UNHCR in Iraq

UNHCR has been present in Iraq since the 1980s. Working with the Government of Iraq (GoI), UNHCR protects and assists people of concern (PoCs) including refugees, asylum seekers, stateless people, returnees, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in all 18 governorates. Iraq is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. However, the country has hosted and assisted, with UNHCR’s support, refugees of Palestinian, Iranian, Turkish, and Syrian origin.

Refugees /Asylum Seekers

The number of (non-Syrian) registered refugees and asylum seekers is now 39,480. UNHCR provides protection and assistance to the refugees while seeking durable solutions to their situation, through voluntary repatriation, resettlement or local integration. As of the end of 2013, the total number of registered Syrian refugees in Iraq reached 212,512. More than 98 per cent are hosted in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. For further details please visit: http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=103.

UNHCR continues to process the applications of the residents who have been transferred voluntarily to Hurriya Temporary Transit Location and who engage with UNHCR. UNHCR identified 1,641 individuals as being in need of International Protection. As of 31 December, 311 individuals have departed to third countries. Out of the 210 that Albania accepted, 197 individuals departed, of which 38 departed in the reporting period. Out of the 98 individuals accepted by Germany, 72 individuals departed to Germany.

Stateless Persons

UNHCR is working with its partners to better document the number of stateless persons in Iraq, which is likely to be significantly below the commonly referenced figure of 120,000. A mapping study targeting a wide variety of communities has commenced, gathering data through 150 key-informant interviews across 11 governorates and a survey among 1,200 respondents. In addition, UNHCR provides direct (financial) assistance and referrals on behalf of the persons of concern.

Returnees

UNHCR supports the return of refugees / IDPs who have voluntarily returned to their places of origin. MoDM recorded 124,150 Iraqi refugee and IDP returnees in 2013. In Iraq, returnees receive assistance from the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) in addition to support provided by UNHCR through its Return, Integration and Community Centres (RICCs). Due to the unrest in Syria, 45,840 Iraqi returnees from Syria have registered with the MoDM since July 2012. UNHCR is providing a cash grant to Iraqis returning from Syria to support their reintegration into Iraq.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

According to the MoDM and the Bureau of Displacement and Migration (BDM), there are approximately 954,128 IDPs in Iraq. Most IDPs fled their homes owing to fear in connection with sectarian violence in February 2006.

A new wave of displacement continued throughout 2013 for which IRC PARC teams were mobilized to respond; 1,865 families/9,991 individuals were verified as newly displaced through individual protection assessments in fourteen sites. UNHCR responded to the needs of flood victims in November by providing over 2,200 CRI kits to affected families and participating in a multi-agency rapid needs assessment.

UNHCR and its partners conducted needs assessments of the newly displaced people and is advocating with the GoI for their registration. In coordination with the government, UNHCR and partners ensure that food, core relief items, education and adequate accommodation are provided and that relevant identity and residency cards are also given. In collaboration with the IDPs working group, UNHCR has been working with the government, particularly with the MoDM, on a comprehensive plan to end displacement that incorporates the development of policies on integration as well as livelihood and employment opportunities as well as shelter programmes. Dialogue on the role of development actors in support to IDP assistance increased significantly in 2013.

UNHCR’s PARCs (protection assistance)

UNHCR, through its partners, manages a network of 18 Protection Assistance and Reintegration Centres (PARCs) across Iraq as well as six Return Integration and Community Centres (RICCs) in Baghdad to ensure that IDPs, refugees, returnees and stateless persons are able to enjoy their fundamental rights. Lawyers in the Centres as well as 45 mobile teams provide legal assistance, interventions and referrals on behalf of the persons of concern.

UNHCR staff and partners continue to follow up closely on protection issues faced by persons of concern, including evictions of IDPs from informal settlements, and issues relating to child protection, and gender based violence.

