IRAQ

Humanitarian Access Severity Overview (April 2020)

District Access Severity as Perceived by Humanitarian Actors

The access environment in Iraq remains difficult, with more than 1.77 million people in need living in areas perceived by humanitarian organizations to have medium to high levels of access difficulties for their activities and operations.

Methodology: In April 2020, OCHA conducted focus group discussions (FDGs) in partner organisations, including UN agencies, INGOs and national NGOs, to systematically collect and distil the opinions and perceptions of participants on the access challenges in central and northern Iraqi governorates. The district findings for all organisation types were applied to a three-point severity scale, ranging from ‘accessible’ to ‘high access constraints’, and the median scores indicate the overall access severities of districts.
In the first quarter of 2020, humanitarian access significantly deteriorated in Iraq with a four-fold increase in the number of high severity districts since November 2019, as a result of the government suspension of national-level access authorizations for non-government organisations (NGOs) in early December 2019, which was compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and related containment measures. Of 4.1 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in Iraq, more than 1.77 million (343,000 IDPs) live in districts with moderate to high access constraints in the governorates of Al-Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninevah, Salah Al-Din and Sulaymaniyah.
Various access constraints have been reported in 92 per cent of districts in northern and central Iraq. While the severity of each constraint varies, both by humanitarian actor and location, administrative restrictions on humanitarian movement was the most cited access challenge, which largely stemmed from the suspension of national level authorizations for NGOs in December 2019 and subsequent difficulties with reestablishing the authorization mechanism.

This was further compounded by increased access difficulties related to the implementation of COVID-19 containment measures implemented by the government: in approximately 77 per cent of districts (46), all organization types (UN, INGO, NNGO) reported that their activities, including all related operations and missions had been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 containment measures. However, the level of impact of the COVID-19 restrictions varied by district and governorate, and this is was reflected in the overall access severity scoring. The variation was partially dependent on how quickly the Governorate-level authorities were able to respond to the initial COVID-19 cases, and how quickly they engaged with humanitarian organizations to grant governorate-level curfew exemptions.

The below graph summarizes the reported constraints by organisation type: