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Iraqis displaced by fighting in the north-west of the country must be given urgent humanitarian assistance, Amnesty International said after tens of thousands of civilians fled the town of Sinjar and surrounding areas following an attack by Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) militants.

Hundreds of civilians from Sinjar and its environs are missing, feared dead or abducted, while tens of thousands are trapped without basic necessities or vital supplies in the Sinjar Mountain area south of the city. Most of those affected are members of the Yezidi minority.

"The civilians trapped in the mountain area are not only at risk of being killed or abducted by ISIS; they are also suffering from a lack of water, food and medical care. They are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance," said Donatella Rovera, Amnesty International's Senior Crisis Response Adviser, who is currently in northern Iraq.

"We urge the international community to provide humanitarian assistance, while the Iraqi and Kurdish authorities must spare no effort to ensure that much-needed aid is delivered to the displaced civilians and that they are protected from further ISIS attacks on the ground."

Entire populations of the areas attacked by ISIS from Saturday 2 August have fled to the mountain area, which is surrounded by the armed group.

Hundreds of missing civilians, mainly men but also women and children, are reported to have been killed or abducted. Other civilian males who took up arms in an attempt to fend off ISIS attacks are also reported to have been captured and killed.

ISIS fighters abducted or killed more than 30 members of two families from the village of Khana Sor, north-west of Sinjar close to the Syrian border, one of their relatives told Amnesty International.

"They killed the 15 men and took the women and children and until now we do not know what happened to them, where they are or if they are alive or dead," he said.

A Yezidi woman who fled to the Sinjar Mountain from Tal al-Banat, a village south of Sinjar, told Amnesty International that she fears her missing son Hsein Buqu -- a 45-year-old father of three -- has been killed or abducted.

"We have had no news of him since we fled three days ago. If he was alive and well he would have contacted us (the family)," she said.

Yezidi communities in Iraq have long suffered persecution because of their religion -- an off-shoot of the pre-Islamic Zoroastrian faith -- and are often referred to by Muslims as "devil worshippers".

Along with Christians and other minorities in Iraq, they are increasingly vulnerable to attacks since ISIS took control of parts of north-western Iraq in June.

Access is currently impossible to the areas under ISIS control and to surrounding areas where armed confrontations are ongoing between ISIS militants and Kurdish Peshmerga forces.

It is therefore difficult to obtain and verify information about the exact circumstances in which individuals and families have gone missing.

The fact that many are trapped in areas without electricity means those affected are unable to communicate with their relatives and with the outside world.

The Kurdistan Regional Government has also blocked displaced people from seeking refuge in some Iraqi Kurdistan cities under its control, such as Erbil and Dohuk.

"The plight of displaced people caught up in fighting in Iraq is increasingly desperate and all parties to the conflict must do more to ensure their safety," said Donatella Rovera.

"For one, the Kurdistan Regional Government must immediately allow displaced people unfettered access to all areas under its control and remove restrictions in Erbil, Dohuk and other areas where civilians may seek refuge."