



**I. POPULATION DISPLACEMENT IN IRAQ**

**Displacement slows in 2007, but conditions deteriorate for 2.4 million internally displaced Iraqis.**

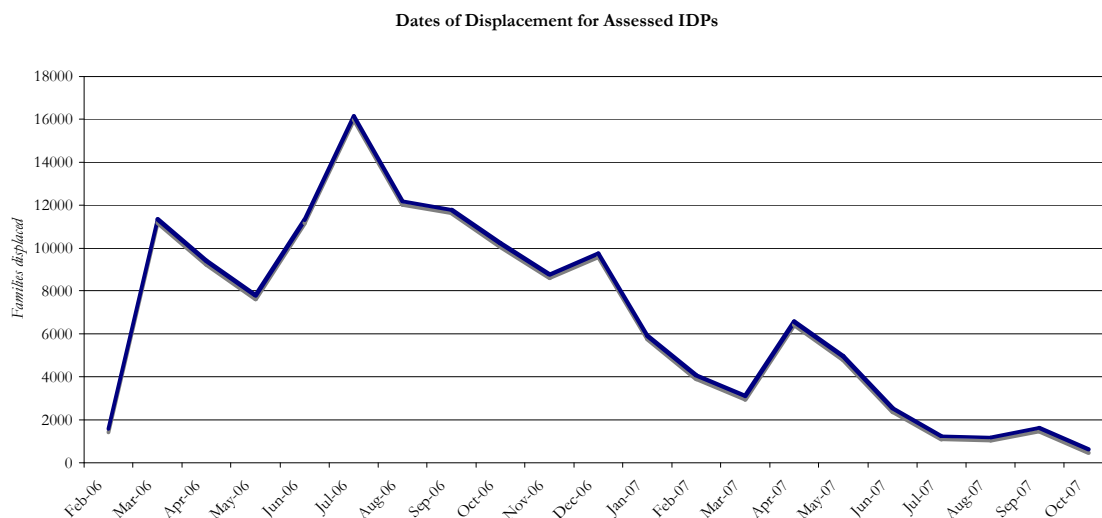
Despite decreased violence, slowing displacement rates, and limited returns in 2007, population displacement within and from Iraq remains one of the largest and most serious humanitarian crises in the world. Over two million Iraqis are refugees, most of them in neighboring Syria and Jordan. An additional 2.4 million Iraqis are Internally Displaced People (IDPs) within their own country.

Iraq has a long history of displacement due to wars and the policies of the former regime. Many IDP populations from the 1980s and 90s still remain in displacement. Following the 2003 conflict, an estimated 400,000<sup>1</sup> Iraqis were internally displaced due to military operations and general insecurity.

On 22 February 2006, the bombing of the Al-Askari Mosque in Samarra triggered escalating sectarian violence that drastically changed the cause and scale of displacement. Although military operations, crime, and general insecurity remained factors, sectarian violence became the primary driver for population displacement. Since February 2006, almost 1,204,000<sup>2</sup> Iraqis have been displaced. Of these, IOM’s assessments cover 142,000 families throughout Iraq (an estimated 852,000 individuals).<sup>3</sup>

**IDP Displacement Rate: 2006 vs. 2007**

The majority (78%) of IDPs assessed by IOM were displaced during 2006. Analysis of IOM date of displacement data shows a marked drop in the displacement rate during 2007:



The immediate spike in displacement in March 2006 was due to the drastic increase in violence after

<sup>1</sup> This figure includes 200,000 displaced by military operations in Fallujah during November 2004. Most of these IDPs have since returned.  
<sup>2</sup> As per the 24 December 2007 MoDM report, “Summary Results IDP Registration – February 2006 To December 2007” and the 21 November 2007 Cluster F Update on Internally Displaced Persons in Iraq.  
<sup>3</sup> For information on IOM’s monitoring methodology, see “IOM Monitoring Needs Assessments Methodology” available at [www.iom-iraq.net/library.html#IDP](http://www.iom-iraq.net/library.html#IDP)

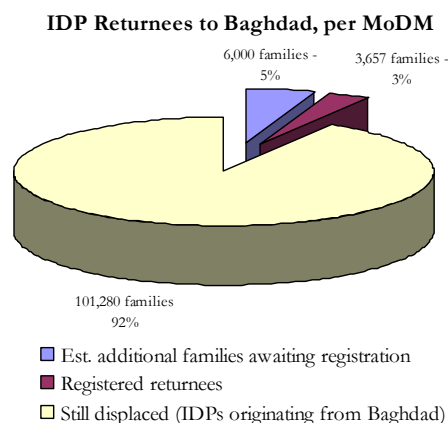
the Samarra bombing in February. Once the school year ended, another wave of displacement occurred in July/August 2006. The sharp increase in displacement during March 2007 is in part due to the arrival in Wassit of large numbers of IDPs originating from Baghdad and Diyala. This, and other displacement in the spring of 2007, may be due to increased military operations in the central governorates.

