

IRAQ SITUATION UPDATE – 09 JULY 07



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Palestinian refugees stranded at the desolate Al-Waleed camp close to Iraq's border with Syria – June 2007.

Latest News...

- *Informal discussions with the Government of Syria indicate growing impatience over the lack of international support and the possibility of restricting access and establishing camps at the border.*
- *Both Syria and Jordan are still waiting for help despite expressions of support made during a major international conference on Iraq in April. UNHCR made a fresh call on donors at the end of the first week of July to help countries hosting hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees.*
- *The first group of some 60 Iraqis to be resettled in the USA in 2007 arrived in the USA from Jordan.*
- *Over 150,000 Iraqis have now been registered by UNHCR offices in the region, including 100,000 in Syria, 36,000 in Jordan, 7,600 in Egypt, 6,300 in Lebanon and 1,000 in Iran.*
- *UNHCR is finalising a request to increase the Supplementary Budget for the Iraq Situation from USD 60 million to USD 115 million.*

Internally Displaced Iraqis

- *Total number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Iraq now exceeds 2,000,000. This includes persons displaced under the former regime and since 2003. Of the total number of displaced persons, the Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration estimated in May 2007 that 822,000 had been displaced after the first Samarra bombing in February 2006.*
- *Some 2,000 Iraqis per day, or over 80 per hour (day and night), become internally displaced.*
- *Increased restrictions on IDP movement within Iraq have led to the establishment of numerous IDP camps. UNHCR has received reports that there are camps in Diyala province, Najaf, Baghdad, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Erbil, Dohuk, Sulaymaniyah and Diwaniya. In Ninewa, it is estimated that 7% of the total number of IDPs (some 80,000) are in makeshift camps. However, most of the camps are not so large and contain only a couple of hundred families. Overall, it is believed that some 1 to 2 % of the persons displaced since February 2006 are now in ad hoc camps¹.*
- *Vulnerable women and children continue to be targets of violence, and reports suggest that single women are being denied access to register for food distribution in certain governorates.*

¹ Source: IOM Emergency Needs Assessment 17 May 2007.

- Since January 2007, the three northern governorates have reported a 70% increase in “new” IDPs (total 143,000). Central Iraq reported a 38% increase (including a 57% increase in Baghdad) to 351,000 IDPs, and in the 9 southern governorates there was a 9% increase to 328,000 IDPs.

Palestinians and other non-Iraqi refugees in Iraq

- There remain 12,000-13,000 Palestinians in Baghdad. Another 1,060 Palestinians are stranded in Al-Waleed on the Iraqi side near the border with Syria; 312 (113 families) in Al Tanf (in no man’s land between Iraq and Syria); and 304 in El Hol, which is located just inside Syria.
- UNHCR is attempting to evacuate 12 young people from Al-Waleed camp suffering from serious and life-threatening medical problems. There are 3 emergency cases - 2 children and a young adult, aged 2, 6 and 21 - with cerebral palsy, a heart problem and diabetes. In addition, there are 2 children with Hodgkin’s Disease. The others suffer from heart problems, severe skin rashes and spinal injuries, among other illnesses. One child has a spinal problem and is currently paralyzed below the waist, but a doctor has said that with appropriate treatment, he may be able to walk again.
- UNHCR continues to receive reports that Palestinians in Baghdad are being targeted with unconfirmed reports of kidnappings for ransom, abductions and murders. Palestinians continue to be forced from their homes by death threats or other violent acts and evictions perpetrated by militias.
- In addition to the Palestinians, UNHCR estimates that there is a significant number of other people potentially in need of international protection including 11,763 Iranians (Kurds and Ahwazis), 15,593 Turkish, 137 Sudanese, 663 Syrians and some 2,265 Iranian, Syrian and Turkish asylum-seekers.

Iraqis in Neighbouring States

Estimated number of displaced Iraqis staying in the region (as at mid-2007)

Country	Displaced Iraqis (estimated)
Syria	1.2-1.4 million
Jordan	500,000-750,000
Gulf states	200,000
Egypt	80,000
Iran	50,000
Lebanon	20,000-40,000
Total	2.2 million

- UNHCR has registered over 150,000 Iraqis in the region. Of those registered, 45% are women. Just less than 30% of registered Iraqis are of school age (5-17) in Syria, with lower figures in Jordan and Lebanon. In Syria and Lebanon, some 30% of those registered have special needs and have been referred for follow-up.

Syria

- The Government of Syria reports that in addition to private vehicles some 15 buses and 50 taxis are arriving daily from Iraq.
- In the first six months of 2007, the UNHCR office in Damascus registered some 60,000 Iraqis. Of those registered:
 - * 30% are between 5 and 17 years (school age);
 - * 47.4% are women;
 - * 5% are 60+ years;
 - * 64% are Sunni, 17.5% are Shiite, 11% are Christian and 4.3% Sabeen Mandeian;
 - * 37% have special needs, including 19% with serious medical conditions;

