

Affected Population

297,595 Refugees and Asylum-Seekers
(as of 28 February 2019)

1,744,980 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

4,211,982 Returnees
(as of 28 February 2019)



Protection Monitoring**
62,209 families reached*



*The disaggregated figures indicate the number of households containing individuals from each age and gender group – including enrolment.

73% 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 28 February 2019.

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

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Highlights

- Approximately 1,300 families across Iraq departed from camps and 1,100 families arrived in camps in February 2019.
- Eight camps were closed in February resulting in secondary displacement and premature returns.
- Families with perceived affiliation with extremists continue to face collective punishment in the form of restrictions on their freedom of movement, denial of return, and refusal of civil documentation.
- UNHCR and partners supported government's mobile missions to issue marriage and birth certificates to IDPs in East Mosul camps, and assisted 593 IDPs in obtaining civil documentation.

Security Incidents

Security incidents and military operations were reported throughout the month in Ninewa, Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, and Salah-Al-Din Governorates. In Anbar Governorate, multiple incidents were reported where extremists abducted and killed people who were collecting truffles in the deserts of Haditha, Rutba and Rawa. Collecting truffles has been a main source of income for some returnees due to lack of livelihood opportunities. In Diyala Governorate, several attacks driven by a mix of extremist activities, sectarian violence and local disputes were reported. Insurgent cells launched attacks in the northern areas around Khanaqin and Lake Hamrin, targeting civilians and security forces in an ongoing effort to undermine the security situation. In Ninewa Governorate, on 16 February, alleged extremists infiltrated a village in Qayyarah Sub-District in Mosul late at night and shot and killed a female resident who was allegedly acting as an informant for the security forces. On 20 February, also in Qayyarah, unidentified gunmen believed to be extremists raided an Iraqi Army checkpoint located on the main road, killing two Iraqi soldiers. Such incidents, together with the intensive security measures undertaken by security forces, continue to deter IDPs from returning to their areas of origin.

Departures from and Arrivals in Camps

Based on data provided by the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, 1,314 families departed camps across Iraq during February, while 1,142 families arrived in camps. Of these, 931 families were in secondary displacement.

Camp Consolidation and Camp Closure

In February, eight camps were closed, one camp underwent partial consolidation, and one camp was reclassified as an informal settlement. As a result of such camp consolidation and closure, UNHCR received various reports of secondary displacement and premature returns.

On 3 February, the Governorate Returns Committee decided to start the relocation of IDPs from Nazrawa Camp to Laylan 1 and Laylan 2 Camps as multiple tents had been damaged by the heavy rains, and the post-school exam and two-week holiday was deemed a suitable time for the closure. This expedited relocation was also based on multiple requests by IDPs. Given the decision, on 10 February, the first round of 387 individuals (74 families) relocated to Laylan 2 Camp where 100 new tents were pitched to host them.

On 6 February, the Baghdad Operations Command closed Al-Wahda Camp in Baghdad Governorate and relocated 12 IDP families along with their belongings to Al-Ahal Camp. The families were unwilling to return to their areas of origin due to security concerns, tribal disputes, shelter and infrastructure damage, lack of livelihood opportunities, as well as the desire to have their children continue the academic year in their current schools. The reputation of Al-Ahal Camp in terms of lack of livelihood opportunities and shortage in services and assistance were factors contributing to their reluctance to be relocated. While the Iraqi Security Forces urged the District Council Office to prohibit IDPs from living or renting places within the host community so that all IDPs from Al-Wahda Camp would be relocated to Al-Ahal Camp, humanitarian partners understand that 15 families from Al-Wahda left prior to the closure and are living in neighbourhoods near Al-Wahda Camp.

On 9 February, the local authorities closed the formal sites of Bzebiz in Anbar Governorate and approximately 26 families (originally from Al-Qa'im District) were relocated to Amriyeat Al Fallujah Camp. Furthermore, 146 families, originally from Jurf Al-Sakhar and Ewesat chose to move to informal settlements in Bzebiz. Additionally, 32 IDP families returned to their areas of origin in Al-Qa'im, Al-Ramadi and Heet Districts. Reportedly, these IDPs preferred to return to their area of origin rather than relocating to camps despite the fact that some of them will need to share accommodation with relatives due to damaged shelter and their inability to pay rent.