This statistic is corroborated by field reports of significantly decreased displacement rates in 2007. Although displacement continues in some areas, the massive displacement observed during 2006 and early 2007 has abated. This may be due to improved security in certain areas and the sectarian homogenization of previously mixed neighborhoods.

### IDP Returns in 2007

2007 also saw increased numbers of both refugees and IDPs returning to their places of origin. The Iraqi government is issuing stipends of one million dinar (\$800) to encourage families to return. In December, MoDM reported that 3,657 families in Baghdad had been registered as IDP returnees, with an estimated additional 6,000 awaiting registration<sup>4</sup>. See the pie chart below for a comparison of reported Baghdad returns versus the total number of IDPs that originate from Baghdad (using MoDM numbers).

Although in certain areas (such as Anbar) return movements have produced a net decrease in the size of the displaced population, overall returns currently represent only a small fraction of IDPs in Iraq. The vast majority of post-February 2006 IDPs remain displaced, and the prolonged nature of their displacement is exacerbating their already serious humanitarian situation. Furthermore, many of those who return are likely to find houses occupied and infrastructure destroyed and will continue to need humanitarian assistance.



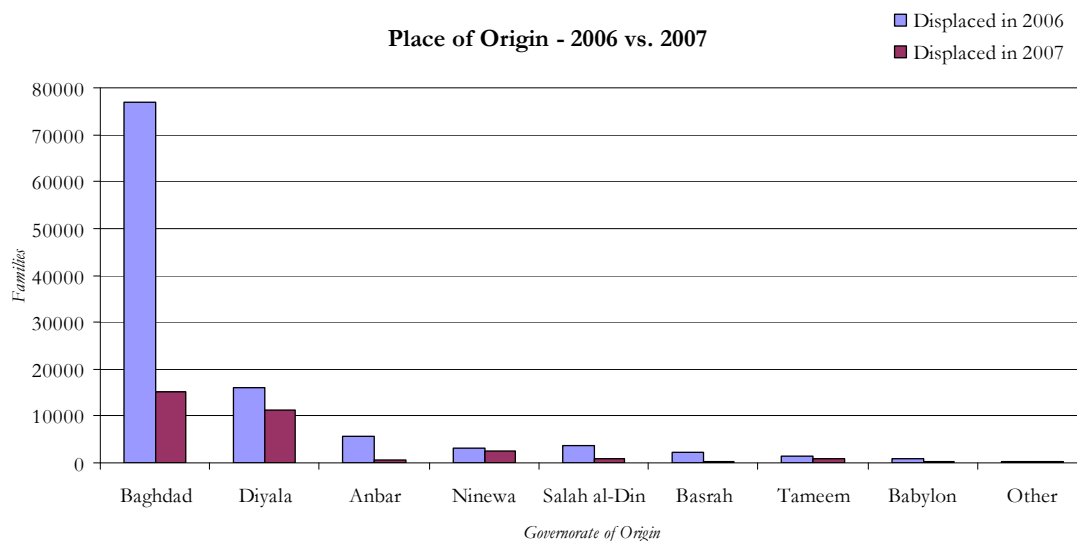
Displacement in some areas continues due to insecurity, and the potential remains for renewed large-scale displacement, either due to re-ignited sectarian violence, cross-border incursions by the Turkish or Iranian militaries, renewed military operations, escalated ethnic or political conflicts in Kirkuk, etc.

## II. POST FEBRUARY 2006 IDP POPULATION PROFILE

### Places of Origin and Reasons for Displacement

The majority (65%) of IDPs assessed by IOM were displaced either from or within Baghdad governorate. Most of the other assessed IDPs originate from or within Diyala (19%), Anbar (4%), Ninewa (4%), and Salah Al-Din (3%). As shown in the graph below, in 2007 significantly fewer IDPs originated from Baghdad, Anbar, and Salah Al-Din than in 2006.

<sup>4</sup> See the 24 December 2007 MoDM report, “Summary Results IDP Registration – February 2006 To December 2007.”



