



IRAQ Humanitarian Crisis

ECHO CRISIS FLASH

Period covered
01/03/2016 to 13/05/2016

Time of validity
12 (UTC)

ECHO Field Office
Erbil – IRAQ

PEOPLE IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE
10 million (UN OCHA)

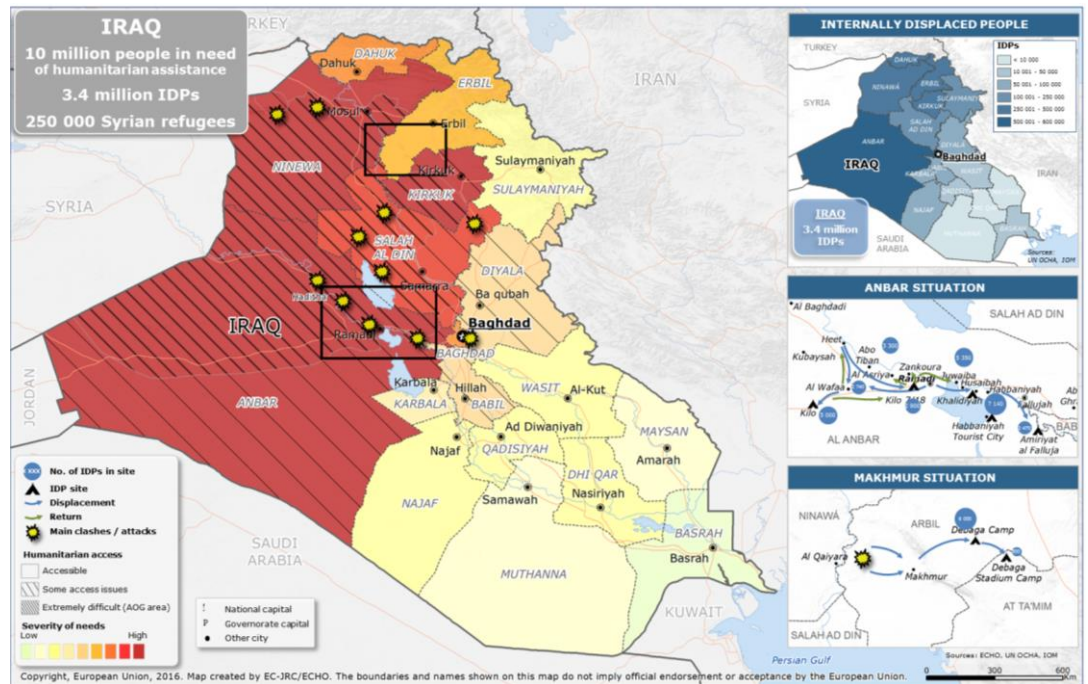
INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPs)
3.4 million (January 2014 – May 2016, IOM)
1.13 million from previous years (Ministry of Displacement and Migration)

CASUALTY FIGURES
Over 64 000 civilian deaths and civilians injured (January 2014 – May 2016, UNAMI)

REFUGEES IN IRAQ
246 589 Syrian refugees
36-40 000 registered refugees of various nationalities (UNHCR)

RETURNEES IN IRAQ
Over 650 000 IDPs reported to have returned to district of origin (IOM)

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Humanitarian Situation

The humanitarian situation continues deteriorating through 2016, with 10 million people in need and the **total number of IDPs now reaching 3.4 million individuals**, since January 2014. The military operations in the Anbar and Mosul corridors have been the main driver of displacement and contributed to **around 100 000 internally displaced persons (IDPs)**, since the **beginning of the year**, mostly concentrated in Anbar, Salah al-Din and Erbil Governorate.

Widespread violations of international humanitarian law during and after the conflict persist. The military tactics adopted by parties to the conflict are having a massive toll on the civilian population, with the UN mission to Iraq having **confirmed over 64 000 civilian casualties**, since January 2014. Current disregard for the basic principles of proportionality and distinction between civilians and combatants continue to cause immense human suffering in Iraq. Civilians are unable to flee IS controlled and state besieged locations, as parties to the conflict continue to impose barriers to their ability to access safety, including targeted use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and snipers. To date, humanitarian access negotiations have not managed to engage all parties to the conflict and the humanitarian community has only been able to punctually deliver life-saving assistance into some besieged cities and has not been able to attend the needs of a minimum estimated of 1.1-3 million people living in areas outside of government control.

