Highlights

- Around 1,400 families across Iraq departed from camps and almost 1,000 arrived in camps in January 2019. Many IDPs remain in protracted displacement due to security concerns and fear of retaliation in their areas of origin.
- A significant number of IDPs reported facing restrictions on their freedom of movement due to the lack of civil documentation. Security concerns and the high travel cost are frequently cited factors preventing IDPs from returning to their areas of origin to obtain or renew documentation.
- Families with perceived affiliation with extremists continue to endure collective punishment in the form of stringent restrictions on their freedom of movement and denial of return.
- The Government of Iraq has begun registration and issuance of identity cards to Turkish refugees in Duhok Governorate.

Security Incidents

Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and other asymmetrical attacks continue to affect governorates across Iraq with a high concentration of IDPs. On 6 January, three subsequent IED attacks occurred in Hawija District, Kirkuk Governorate, resulting in multiple causalities. On 14 January, also in Hawija District, alleged extremists detonated multiple explosives targeting the house of a civilian reportedly due to his cooperation with the government. During the same reporting period, five IED attacks targeting government affiliated armed forces were recorded in Al-Ba’aj and Sinjar Districts, in Ninewa Governorate. Furthermore, on 9 January, a shooting incident occurred in Mosul City resulting in the death of a Mukhtar and three members of the military. On 11 January, in Al-Qaim District, Anbar Governorate, an IED attack resulted in 27 causalities. After the incident, a member of the Anbar Provincial Council made a statement implying that authorities should not facilitate the returns of families who are affiliated with extremists as they may reinforce sleeper cells in the governorate.

Displacement and Barriers to Return

Based on data provided by the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, 1,426 families departed camps across Iraq during December, while 999 families arrived in camps. Of these, 745 families were in secondary displacement.

According to assessments carried out by UNHCR and partners, IDPs cite various reasons for not being able to return. During protection monitoring visits in Kirkuk city, Tuz Khurmatu, and Dibis, in Kirkuk Governorate, IDP families reported that government-affiliated armed forces denied security clearance to many families, while in other cases, families are unwilling to return due to the presence of these groups in the areas of origin.

Affected Population

- **296,800** Refugees and Asylum-seekers (as of 31 January 2019)
- **1,802,832** Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)
- **4,165,320** Returnees (as of 31 December 2018)

Protection Monitoring**

- **58,517** families reached*

65% of families do not have access to a regular source of income***

** The data reflects the number of households assessed from 1 January 2018 to 31 January, 2019

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

LINKS

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In Sinjar District, Ninewa Governorate, IDP families whose members were allegedly involved with extremist groups stated that they are unable to return due to fear of revenge. Other families claimed extremist attacks, tribal disputes, destruction of shelters and the lack of basic services and income-generating opportunities in their areas of origin as reasons for not being able to return. In Erbil Governorate, IDP families displaced from Al-Hamdaniya District in Ninewa Governorate claimed that Kurdish security forces were preventing their returns stating the need for an agreement between the Government of Iraq (GoI) and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) before any returns could be permitted.

Lack of civil documentation continues to impede IDPs’ freedom of movement as well. In Jeddah Camps in Ninewa Governorate, IDPs reported that their freedom to go outside of the camps was limited even for medical purposes as they lacked civil documentation and they feared being harassed at checkpoints. In Erbil, IDP families originating from Ba’aj, Al-Hamdaniya, Mosul, Sinjar, Tal Afar, and Tilkaif, in Ninewa Governorate, reported that they are unable to obtain civil documentation because they cannot afford the cost of transportation to visit local civil affairs offices in their areas of origin multiple times as required. Furthermore, IDPs also continued to state difficulties in accessing their areas of origin due to security concerns.

Collective Punishment
UNHCR continues to receive reports of collective punishment of families due to their perceived affiliation with extremists. In Laylan camps in Kirkuk governorate, IDP families reported that security guards at the gate never allow them to leave the camp as they had relatives allegedly affiliated with extremists. IDPs reported that law enforcement authorities required them to provide documents from two sponsors who would stay in the camp during their absence. IDPs explained the challenges in finding sponsors as they fear to expose themselves to further risk by providing information about sponsors. In Jeddah and Hamam Ali-Alil (HAA) camps, a number of IDP families reported that they were prevented from leaving the camp and returning to their areas of origin due to their perceived affiliation with extremists. For instance, in one of the HAA camps, an IDP woman was reportedly denied permission to leave the camp to receive medical treatment due to her husband’s alleged affiliation with extremists. She was investigated for an hour and was informed she could not to leave the camp. In one of the Jeddah camps, IDP families who returned to Iraq from Al-Hol camp in Syria in 2018 reported that government-affiliated armed forces did not allow them to enter their villages in Mosul District due to their alleged affiliation with extremists. The family added that armed forces detained two of their children. Other IDP families reported that government-affiliated armed forces destroyed their houses and prevented them from returning to their village.

