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Displacement from Iraq's Anbar province

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Over the last six weeks up to 300,000 Iraqis - some 50,000 families - have been displaced due to insecurity around Fallujah and Ramadi in central Iraq's Anbar Province. With the conflict in Anbar continuing, UN agencies continue to receive reports of civilian casualties and sustained hardship in communities impacted by the fighting and the influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Iraq's Ministry of Displacement and Migration estimates that the government will initially need \$35 million to address humanitarian needs caused by the Anbar crisis, including to provide food, bedding and other needs. Late last month the government's high level emergency coordination committee allocated \$18 million to the Ministry of Displacement and Migration and a further \$9 million to Anbar Province authorities to help the displaced persons.

UNHCR field staff report that displaced Iraqis are residing in schools, mosques and other public buildings and urgently need various humanitarian items. Pregnant women and children need medical care while all families are in need of drinking water, milk and other food aid, diapers, beds and cooking items.

Most of the displaced have fled to outlying communities in Anbar Province to escape the fighting while 60,000 persons have fled to more distant provinces. Thousands are now displaced to Salah Al-Din; authorities in Erbil report some 24,000 persons there, while some 6,000 persons are registered in Dohuk and Suleymaniyyeh and others are in Tikrit, Babylon and Kerbala.

Along Iraq's distant frontier with Syria, there are now some 7,000 displaced Iraqis in Al Qaim, a border city where families need significant support. Al Qaim hosts some 5,000 Syrian refugees and supplies are becoming increasingly scarce.

As in other parts of the country, the IDPs in Al Qaim are mainly living in hotels and guest houses, although some are staying in the abandoned staff residences at an old phosphate factory. A UNHCR team that flew in from Baghdad found others living in an unheated school, where they stay in classrooms and cook in an improvised kitchen on a stove donated by the host community. We identified several chronic medical cases of diabetes and high-blood pressure as well as at least four pregnant women. Blankets and kitchen sets were provided from the stocks stored at the nearby Al Obeidy Syrian refugee camp

In a relief operation coordinated by the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq to support the Iraqi government's response, UNHCR has distributed more than 2,300 kits of core relief items and 175 tents various locations across the country. The International Organisation for Migration has distributed more than 1,600 kits including also mattresses and sleeping kits. ICRC has likewise distributed its core relief item kits to more than 800 needy families as well as water tanks and other supplies. UNICEF has so far distributed more

than 1,250 hygiene kits and various water/sanitation supplies and plans to send 36 tons of hygiene kits, water and sanitation supplies into Ramadi, Heet, Haditha, Rawa, Ana and Al Qaim. UNWFP in cooperation with IOM has delivered more than 4,300 food parcels to various districts in Anbar hosting IDPs.

In addition to providing medical care, first aid and transportation, the Iraqi Red Crescent Society is very actively involved in the relief effort and has distributed food parcels and other items to more than 100,000 people. Iraq's parliament has also dispatched relief aid via the Ministry of Displacement. The Ministry of Displacement and Migration itself has dispatched more than 5,300 food rations, 9,000 blankets and more than 600 core relief item kits while more than 200 tents are on their way to Amiriat Al-Fallujah to increase accommodation capacity. National charities like Al-Ataba Al Hussainiyah have distributed cash assistance for all IDP families from Anbar province in Al-Zahra city in Kerbala (100,000 dinars for adults and 50,000 dinars for children) as well as transportation costs between Al Zahra city and Kerbala city and three meals daily. A UNHCR team from Baghdad recently visited Al Zahra city near Kerbala and found more than 1,500 IDPs residing there in a pilgrim camp, where ICRC has provided water tanks and other aid.

Other partners like the International Rescue Committee are active and supporting UNHCR's field work. Save the Children plans to conduct a child protection assessment in Shaklawah and Erbil, in northern Iraq.

Access and roadblocks remain a challenge. A consignment of WHO medical supplies has reportedly been detained at an Iraqi Army checkpoint since 30th January. Many bridges leading into the Anbar region have been destroyed and roads are blocked, complicating deliveries to communities hosting IDPs.

The some 300,000 new IDPs comes atop of Iraq's population of more than 1.1 million displaced persons who have still not returned to communities wracked by violence mainly during the 2006-2008 upheaval.

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