

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	1568
Land:	Irak
Kilde:	RDC - Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland
Titel:	COI Query Response - Iraq – Information on internal relocation
Udgivet:	27. august 2024
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	7. februar 2025

RESEARCHED AND COMPILED BY THE REFUGEE DOCUMENTATION CENTRE OF IRELAND ON THE 27 AUGUST 2024

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COI QUERY RESPONSE

IRAQ – INFORMATION ON INTERNAL RELOCATION

The *Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP)* in August 2024 points out that: “According to the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, conditions in Al Hol camp are “dire and extreme” despite humanitarian intervention, and leading humanitarian organizations have noted that the environment is detrimental to children's rights, including the rights to life, health, and education. Camp residents face limited access to services and limited freedom of movement.”¹

The *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)* in June 2024 reported that: “Iraq has witnessed significant advancements in the humanitarian sphere, with a notable reduction in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from seven million, as a consequence of conflict, to 1.1 million currently. Out of all IDPs, nearly 157,714 persons continue to live in IDP camps mainly in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and in East Mosul, in Ninewa Governorate. Over 4.8 million individuals have been identified as returnees, with a relatively slow return movement witnessed in 2023 as the remaining IDPs caseload faces complex barriers and challenges hindering return.”² This report further states that: “The IDPs in the three East Mosul camps (Hasansham U2, Hasansham U3 and Khazer M1) face dire living conditions, compounded by severe restrictions on their freedom of movement, which make them dependent on assistance received in the absence of livelihoods opportunities. These IDPs have limited access to basic services, as camps are located far from any urban center. Electricity, water, sanitation and hygiene provision is inadequate, posing significant public health challenges and exacerbating protection risks. Schools within the camps are understaffed

¹ Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP) (6 August 2024) “It Is One Big Prison”: Challenges in Repatriation from Al Hol Camp in Syria

² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (30 June 2024) Iraq Humanitarian Transition Overview 2024 (June 2024)

and overcrowded, while health services are inadequate, with residents often necessitating outside referrals that the majority, however, cannot access due to movement restrictions.”³

In June 2024 the *Danish Immigration Service* mentioned that: “According to multiple sources, the relocation of Iranian Kurdish armed parties from their camps and bases in the border areas has been completed, and their inhabitants have been relocated deeper into KRI.”⁴ The report further points out that: “Iranian Kurds can only travel within the Kurdistan region, but local political dynamics can also inhibit travel within the KRI. An Iranian Kurd with a residence permit from KDP controlled-Erbil, who travels to PUK-controlled Sulaimania, will be stopped, delayed and questioned at the many checkpoints on the routes. Multiple sources including the Directorate of Residence informed the delegation that to pass through a checkpoint, an Iranian Kurd requires a valid residence permit or work-visa issued by the KRG. Iranian Kurds holding a UNHCR certificate but no residence permit cannot travel from one city to another.”⁵

The *US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report* in June 2024 states that: “Following the closure of those IDP camps in previous reporting periods, NGOs reported camp residents experienced challenges obtaining civil documentation and security clearance to travel to other parts of the country, resulting in secondary displacement, preventing freedom of movement, and exacerbating this population's already high risk of trafficking.”⁶

The *US Agency for International Development (USAID)* in June 2024 notes that: “From September to December 2023, over half of all returnees from IDP camps went to Sinjar District, which remains largely decimated after conflict between the Islamic State and international coalitions between 2014 and 2017 destroyed 80 percent of the civilian infrastructure and 70 percent of houses, according to USG partner the International Organization for Migration (IOM). As a result of the lack of public services, housing, and job opportunities, over half of all failed returns—where displaced peoples returned to their areas of origin, but then departed again—at the end of 2023 occurred in Sinjar.”⁷

