

Humanitarian Agencies are Rushing Assistance to People Fleeing Violence in Anbar

(Baghdad, 19 April 2015): Humanitarian agencies are rushing to provide assistance to more than 90,000 people fleeing clashes in Anbar Governorate.

“Our top priority is delivering life-saving assistance to people who are fleeing-- food, water and shelter are highest on the list of priorities,” Lise Grande, the Humanitarian Coordinator for the United Nations in Iraq said.

Civilians are fleeing Ramadi, Albu Farraj, Albu Aetha, Albu Thiyab and are moving towards Khaldiya, Ameriya al Faullujah, and Baghdad, many of them on foot.

“Seeing people carrying what little they can and rushing for safety is heart-breaking,” Lise Grande said. “We are very worried about people’s safety; the situation is dramatic and only urgent action can save lives.”

Humanitarian agencies have moved quickly to provide assistance. The World Food Programme (WFP) is distributing immediate response rations (IRRs), sufficient for three days, for 41,465 people in Ramadi, and has already distributed rations to 8,750 newly displaced people in Baghdad.

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has distributed core relief item (CRI) kits to approximately 1,000 families in Ameriyat al Fallujah and Baghdad, with plans to distribute another 2,000 kits in coming days.

The UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has distributed 12,150 Rapid Response Mechanisms (RRM) kits in the last few days to cover the immediate needs of 85,000 people. Each kit includes adult hygiene items and 12 litres of water. 39,000 additional kits are ready to be distributed over the next two weeks, sufficient to meet the immediate needs of 273,000 individuals.

The World Health Organization (WHO) is assisting the Ministry of Health with front-line services. Six ambulances have been dispatched around the BzBiz Bridge with emergency health staff and two mobile health clinics will arrive at the location tomorrow.

At least 2.7 million Iraqis have been displaced since January 2014, including 400,000 from Anbar Governorate, making the Iraq crisis one of the most complex humanitarian emergencies in the world today.

Humanitarian agencies are working under the leadership of the Government of Iraq and coordinating their response through the Government’s Joint Coordination Monitoring Center (JCMC).

“We are doing what we can to help,” Grande said, “but the humanitarian operation in Iraq is severely under-funded.”

In the next few weeks and months, unless funding is received, 60 percent of programmes supported by humanitarian partners will be curtailed or shut-down. The impact of this on the victims of the violence will be catastrophic.

“We’re asking everyone who can, to help contribute financially to the operation,” Grande said.

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