** The overwhelming number originate from Baghdad.*

- *A total of 30 UNHCR staff are now involved in registering Iraqis in Syria. The office is trying to reduce the waiting period for interview to 2-3 months.*
- *The UNHCR office has seen a steady decline in the number of 'no-shows' to interviews. For example, two weeks ago, the rate of those failing to attend was 26% of the total interviews scheduled, compared to 30-35% the week prior.*
- *Furthermore, calls to the UNHCR hotline continue to increase, with the average number of calls per week increasing from under 200 in early May to over 300 calls per week in early July.*
- *UNHCR staff members are visiting and monitoring the main border crossing with Iraq four days per week.*
- *A recently completed UNHCR-sponsored survey of 733 Iraqis visiting the UNHCR registration site in Douma, Damascus, has revealed interesting information that will assist greatly in developing future responses in Syria and the region. This information includes the following statistics:*
 - *41% of those interviewed had been in Syria less than one week (85% had been in Syria less than one year);*
 - *56% were from Baghdad, 13% from Qadeseh, 8% from Basra, 6% from Ninawa, and 5% from Dohuk;*
 - *58% arrived with a spouse and children (representing complete family units departing Iraq). Only 12% travelled alone. 83% of respondents had children;*
 - *76% of respondents' children were not enrolled in Syrian schools. 53% stated that children had a problem with documents;*
 - *10% of children were reported to be working;*
 - *27% stated that the main reason that they applied to UNHCR was to seek resettlement while 24% applied to UNHCR to seek a refugee certificate;*
 - *96% rent accommodation while 0.5% said they were homeless;*
 - *29% stated that 8 or more persons lived in their apartment;*
 - *63% had family abroad (34% of whom were in Sweden, 24% in the US, 16% in Australia, 13% in Germany and 13% in the UK);*
 - *41% were living off savings, 32% were receiving assistance from relatives in Iraq, 20% were supported by a salary, 9% were receiving donations, 8% were receiving remittances and 4% were living off loans.*
 - *34% stated that their funds would be depleted within a month.*

Jordan

- *A newly recruited public health officer joined the UNHCR office as of 1 July.*
- *Between 3 and 17 June, 25 applicants for protection were arrested, 19 of whom were bailed out through the intervention of UNHCR and its partners. 7 cases are reported to have been deported. A total of 23 people of concern are in detention.*

Lebanon

- *The political and security situations have further deteriorated during June, which has worsened the situation for refugees. For the first time, the authorities have openly threatened some Iraqi refugees with "deportation" on account of "national security". Some 470 Iraqis are reported to be in detention.*
- *The tight security and uncertainty about the future have also contributed to a rising level of frustration amongst the refugee population. UNHCR has dedicated much time to counselling these individuals.*
- *Security concerns have meant that some refugees fear coming to the UNHCR office. In certain areas, access to clinics is restricted for refugees and not all necessary medication is*

available. Meanwhile, 32% of the individuals registered the week before last (15-21 June) had special needs.

Egypt

- Over 2,000 Iraqi refugee and asylum-seeking children (Grades 1 to 12) will require support through education-grants for the academic year 2007/08.

Resettlement

- Seven Swedish officials conducted an 8-day selection mission to Amman (from 6 to 17 June). 210 of the most vulnerable individuals were accepted for resettlement.
- 59 individuals accepted during the February/March US resettlement selection mission departed in the last week of June.
- Canada has tentatively scheduled a selection mission to Amman the first week in August.
- By 6 July, 10,305 of the most vulnerable Iraqis had been referred to Australia, Canada, Denmark, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, the UK and the USA. This represents 51.5% of the total number of resettlement submissions for Iraqi refugees that UNHCR has undertaken to refer for 2007. Of these referrals, some 8,137 were to the USA.
- UNHCR is encouraging resettlement countries to make rapid decisions to facilitate the departure of the most vulnerable Iraqis. Over 20% of cases (totalling 517 individuals) submitted by Jordan and Syria are women at risk.

Community Support & Assistance

- UNHCR is continuing to work with UNICEF on programmes aimed at having at least 150,000 Iraqi children in school in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon by the end of 2007.
- UNHCR estimates that there are only 33,000 Iraqi children attending school in Syria, and only another 10,000–15,000 attending school in Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt.
- CARITAS is supporting 1,200 extremely vulnerable families at their Migrants' Centre.
- Medical referrals and assistance has been provided by UNHCR to 10,056 Iraqis in Syria.
- UNHCR has established 13 community centres in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. The centres provide emergency assistance, counseling for domestic violence, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence as well as referrals for health and education assistance. The target is to establish at least 20 other such centres by the end of 2007.
- UNHCR Syria community services staff began conducting vulnerability assessments and have thus far assessed over 85 cases (60% of these cases were unaccompanied women and 10% were unaccompanied elderly). Eight community services staff are undertaking home visits, either at counselling centres or at the registration centre. In addition, the Syrian Red Crescent is conducting 50 home visits per month
- Distribution of relief items, as at 22 June 07:
 - In Iraq: 93,398 blankets, 9,075 kitchen sets, 6,591 stoves, 9,024 jerry cans (for kerosene and water), 280 plastic rolls, 8,941 plastic sheets, 8,636 lanterns, 15,152 bars of soap, 13,954 mattresses and 4,426 tents.
 - In Syria and Jordan: 163,879 blankets, 27,312 kitchen sets, 27,123 stoves, 45,398 jerry cans (for kerosene and water), 195 plastic rolls, 40,461 plastic sheets, 17,016 lanterns, 7,960 bars of soap, 31,392 mattresses and 19,707 tents.

Staffing

- UNHCR has over 300 staff working on the Iraq operation based in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Geneva, Turkey and Egypt.