The *London School of Economics (LSE)* in May 2024 reported that: “This year will mark a decade since approximately 400,000 Yazidis fled the genocidal campaign wrought by ISIS in Sinjar in August 2014. The transition is expected to impact those remaining in displacement camps, with focus turning to the need to de-militarise the transnationally contested district (Ali Saleem, Zmkan, 2024). While it is federal policy to encourage the return of displaced Yazidis to Sinjar, they are aided by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Iraq. Iraq's federal government is offering one-time cash grants of 4 million Iraqi dinars (around 3,000 USD) per family to assist displaced Yazidis with relocation or local integration, but residents argue this is not enough to sustain important, long-term support (Interviews with families in Sharya IDP camp, Kabartu IDP camp, Khanke IDP camp, Sheikhan IDP camp, and IDP settlements in Erbil). The instability amid political contestation in Sinjar continues to prevent the return of many, who are choosing to remain in their camps or informal sites, or risk travelling abroad for asylum.”⁸ The same document states that: “While the MoMD promises a settlement grant, those

³ Ibid, p.13

⁴ Danish Immigration Service (25 June 2024) Iranian Kurds in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

⁵ Ibid

⁶ US Department of State (24 June 2024) Trafficking in Persons Report 2024: Iraq, p.10

⁷ US Agency for International Development (USAID) (3 June 2024) Iraq – Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #2 2024 [Key Developments]

⁸ London School of Economics (LSE) (30 May 2024) The UN's humanitarian transition from emergency assistance to development funding in Iraq: The politics of delivering aid in a country of protracted post-conflict displacement

who have returned recently report not receiving any funds, highlighting discrimination between different IDP groups depending on the date of their return.”⁹

A report issued by the *European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA)* in May 2024 notes that: “Certain groups within the Iraqi society, including IDPs, returnees, women and girls (especially femaleheaded households), children, elderly people, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised groups remain particularly vulnerable and often socio-economically disadvantaged. Individuals who do not hold identity or civil documentation face restrictions in freedom of movement, in accessing basic services and social security benefits, and are at higher risk of being arbitrarily arrested.”¹⁰

The *Protection Consortium of Iraq* in May 2024 reported that: “Access to services such as health care, education, and government social safety net schemes remain inadequate and inequitable for remaining IDPs. Lack of livelihoods and functional markets further impede households' abilities to generate income and meet basic needs such as shelter and nutrition, and act as a barrier to decisions around return to area of origin. 40% of PCI survey respondents indicated 'lack of services and infrastructure' as a primary motivation for not returning to their area of origin; and almost 60% of respondents who had been displaced more than once indicated 'lack of services' as their reason for secondary (or subsequent) displacement.”¹¹

In May 2024 the *Enabling Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC)* mentioned that: “On May 8, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) published new data that reflects further increase in the scale of climate-induced displacement affecting communities in southern Iraq. The data shows that as of mid-March, more than 140,000 individuals (comprising 23,364 families) were experiencing displacement from their areas due to water shortages and environmental degradation impacting twelve provinces. Of these families, more than four in ten (47%) were in displacement within their home districts. Most of the displaced had relocated to urban areas because water scarcity and high salinity undermined agriculture and overall livelihoods.”¹²

A report issued by *Freedom House* in February 2024 notes that: “Freedom of movement has improved somewhat as areas formerly controlled by IS were brought back under government control. However, large-scale destruction of housing and infrastructure, the presence of sectarian or partisan militias, and the ongoing threat of violence has made it difficult for many displaced people to return home. The renewed IS insurgency and the Iraqi Security Forces' corresponding response, as well as fighting between the Turkish military and the PKK in northern Iraq, have constrained the freedom of movement of residents in rural western and northern Iraq. The KRG also continues to prevent Arab families from returning to villages on the border with Syria, from which they fled during fighting between the Peshmerga and IS in 2014.”¹³

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) (22 May 2024) EUAA COI Report - Iraq - Country Focus (May 2024) [2. Key socio-economic indicators for Baghdad and Sulaymaniyah], p.6

¹¹ Protection Consortium of Iraq (14 May 2024) "Where should we go?" Durable solutions for remaining IDPs in Iraq

¹² Enabling Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC) (9 May 2024) ISHM: May 2-9, 2024 - Militias Increase Long-Range Attacks On Israel; Joint Military Brigades; Another Mass Execution; Climate Change Displacement Continues To Rise

¹³ Freedom House (29 February 2024) Freedom in the World 2024: Iraq

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