On 28 February 2019, Baghdad Operations Command closed Al-Amal IDP Camp in Abu Ghraib District, Baghdad and relocated 29 families to Al-Ahal Camp. During the closure process, the Iraqi Security Forces informed the IDPs that they must relocate to Al-Ahal Camp and that they were not allowed to rent accommodation in the surrounding host community. However, as the closure and relocation took place during the academic year, 50 families left the camp to join relatives or rent spaces within the host community prior to the closure date. No action was taken by the authorities against families that stayed in the host community.

Collective Punishment and Denial of Returns

UNHCR continue to receive reports of collective punishment of families due to accusations of perceived affiliation with extremists. For instance, in Jeda'a 5 Camp in Ninewa Governorate, three families consisting of female headed households reportedly were unable to return to their area of origin as their husbands were allegedly affiliated with extremists. They attempted to return to their village on 4 February, however, government-affiliated armed forces in the area informed the families that they must depart the village within five days. In Jeda'a 1 Camp, a female headed household was reportedly unable to renew her civil ID because her husband was allegedly involved with extremists. The family is unable to depart the camp even for medical treatment, and the children are unable to attend school as they are unable to obtain their graduation papers from their area of origin. In Nimrud Camp in Ninewa Governorate, a female head of household reported that she and her family were unable to return to their area of origin as the community leader (Mukhtar) demanded she pay 200 USD for her husband's alleged involvement with extremists. In Heet District, Anbar Governorate, an IDP family was reportedly evicted from their neighbourhood despite denouncing their son, who was allegedly affiliated with extremists, in front of the community and community leader.

Iraqi Returnees from Turkey

Between January and February, UNHCR recorded 174 Iraqis returning from Syria through the town of Rabia in Tel Afar District, Ninewa Governorate. Ninety per cent of the returnees were from Anbar and the remaining were from Salah-Al-Din and Ninewa. Furthermore, throughout February, UNHCR recorded 651 Iraqis returning from Turkey through Ibrahim Khalil Border Crossing Point in Duhok Governorate. Of the returnees, 381 individuals returned to Ninewa and 214 to Anbar, while others returned to Salah-Al-Din, Baghdad, Najaf, and Kirkuk. Both returns from Syria and Turkey were spontaneous and self-organized.

Syrian Refugees and Asylum-seekers

In February, UNHCR registered 1,957 individuals from Syria, including 713 new arrivals. This brings the total number of Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR up to 253,085 individuals (47% female and 53% male). Nearly 99% of the population resides in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), where 37% are living in camps and 63% out-of-camps. The majority of Syrian refugees originate from Al-Hasakeh (58.8%) followed by Aleppo (24.7%) and Damascus (9.5%).

Response by UNHCR and Partners

- UNHCR and partners continue to provide legal assistance to IDPs and to support the government's efforts to address issues relating to lack of civil documentation. In coordination with Khabat Court and the Hamdaniyah Health Center, UNHCR and partners arranged two mobile missions in the East Mosul camps in Ninewa Governorate to facilitate the issuance of marriage and birth certificates to IDPs. During the month of February, UNHCR and partners assisted 593 IDPs in securing documentation such as Civil Status ID, Nationality Certificate, and birth and marriage certificates.
- During the reporting period, UNHCR organized a number of workshops for government officials to enhance the protection of refugees and IDPs across the country. In Duhok, on 3 and 4 February, UNHCR conducted a training for 27 Peshmerga Officers on international human rights law, international humanitarian law, Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Sexual and Gender based Violence (SGBV) and Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). On 7 February, UNHCR and the Department of Foreign Relations of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) organised a workshop for KRG's Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice and the Higher Judicial Council, with the objective of promoting international, national and regional legal standards for refugee protection and reinforcing coordination between UNHCR and key government counterparts.
- On 24 February, UNHCR donated two garbage trucks to the municipality of Al-Hawija District, Kirkuk Governorate in a formal hand-over ceremony attended by the Hawija City Council Chairperson, Council members and local authorities. The two garbage trucks were part of UNHCR's quick impact projects to help the people and local government of Hawija to clear the remnants of war, garbage and debris. Officials of Hawija and the local community expressed their gratitude to UNHCR and requested UNHCR to continue their assistance in the rehabilitation and restoration of the district.