Year 2016 also continues to see an **increase in access constraints and IDPs civilian rights violations**. IDPs are being forcibly relocated and interned, for apparent military necessity and following sectarian/demographic discriminatory objectives. They are subject to security screening processes, without the necessary procedural safeguards or required basic assistance. They are, also, often relocated to unsafe and unsuitable IDP camps where they face restrictions on their freedom of movement and self-reliance, as they cannot independently meet their basic needs.

Local authorities and humanitarian community are underprepared for the upcoming large scale displacement, forecasted as a result of the ongoing military operations which could result in an additional 2.55 million IDPs (from Anbar and Mosul corridor/city only), by the end of 2016. Planning challenges have already resulted in ad hoc decisions on where to host IDPs, with thousands of individuals obliged to reside in sports centers and deserted locations, living in extreme poor conditions or without access to basic assistance. As an illustration, out of the over 5 000 individuals, displaced as a result of ongoing military operations in Makhmour (Mosul corridor), only 1 219 were able to move on to third locations, through sponsorship. The remaining ones reside in Debaga IDP camp, currently hosting 6 225 individuals, despite having a maximum capacity of 5 000. More IDPs arrive daily.

Return movements have increased complexity in 2016, as displacement patterns have become more kinetic. Families, displaced by the military offensive along the Anbar corridor, are spending a shorter period of time in transit sites (established West of Ramadi) before choosing to return to places of origin, as the military operations move further West. Their choice to return is also conditioned by the limited assistance provided in transit sites. Recent multi-cluster assessment visits have highlighted that **poor living conditions, lack of humanitarian assistance and lack of privacy have contributed to families choosing to return, despite the significant threats posed by high levels of IED, Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) and Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) contamination and the lack of access to basic services, in their areas of origin.** Up to 17 000 families have been reported to have returned to Ramadi; since Heet was retaken by governmental forces, in late April, up to 4 000 families have allegedly returned.

Broadly, the number of returnees in country is growing rapidly, with over 650 000 IDPs reported to have returned to their district of origin, as of the end of April 2016. This represents a 40% increase compared to the number of returnees as of the end of 2015. The overall increase of returns should not detract from the **ongoing restriction that many IDPs face in realizing their right to return, often based on their sectarian affiliation and/or ethnicity.** There is still a significant threat of retaliatory attacks against those who choose to return to locations controlled by security forces of different sectarian or ethnic identity. Furthermore, deliberate destruction of civilian infrastructure in retaken areas continues to undermine IDPs' right to return, as well as contravene International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

The security situation in the internal disputed territories remains tense and volatile. In April 2016, fighting broke out between Shiite Militias and Kurdish security forces in Tuz Khurmatu. As a result, approximately 14 000 people were displaced, before multiple attempts to negotiate a ceasefire, eventually, succeeded in bringing an end to the armed clashes. In Diyala, politically driven ongoing tensions are fueling insecurity in Ba'quba and surrounding areas.

Humanitarian Response and Planning

Ongoing Response

The ECHO supported Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), led by UNICEF and WFP, has provided life-saving assistance to newly displaced families, in the form of RRM kits including immediate response food rations, water and hygiene kits. Aid has been delivered through NGO partners present on the front lines and in areas receiving new displacements. The RRM has reached almost 280 000 families since the beginning of 2015. The overwhelming majority of needs have been concentrated in the Anbar corridor where over 60 000 individuals have been displaced since 1st March. Partners have struggled to ensure the delivery of sectoral responses, as a follow up to the RRM assistance, in areas with more limited access - particularly in Salah al-Din and Anbar. In response to urgent need for access to safe drinking water and sanitation, ECHO's support to WASH actions delivered by UNICEF and INGOs, has succeeded to scale up services in Ninewa, Kirkuk, Makhmour, Salah al-Din, Baghdad and Anbar - prioritizing those areas receiving large numbers of new IDPs.

ECHO has worked with Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM), WASH and Shelter partners, to deliver an integrated package of assistance for IDPs, residing both in and out of camp settings across the Central/South regions of Iraq. The integrated response programme is adjusting to the displacement trends and the increase in displacement into camps. Such adjustment includes the provision of additional CCCM, Shelter and Wash assistance in formal IDP camps; the support for the establishment of new ones (such as the four by UNHCR in Ameriyat Fallujah, in preparation for new displacement due to military operations in Fallujah district); and the inclusion of emergency relief packages/core relief items for IDPs who arrive to transit sites and IDP camps. A clear need remains capacity building and support for national authorities, on site selection standards and criteria, to avoid across the country the choice of locations that are unsafe, due to proximity to the front line, or inappropriate, due to their geography.