Populations of Concern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Populations of Concern</th>
<th>Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refugees &amp; asylum Seekers, non-Syrian (September)</td>
<td>39,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Syrian refugees fleeing Syria (August)</td>
<td>212,512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stateless persons (GoI source)</td>
<td>120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi refugee and IDPs returnees registered in 2013</td>
<td>124,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi refugee returnees registered from Syria</td>
<td>45,840</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDPs (MoDM source)</td>
<td>954,128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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UNHCR Iraq 2013 budget: USD 216,011,708
USD 112 631 621 regular programme
USD 103 380 087 Syrian response
A Refugee Story from Northern Iraq

With Patience and Hope, A Syrian Refugee Looks Forward to the Future

Bajet Kandala, (UNHCR) - Thirty seven-year-old *Kamal from Aleppo, Syria, was unable to report to work because of the extreme danger as fighting intensified between government forces and militants in the middle of his town. He took the quick decision to save his family and resort to a nearby small village for several months. Consequently, it turned out that he committed the mistake of his life.

A couple of months later, Kamal gambled with his life and went to work in the middle of heavy bombardments to collect his salary. To his surprise, they told him that he was terminated for failure to report to work for more than fifteen days without reason. He tried to explain that it was too dangerous for him to make it to work, but they did not listen, so Kamal lost his job he held for more than ten years.

Kamal then decided to check on his house that he abandoned months earlier, but another surprise was waiting for him—the house was occupied by armed elements that told him “go away, it is not your house anymore.” In one day, Kamal realized that he lost everything because he chose to save his life and that of his family.

Angry and shocked, Kamal went back to the village with nothing but his patience. There is nothing left for him in his own country, he decided to head to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Kamal recognized very well that he will be welcomed in the KR-I, “we are all one family, I knew that I will be protected there,” Kamal said, in reference to his feelings toward the people of the KR-I.

But the road to the KR-I was not as easy. Because the main route from his village to Qamishli is dangerous and full of hostilities, Kamal had to rely on smugglers, paying more than 550 USD, to reach the Syrian-Iraqi border.

I have nothing right now, I lost everything, but I am grateful that I have my wife and two daughters with me,” said Kamal, “other people have lost family members.” Kamal then recalled, “I used to cover the eyes of my little daughters so they don’t see things that will ask me to purchase for them, which hurts so much.”

Kamal and his family are registered with UNHCR and temporarily settled in Bajet Kandala Transit Site where they have access to all basic services including shelter, food and health care. After completing the registration and residency paperwork, they will relocate to Gawilan camp where they will receive longer term assistance and support. Kamal was so excited when learned that education will be offered for his daughters in Gawilan. “Of course, I will make sure that they attend the school in the Camp,” Kamal said with a smile in his face.

Flooding in Central Iraq

As a result of a wave of heavy rains that hit the central governorates of Iraq beginning on 20 November, dozens of villages were flooded, particularly in Najaf. The worst affected communities were those living in IDP settlements. Days of torrential rain destroyed thousands of homes, roads and bridges. At its worst, the flood water submerged whole villages near Al Najaf city and some villages in Najaf provincial government were declared as disaster zones with water reaching one to two metres. Some houses were entirely immersed. In Najaf alone, communities in five villages were displaced (Madhloom, Al-Rahaima, Al-Asaweed, Al-Hayadhiya, Al-Izziya) with fast moving water drifting their homes, taking with it their furniture, documents, food and all valuable belongings. Other governorates were also hit hard by the floods including Kerbala, Baghdad and Babylon.

The UNHCR coordinated with relevant authorities, partners, other UN agencies, and focal points from informal settlements, and responded immediately to the affected families. In collaboration with local authorities in all affected governorates the distribution of over 3,000 core relief item kits and registration of displaced persons took place within days of the floods. UNHCR and partners continue to provide support to the communities affected by the floods. (Photos: Kerbala distributions of CRI kits and flooded IDP settlement in Najaf @ UNHCR).

UNHCR coordination and partnerships:

**Government of Iraq & Kurdistan Regional Government:** Bureau of Displacement and Migration (BDM), Department of Displacement and Migration (DDM), Development and Modification Centre (DMC), Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Human Rights, Implementation and Follow up Committee for National Reconciliation (IFCNR).

**UN agencies and other entities:** UNAMI, WFP, UNICEF, UNOPS, UN-Habitat, UNWomen, IDOM, WHO, OCHA, ICRC, MSB.


For more information please visit the UNHCR portal: [http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php](http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php), LIKE us on Facebook, or write to irqpi@unhcr.org