Iraqi Returnees from Turkey
In January, a total of 687 Iraqis (298 families) returned from Turkey through the Ibrahim Khalil Border Crossing Point (IK-BCP) in Duhok. These were spontaneous and self-organized returns. The returns included 381 individuals from Ninewa, 200 from Anbar, 58 from Salah-Al-Din and 42 from Baghdad. According to the authorities at IK-BCP, the returns were driven by the lack of job opportunities and depleted savings of Iraqi families in Turkey. No MoDM-organized returns from Syria were reported in January.

Syrian Refugees and Asylum-seekers
In January, UNHCR registered 1,751 individuals from Syria, including 357 new arrivals. This brings the total number of Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR up to 252,451 individuals (43% females and 57% males). Nearly 99% of the population resides in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) where 37% are living in camps and 63% out-of-camps.
The majority of Syrian refugees originate from Al-Hasakeh (58.7%) followed by Aleppo (24.8%) and Damascus (9.5%). In order to safeguard their rights and freedom of movement, UNHCR continues to advocate for the GoI (Permanent Committee of the Ministry of Interior – PC-MoI) and the Government of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRG) to register and issue ID documents to all Syrians registered with UNHCR. UNHCR is supporting the PC-MoI to scale up their mobile registration capacity in order to begin registration of Syrian refugees in the second quarter of 2019.

Response by UNHCR and Partners

- UNHCR and partners engaged in various awareness-raising and social cohesion activities throughout the country. In Duhok, community volunteers conducted a total of 48 awareness-raising sessions for 271 IDPs on child protection, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and personal hygiene. Furthermore, community volunteers organized sessions in camp/non-camp settings to develop social cohesion amongst refugees, IDPs and host communities. 1,458 people attended these sessions where community volunteers provided classes on English, math, cleaning and water usage, and ended each session with messaging on social cohesion. In Kirkuk, UNHCR and partners conducted activities in women’s centres and social centres in three UNHCR managed camps (Laylan 1, Laylan 2, and Nazrawa camps) to promote social cohesion and self-reliance. During the reporting period, 5,432 women and girls participated in several recreational and vocational activities in the women’s centres, and 2,688 children participated in various resilience-building activities in the social centres.

- UNHCR and partners provided legal assistance to IDPs and refugees in camps and out-of-camp settings on a variety of issues such as civil documentation, compensation and detention. In Erbil, UNHCR provided legal counselling and assistance to 1,570 IDPs and 608 refugees. In Duhok, UNHCR and partners provided legal counselling to 118 Syrian and non-Syrian refugees and facilitated the issuance of 124 civil documents.

- UNHCR continues to support the GoI in registering and issuing documentation to all IDPs. In Ninewa, as part of the continuous cooperation with the local Civil ID Directorate, UNHCR donated five vehicles to support the Directorate’s mobile missions aimed at helping to issue missing documents for IDPs who are experiencing difficulties in accessing the civil office in their areas of origin.

- On 3 January 2019, the PC-MoI in Baghdad, in collaboration with the Residency Department in Duhok, started its official registration of Turkish refugees, targeting some 6,000 individuals across the governorate. This comes after extensive discussions between UNHCR and authorities from both the GoI and KRG to register all refugees and asylum seekers throughout Iraq and to issue a PC-MoI ID card for each of them. This ID card serves as an official recognition of their status which legalizes refugee’s residency and movement throughout the country. In January, PC-MoI registered a total of 2,822 individuals and is expected to complete the registration in the coming months.

- As part of UNHCR’s global strategy to end immigration detention of asylum-seekers and refugees, UNHCR collaborated with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Justice to ensure that conditions of detention meet international standards. During the reporting period, UNHCR rehabilitated several water tanks, visitation areas, and a playground in an Observation Centre in Baghdad, which holds refugees, asylum-seekers and other children aged 9 to 18. UNHCR received positive feedback from the Centre which reported improvement in hygiene as well as increased willingness of children to engage in outdoor activities.