ECHO continues to support multi-purpose cash assistance, as a cost effective and dignifying response to multi-sector basic needs of newly displaced and extremely vulnerable individuals. In April, 4 161 families received cash support. The cash working group, which includes ECHO supported multi-purpose cash partners, is exploring the feasibility of using multi-purpose cash to address the basic needs of IDPs in current areas of large displacement, including Anbar and Ninewa. Similarly, ECHO is also supporting WFP to expand the proportion of WFP's food assistance delivered through cash, as well as scale up the use of the SCOPE database and distribution card. These would allow for multi-agency, multi-purpose cash assistance and, through improved management of IDP data and assistance, could also improve targeting and avoid duplication. Preliminary reports from the pilot, conducted in the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI), indicate that the cash modality and SCOPE card are, not only, feasible, but also more cost effective for WFP and welcomed by displaced families.

The humanitarian community in Iraq has struggled to deliver a timely and relevant response to all of the needs outlined above. Despite some progress for a more balanced assistance, coordination structures and humanitarian programmes are still concentrated in easily accessible locations, with the majority of displacement, through 2016, concentrated in Anbar and Salah a-Din. The lack of pre-existing partners in these areas and a relatively still weak coordination system in Baghdad have undermined the response capacity. The RRM has been successful, through a pre-identified network of implementing partners with areas of responsibility and agreed packages of assistance and supported by necessary supply chain. The follow up sectoral response lacks pre-defined assistance packages and minimum conditions for support - the humanitarian community has not yet agreed under which conditions it should or should not intervene, and with which level of assistance.

Planning and Preparedness for the Anbar and Mosul Corridors

A contingency plan has been developed by UNOCHA through the cluster system in preparation for responding to the ongoing military operation along the Anbar and Mosul corridors. The probable scale of displacement is enormous, with planning figures surpassing the 2.5 million additional IDPs, before the end of 2016. The scale of displacement, humanitarian impact and, therefore, the cost and duration of the humanitarian response depend on methods, tactics and pace of the military operation. Furthermore, the capacity of security forces to facilitate civilians seeking to flee active conflict areas, the procedures and safeguards, implemented during IDP screening, and the preservation of the humanitarian and civilian nature of IDP camps are crucial to ensuring the protection and basic assistance of civilians during the conflict. With this in mind, the humanitarian community will need to establish and maintain strong civil-military relations as part of its preparedness and response.

ECHO is already supporting 16 partners in Anbar, 18 in Salah al-Din, 10 in Kirkuk and 17 in Ninewa, in order to address the current needs and as an operational form of preparedness. This will allow ECHO to more rapidly scale up its current emergency response, through pre-positioned partners and predefined modalities. At the same time, humanitarian partners will be in a stronger position to offer prompt support, having already worked on their acceptance and access to areas likely to be impacted by military operations and/or to receive IDPs.

Iraq Crisis Appeals and Funding

The 2016 Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan requests \$861million and it is currently 24% funded. The highly prioritized nature of the appeal renders the current funding gap of critical concern, with humanitarian programmes at risk of closure by June. The humanitarian pooled fund has just under \$40million available; \$32.6million were allocated to 10 clusters to meet urgent and critical needs, prioritizing WASH and health responses in Anbar, Salah al-Din and Ninewa/Makhmour. The Syria Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) for Iraq has requested \$298m.

EU Funding and Humanitarian Engagement

Responding to growing humanitarian needs, the European Commission has significantly increased its humanitarian aid to Iraq, allocating and fully contracting €107.65 million in 2015. A substantial amount will be also allocated in 2016. Funding supports life-saving humanitarian assistance, in full respect of the humanitarian principles and targeting all most vulnerable people, on the basis of needs only (including both internally displaced persons and Syrian refugees in Iraq). Strong efforts have been made for a balanced humanitarian response throughout Iraq, reaching people in underserved/conflict affected areas, in line with the all-of-Iraq approach.

Advocacy for the protection of civilians, safe and unhindered humanitarian access and the respect of IHL by all parties to the conflict has been at the forefront of ECHO's humanitarian response as well as the call for the safe, voluntary and non-discriminatory return of displaced populations to villages of origin. The Commission supports the dissemination of IHL principles to state and non-state armed groups in the country through ICRC and other humanitarian partners.