



Global Overview 2014: people internally displaced by conflict and violence - Iraq

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Number of IDPs	Up to 2,100,000
Percentage of total population	Up to 4.6%
Start of displacement situation	1968
Peak number of IDPs (year)	2,840,000 (2008)
New displacement in 2013	11,800
Causes of displacement	✓ Armed conflict ✓ Generalised violence ✓ Human rights violations
Human development index	131

Up to 2.1 million people were displaced in Iraq and unable to achieve durable solutions as of 2013. This includes up to 1.1 million people displaced since the sectarian violence of 2006, and at least one million IDPs displaced from previous waves of displacement or newly displaced but unregistered by the authorities.

Struggling under the strain of hosting more than 200,000 refugees and 50,000 Iraqi returnees from Syria, the authorities had to adapt their response quickly during 2013 to focus on new IDPs. There were more violent attacks and civilian deaths during the year than at any other time in the past five. Violence increased after the Shia-led government raided and dismantled a Sunni protest camp in the northern city of al-Hawija in April. According to IOM, nearly 11,800 people fled their homes during 2013, but the true scale of new displacement is unclear, particularly in Anbar governorate where the security situation has deteriorated rapidly. New displacement also took place in Baghdad and the southern city of Basra, and in rural villages with mixed Sunni and Shia populations in North Hilla, Diyala, Basra, Thi-Qar and Ninewa governorates.

No official census has been carried out since 1997, and references to the number, location and living conditions of IDPs in protracted displacement are inconsistently monitored across governorates. The situation is particularly unclear in the disputed Kurdish territories, where population estimates are a sensitive issue often associated with political manoeuvring. In December, the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) and the Kurdish Directorate of

Displacement and Migration (DDM) estimated the number of registered IDPs to be over 954,000, down from 1.1 million in December 2012. Although more than 26,700 displaced families have reportedly returned to their homes during the year, many international organisations questioned the extent to which the government figures reflected a real change on the ground. They estimate the total to be much higher, and note that many IDPs are unable or reluctant to register with the authorities.

According to IOM, at least 87 per cent of IDPs in protracted displacement wish to integrate locally, but the government's policy has been to promote return by offering significant financial incentives to those who agree to de-register as IDPs. Returnees receive assistance and support from both the Iraqi authorities and UNHCR, but research by IDMC suggests that many used their financial grant as a temporary relief, rather than to fund their return to their place of origin. Those IDPs who never registered in the first place tend to find themselves unable to rent or purchase property, vote, register in schools, receive medical treatment or access other services.

Most IDPs live in urban areas, where they rent accommodation or squat public buildings or land. According to NRC, there are at least 150,000 IDPs living in poverty among the rest of the urban poor in Baghdad's 241 informal settlements. Conditions in the settlements are harsh, with little or no access to basic services such as drinking water, electricity and sanitation. Inhabitants have no tenure security and few if any job opportunities. IDPs face the risk of forced eviction and secondary displacement. Displaced women and girls are also at heightened risk of gender-based and domestic violence, and female-headed households have particular difficulty in accessing livelihood opportunities.

Meeting the basic needs of Iraq's IDPs in the current security climate and with fewer funds has proved a major challenge for the humanitarian community. Both IDPs and host communities identify the improvement of living conditions in informal settlements and the fostering of self-reliance as their priorities. In April, UNHCR and its partners agreed to support the development of the second stage of MoMD's revised displacement plan. Launched in 2012, the plan attempts to combine policies on integration, livelihood, employment opportunities and shelter programmes aiming to achieve durable solutions. UN-HABITAT has also helped the government provide vulnerable communities with an estimated two million housing units and services.

A more vigilant and coordinated approach is needed to ensure that the situation of Iraq's IDPs is not overshadowed by the emergency in Syria, and that their needs remain at the forefront of the response.

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