



Iraq – 10,000 displaced from Christian communities near Mosul

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In northern Iraq, thousands of people from the predominately Christian communities of Qaraqosh (also known as Hamdaniya) have fled their homes since Wednesday evening, following violence close to their community. Displaced people tell us that mortar rounds landed close to Qaraqosh prompting the exodus. Qaraqosh is an historic Assyrian town of 50,000 people, approximately 30 kilometres southeast of Iraq's second largest city of Mosul, where armed opposition groups seized control two weeks ago.

Community leaders say as many as 10,000 people fled by bus, car and taxi into Iraq's Kurdistan region on Wednesday night. Many are women and children. They are now staying with families, relatives and in schools and community centres. Most are in Erbil. They fled in a rush, with little time to bring belongings with them.

Last night, UNHCR - supported by dozens of local volunteers who brought their own trucks for transport - distributed quilts and mattresses, plastic sheeting and hygiene kits at schools and community centres where the displaced are sheltering. Already, some 300,000 Iraqis from Mosul's Ninewa province and elsewhere have arrived in the Kurdistan region. This latest influx will place further pressure on resources there, particularly housing and fuel supplies. Conditions for these new arrivals will be challenging. In one school we visited, there are already 700 people, and more are expected to arrive. They have no access to showers and there is no air conditioning. They are living in classrooms where daytime temperatures exceed 40 degrees. Thus far, food is being supplied by local charities and international aid organizations. Many of the displaced are concerned about the lack of medical care.

So far in 2014, an estimated 1.2 million Iraqis have been displaced by fighting, including from Anbar and Ninewa governorates. UNHCR has revised its funding requirements as part of the 2014 Strategic Response Plan, and is now seeking \$64.2 million dollars for its shelter and protection activities (as part of the broader \$312 million appeal launched this earlier this week.) To date, that appeal is only 8 percent funded (\$5.1 million).

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