The majority (61%) of those assessed said that they fled direct threats to life. Reasons for displacement do not vary significantly between those displaced in 2006 and in 2007.

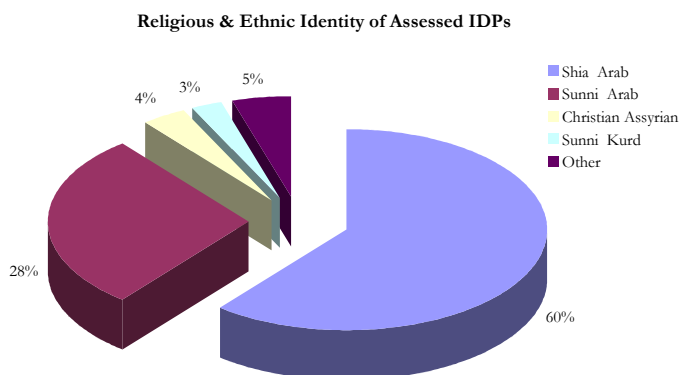
REASON FOR DISPLACEMENT	% of assessed IDPs
Direct threats to life	61%
Generalized violence	47%
Left out of fear	40%
Forced displacement from property	25%
Armed conflict	10%
Other	1%

When asked why they were targeted, 86% of those assessed attributed it to their sectarian identity. Another 11% said that they did not feel specifically targeted, while 6% cited political opinion and 4% cited ethnic identity. Answers did not vary significantly between those displaced in 2006 and in 2007.

### Religion and Ethnicity

The following graph shows the religious and ethnic profile of the IDP population:

RELIGION AND ETHNICITY	% of Assessed IDPs
Shia Arab	60.9%
Sunni Arab	28.2%
Christian Assyrian	3.6%
Sunni Kurd	2.6%
Christian Chaldean	1.6%
Shia Turkmen	1.2%
Shia Kurd	0.9%
Sunni Turkmen	0.8%
Other	0.2%



When comparing IDPs displaced in 2006 with those displaced in 2007, the ethno-religious profile does not vary significantly. For the major groups, displacement rates dropped in 2007 (reflecting the

overall trend), while displacement rates for some very small IDP minorities (Turkmen and Sunni Kurds) did not change significantly from 2006 to 2007.

### Intentions

The majority (59%) of assessed IDPs intend to return to their place of origin, while 22% intend to integrate locally and 17% plan to resettle in a third location. However, IDPs who were displaced to another governorate are more likely to plan to integrate locally when compared with IDPs displaced within the same governorate. Eighty-two percent (82%) of IDPs displaced within their home governorate intend to return to their original location.

IDP INTENTIONS	Of total assessed	Of those displaced to another governorate	Of those displaced within the same governorate
Return to place of origin	59%	49%	82%
Integrate in the current location	22%	30%	5%
Resettle in a third location	17%	19%	13%
Undecided	2%	2%	1%

## III. IDP HUMANITARIAN ASSESSMENT

For brevity's sake, this report summarizes the IDP situation in the security, shelter, food, and health sectors. More in-depth information and data on additional sectors is available at <http://www.iom-iraq.net/idp.html>. IOM's recently released 2007 Governorate Profiles contain detailed area-specific analysis and comparison on displacement throughout Iraq.

### Security/Protection

Overall violence in Iraq appears to have declined during 2007. Security continued to be unstable, particularly in Basrah, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Qadissiya, and Salah Al-Din. In Baghdad and Anbar governorates, the implementation of security plans in cooperation with local "awakening" movements reduced violence, although certain areas continue to be unstable. In addition to fighting between Multi-National Forces in Iraq and Iraqi Forces (MNF-I/IF), militias, insurgents, and other armed groups, 2007 also saw continued attacks on infrastructure, government buildings, religious sites, and civilians generally.

In September, a reported 700 families fled various Anbar cities in anticipation of renewed arrest campaigns following the assassination of the Anbar Rescue Council leader Sheikh Abu Risha. In August, bombings targeting Yazidi communities in Ninewa killed hundreds and displaced hundreds more.

Security in the northern governorates of Dahuk, Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah continued to be relatively stable. However, military operations by the Turkish and Iranian militaries displaced hundreds of families from border villages. Most have returned, but property was damaged and livestock destroyed. Due to continued tensions, there is fear among IDPs and host communities of a large-scale Turkish military incursion, which could displace thousands of families.

