, plastic sheets, and cooking utensils); and Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) kits (which support a family of seven for one week, and consist of food rations, a hygiene kit, a dignity kit, potable water and a water container). Civil defense and military actors have been transporting vulnerable families from unsafe locations and medical partners have been on standby to assist as necessary.

III. Humanitarian Needs and Response

In **Ninewa**, the first wave of storms and flooding on 22/23 November impacted the Qayyarah Airstrip camp, Jeddah camps 1 through 6, Salamiyah camps 1 and 2, Hamam Al Alil camp 2 and Nimrud Camp. In many cases, tents were inundated, and personal belongings submerged in standing, murky water. Clean up activities commenced immediately, but camp management in each location reported additional flooding—to a lesser degree—in subsequent storms of 30-November/1-December and 6/7 December. Immediate humanitarian needs including distribution of food, water, and NFI kits were met, but medium- to longer-term needs including drainage activities, garbage/waste management, desludging activities, tent repair/replacement, and psychosocial support (especially for children), are underway and will require sustained attention. The city of **Mosul** was also heavily impacted, especially by the severe weather of 30-November/1-December, with reports of flooded neighborhoods, destroyed bridges, and collapsed buildings—principally in the Old City, which was the scene of some of the heaviest fighting in the armed conflict against ISIL. Response needs in Mosul were largely met by governmental partners, who are undertaking temporary engineering repairs, and monitoring looting. However, longer-term infrastructure repairs are required.



Jeddah Camps / Credit [RNDVO]

In **Salah al-Din**, the town of Shirqat and the villages of Al- Khadraniya and Hureya bore the brunt of the impact from the storms on 22/23 November. Affected families were evacuated to nearby villages or to stay with relatives, and immediate needs including food distribution, water trucking, NFI and medical assistance were primarily met by local authorities, I/NGO partners and the Iraqi Red Crescent. Multipurpose cash assistance was distributed where it was assessed to be appropriate. Longer-term protection needs, especially regarding loss of documentation, remain.



Gazwashan village / Credit: UNHCR

In **Kirkuk**, 18 families (an estimated 180 individuals) in Gazwashan village were displaced by the floods of 6/7 December. The water level rose to approximately one meter, and mud structures collapsed. Families were evacuated with their livestock, but many lost property and possessions, and the bridge in the adjacent village of Tel Helala is at risk of collapse. UN Agencies, national NGO partners and the Iraqi Red Crescent distributed food, NFI, and RRM kits.

In **Dahuk**, there was limited damage attributed to the storms of 30-November/1-December, principally in Shikhan camp (20 tents impacted) and Mesereke village (30 families); all affected people were temporarily relocated, with needs met by local authorities and NGOs.

However, during a site visit by OCHA to Shikhan camp, management indicated that structural changes in the drainage system are required in order to avoid any future secondary displacement in the camp. In parallel, recent reports indicate that due to the heavy rains of 6/7 December, several dams in Duhok are at capacity, and may require partial openings to relieve pressure.

In **Diyala**, there have been reports of schools and houses “sinking” due to inundated land, with strategic roads linking Diyala and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq reported as being out-of-service due to flooding. Immediate needs were met by local NGOs and the host community.

IV. Preparedness and Mitigation

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Many of Iraq's IDP camps, especially in Ninewa, are constructed on flood plains, and therefore may be prone to damage from heavy rains in the future. Rehabilitation and mitigation activities should be undertaken to ensure that minimum acceptable standards in all IDP camps can be achieved and sustained. This could include tent replacement and repair, but also upgrading of WASH services and facilities; improved drainage systems and sewer design; the placement of sand bags and gravel around tents and the elevation of tents above flood level; reinforcement and rehabilitation of roads inside the camps; and strategic pre-positioning of response supplies in protected warehouses/storage facilities. A targeted approach to consolidation and closure amongst the remaining 125 camps could also be considered, to ensure that resources were being used most efficiently.

The recent three weeks of heavy rains and flooding have highlighted weaknesses in Iraq's infrastructure, much of which has not been subject to regular maintenance since 2003 or which suffered damage in the military operation against ISIL. Sustained focus and dedicated resources are needed to rehabilitate major roadways, bridges and urban centers, and undertake the removal of UXO. Major public infrastructure installations such as dams—including Mosul Dam—would also benefit from additional attention.

V. Contact

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