Some IDPs fleeing violence have relocated to areas where they are again unsafe. In areas controlled by insurgents, IDPs reported incidents of forced marriage, death threats, and eviction orders, especially in Diyala. Some IDPs displaced within Basrah due to inter-tribal conflict reported that they have not registered with local authorities due to tribal biases. In areas where "awakening" movements have gained control in cooperation with MNF-I/IF, IDPs may still be vulnerable as they are often the primary targets for search and arrest campaigns. Local authorities and security forces frequently

suspect IDPs of complicity with insurgents, since they may lack personal ties to their place of displacement and originate from unstable areas. In particularly insecure areas such as Ninewa, Kirkuk, and Salah Al-Din, local authorities have ordered entire IDP groups to return to their place of origin.

Displacement presents particular challenges for women, children, elderly, and the ill. Specialized health care (such as surgery or gynecology) is difficult to obtain in Iraq. Female-headed households are an extremely vulnerable group: many of these families displaced after their husbands were violently killed. In many areas it is especially difficult for women to find employment and protect their families. Some IDP women and girls reported discomfort with the conservative customs they encountered in their place of displacement, restricting their dress and in some cases preventing girls from attending school. Health workers, IOM monitors, and IDPs themselves reported a rise in unattended births, miscarriages, and prostitution. Many IDPs, especially children, have experienced brutal psychological trauma during their displacement. Few IDPs have access to psychosocial assistance.

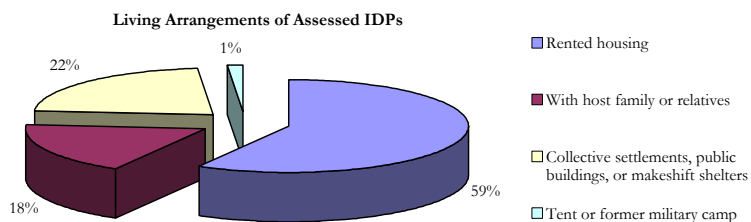
### Restrictions on IDP Entry and Registration

In response to security concerns or strained resources, authorities in some governorates restrict IDP entry or registration. In 2007 restrictions did ease somewhat as some authorities responded to a directive from the central Baghdad government to lift restrictions. MoDM registration continues in all the fifteen central and southern governorates. The Kurdistan Regional Government registers IDPs in Dahuk, Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah.

In some areas, MoDM is limiting the scope of its registration, registering only those IDPs from “hot spot” areas. Some IDPs also reported that they were not registered due to sectarian, ethnic, or tribal bias. Non-registration of IDPs is a humanitarian concern because it limits their access to basic services and legal documentation for PDS food rations.

### Shelter

IOM assessments find that shelter is consistently the highest-priority need reported by IDPs, followed by employment and food. Although the majority (59%) of IDPs assessed by IOM are renting, their finances are dwindling as time passes and rent prices rise. A sizeable minority (18%) is living with host families or friends in crowded conditions, an added burden on households already struggling to provide for themselves. Another 22% live in collective settlements, public buildings, or other makeshift housing. IDPs living in settlements or public buildings often may be at risk of eviction by local authorities or private owners. Less than 1% lives in tent camps. IDPs view camps as an absolute last resort, due to cultural sensitivities and camps’ lack of basic services and harsh living conditions.



Substandard shelter and a lack of basic services such as clean water, sanitation, and electricity is a major factor in the IDP humanitarian crisis. IDPs who are renting do not necessarily have access to these services. IDPs living in tents, public buildings, or makeshift shelters in collective settlements are particularly vulnerable and usually have additional urgent needs in other sectors such as food, health, water, and sanitation.

Nearly one-third (31%) of IDPs assessed by IOM said that the property they had left behind was occupied by private citizens. If return movements continue or increase, the settlement of legal disputes over property will likely become a major concern.

#### Food/Public Distribution System (PDS)

Much of the Iraqi population depends upon the government's PDS food rations, but there is a widespread lack of access to these distributions due to insecurity, political manipulations, limited resources, and logistical difficulties. The situation is especially dire among the displaced: of all IDPs assessed by IOM, only 22% said that they had regular access to PDS food rations. Another 22% said that they had no access at all, while the remaining 56% said they could access rations sometimes.

Non-access to PDS rations was worst in Dahuk (91%), Sulaymaniyah (88%), Basrah (61%), Erbil (55%), Kirkuk (42%), and Babylon (42%). The most frequently cited reasons for non-access were insecurity along food transportation routes and delay in the transfer of PDS registration. Only 29% of IDPs assessed by IOM said that they had received food assistance from a source other than the PDS. Nearly all of this was provided by humanitarian organizations or religious charities. In some cases, IDPs reported receiving food assistance from armed groups.

#### Health Care

Health care in Iraq has deteriorated greatly due to the exodus of qualified professionals, a severe shortage of medication and equipment, and damage to medical facilities. Many of the displaced live in substandard conditions and lack basic services, increasing their risk of disease. Of IDPs assessed by IOM, 14% reported that they have no access to health care services. Non-access is worst in Kirkuk (57%), Diyala (35%), Muthanna (22%), and Dahuk (22%).

Access to services is no guarantee of adequate health care. One-third (33%) of those assessed said that they cannot access medications that they need. Specialized care (e.g. surgery or gynecology) is also difficult to obtain in Iraq, since many specialists have fled the country.

Inadequate shelter and poor services (lack of sanitation and potable water) are major causes of IDP health problems. Some IDP groups must rely on lakes, rivers, or drainage and irrigation ditches for drinking water. Monitors frequently observe malnutrition and gastrointestinal and dermatological diseases among IDPs, especially children. IDP groups living in overcrowded neighborhoods or far from essential services are particularly vulnerable.

### **IV. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE**

Iraq continues to be one of the most dangerous places in the world for humanitarian agencies to work. Humanitarian access is limited by armed conflict, general insecurity and crime, restrictions on movement, and in some cases deliberate obstruction by authorities. Humanitarian workers must operate cautiously as in many cases they are deliberately targeted by armed groups. The situation is complicated by a blurring of roles between military and humanitarian actors. As a result, humanitarian actors in some locations adopt a "low-profile" approach, hiding their identity as international or humanitarian organizations.

In some insurgent or militia-controlled areas, armed groups themselves have reportedly provided assistance to IDPs. IDPs in such areas are especially vulnerable since insecurity usually prevents humanitarian organizations from assisting them.

The majority (62%) of assessed IDPs reported that they had received some form of humanitarian assistance. The most frequently reported source was host communities, which provided assistance to 30% of the assessed. Other sources were MoDM (29%), the Iraqi Red Crescent (28%), relatives of IDPs (25%), religious groups (25%), and humanitarian organizations (18%).

Despite insecurity and limited funding, IOM continues to provide humanitarian assistance to displaced populations and vulnerable host communities throughout Iraq. In 2007 IOM conducted 16 Emergency Distributions that provided food and non-food items such as blankets, mattresses, fuel, and kitchen sets to IDPs and their host communities. In 2007 IOM also implemented 38 Community Assistance Projects, improving basic services in the water, sanitation, health, education, and livelihood sectors and benefiting more than 570,000 individuals. IOM plans to continue these programmes in 2008 and will also expand operations to monitor, assess, and assist IDP populations returning to their places of origin. However, only 25% of IOM's \$85 million proposal to assist IDPs and other vulnerable groups has been funded.

## V. CONCLUSION

Internal displacement in Iraq slowed in 2007, due in part to improved security in limited areas, but also to the homogenization of communities that occurred after the mass exodus of residents of one sect or another; in other words, there were fewer and fewer people to force out. For the 1.2 million Iraqis who have been internally displaced over the past two years, conditions continued to deteriorate. Many live in substandard or overcrowded shelter, only 22% report regular access to food rations, 14% have no access to health care, 33% cannot access the medications they require, and 31% report that their property is occupied, to name a few sobering statistics.

Slightly more than half of the internally displaced plan to return home, but as displacement prolongs, this figure is likely to decline, potentially leading to the permanent segregation of communities in Iraq.

Displaced Iraqis are beginning to return from abroad and within the country, but currently return figures represent only a minute percentage of those who have fled. Many from abroad are returning to internal displacement because they cannot safely return to their home communities or their property is occupied by other citizens or armed groups. As conditions continue to deteriorate in places of displacement, Iraqis will continue to try to return home, especially to those areas that have seen an improvement in security. However, their safety is not guaranteed, and these Iraqis might face secondary displacement.

Despite limited funding and insecurity, IOM continues to assist the displaced, returning Iraqis, and host communities with emergency food, water and household item distributions, community assistance projects, and advocacy. However, overall assistance to these vulnerable communities remains inadequate. Until long-term stability is realized, rule of law improved and basic services restored, internal displacement in Iraq will remain a serious humanitarian crisis that calls for urgent assistance.

*For further information on displacement, please contact Dana Graber Ladek, Iraq Displacement Specialist, at [dgrabler@iom-iraq.net](mailto:dgrabler@iom-iraq.net) (+962 79 611 1759).*