



INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN IRAQ: MORE THAN JUST MOSUL

Daryl Grisgraber and Michael Boyce



This page: Food distribution line at transit site in Salahaddin governorate for IDPs who recently left the Mosul corridor. Front cover: This man and his three children walked for two days to reach the transit site. He has no sponsor and cannot leave the site until he finds one.

INTRODUCTION

The second half of 2016 has seen some changes in the humanitarian response to the 3.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq, particularly in the central governorates. With Ramadi and Fallujah liberated in the past year, fewer towns remained under siege, more people were able to leave dangerous areas, and a limited number of the displaced are even returning home. However, the situation in general for IDPs remains extremely worrisome. There are still only a handful of large international aid agencies with consistent operations in central Iraq: local groups continue to provide the most regular response in hard-to-reach areas, but their capacity is limited. The latter also holds true for the insecure areas around Mosul, where an Iraqi Security Force (ISF)-led assault on the city proper recently began. The need to prepare for major humanitarian needs prompted by that military activity has drawn much attention and many resources toward Ninewa governorate, but the ongoing displacement in the rest of the country – including returns to areas perceived to be safe – must not be forgotten.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❑ The government of Iraq should improve its humanitarian coordination with both international and local aid groups, and facilitate the work of international groups seeking to register and operate in Iraq outside the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) through expedited registrations and visas.
- ❑ The government of Iraq should have an accessible, consistent, and transparent process for requesting and granting travel permission for deliveries of essential humanitarian supplies and services.
- ❑ The UN's Humanitarian Pooled Fund for Iraq should seek procedural changes that create wider outreach to local Iraqi groups and more possibilities for independent Iraqi groups to apply for and receive funding independently.
- ❑ The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) should establish a civil-military coordination group in Iraq to convene interested parties. The Working Group should include government officials from both Baghdad and Erbil, and should do outreach to international and local aid groups.
- ❑ Donors should prioritize supporting the work of organizations helping IDPs get official documentation, both to increase current legal protection and to avoid protection issues during and after return.
- ❑ OCHA and humanitarian partners should ensure that the 2017 Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan accounts for prolonged displacement of new IDPs from Mosul as well as other all other vulnerable IDP populations in Iraq.

BACKGROUND

Refugees International (RI) visited central Iraq in August 2015¹, one year after the group known as the Islamic State (ISIS) began its move to take territory in Iraq. The United Nations and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) were having trouble reaching the internally displaced because the security situation – particularly in Anbar governorate and around areas of Baghdad, where so many of the IDPs had fled – remained precarious. IS still had control over the two main cities in Anbar – Ramadi and Fallujah – and a number of the surrounding towns were under siege. IDPs were streaming out of Anbar and amassing where they could find empty space to pitch tents or squat in abandoned buildings. Most of these sites lacked even a semblance of water and sanitation systems, and proper shelter was in especially short supply. Medical care was *ad hoc* at best. Major staffing changes were happening in Iraq's government ministries, and there was little capacity to manage a humanitarian response for the ever-growing numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs). As a result, in central Iraq, it was primarily local aid groups providing humanitarian assistance in the most troubled areas to the most vulnerable people.

The internal displacement driven by the spread of ISIS in Iraq in 2014 continues through today. There are now 3.3 million IDPs in the country, with roughly one million of those in Anbar and Baghdad in the central region. In addition, as the government of Iraq moves to reclaim Mosul from IS in Ninewa governorate, civilians from the areas near Mosul – known as the Mosul corridor and including parts of Ninewa and Salahaddin provinces – have been fleeing for months: roughly 100,000 people have left the region because of military activity that was part of the lead-up to the direct attack on Mosul³, and one million or more may join that outflow in the coming weeks. Humanitarians and politicians alike have been aware of a potential offensive against Mosul for almost a year and of the consequent humanitarian needs. However, as the time approached, it was very clear that no one knew if the residents of Mosul would stay or leave. Planning for the crisis has had to depend on not just hypotheticals, but unknowns that were heaped on top of a response that was already falling short for 10 million people in need.

The Mosul crisis unfolds as humanitarian partners in Iraq are already struggling to provide aid to some 10 million people who are in need of some form of humanitarian assistance across the country, including 3.3 million internally displaced people, many for the second or third time.

¹The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs²

The government of Iraq, the United Nations and its partners, and donor governments and their partners have all struggled to keep up with the humanitarian needs in Iraq since 2014. The UN's Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan for 2016 is just over half-funded, as is the emergency appeal to address needs related to Mosul. These financial shortages mean gaps in both the ongoing humanitarian response throughout Iraq and in the immediate emergency response to the needs that will arise from Mosul in the very near future.

The June liberation of Fallujah from ISIS shed further light on a number of weaknesses in the humanitarian response inside Iraq, particularly with regard to protection. Some of these – such as the difficulty of humanitarian access for the United Nations and INGOs – have persisted for years. Others, like the presence of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in areas of return, have more recently taken on urgency as IDPs begin to return to their places of origin, sometimes prematurely.

The lessons learned from Fallujah, in particular, can serve humanitarians well as they engage in an extended response related to displacement from Mosul. But even as they do, all aspects of internal displacement in the rest of the country need more attention and more response if people are to be safe.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE ONE YEAR LATER

On a follow-up mission to Iraq in September 2016, RI found that while Anbar's primary cities have been liberated, and some of the displaced are even returning home, the conditions for IDPs remain challenging. More formal camps, with management teams and regular distributions and even medical clinics, are present than were last year, and the UN and its partners have consistent access in some of these places. But many more IDP communities are served only by local groups with more flexible security protocols than the UN and INGOs usually have, but also with less capacity and funding.

In one IDP site in Baghdad, RI met with a family who had fled their village in Anbar 18 months ago. They had been displaced three times before arriving at their current site. The head of the family had previously been a shopkeeper, but there was no work for him in Baghdad, so the family relied on aid from

10 million
number of people in need

7.3 million
number of people targeted
for assistance

3.3 million
number of internally
displaced persons (IDPs)

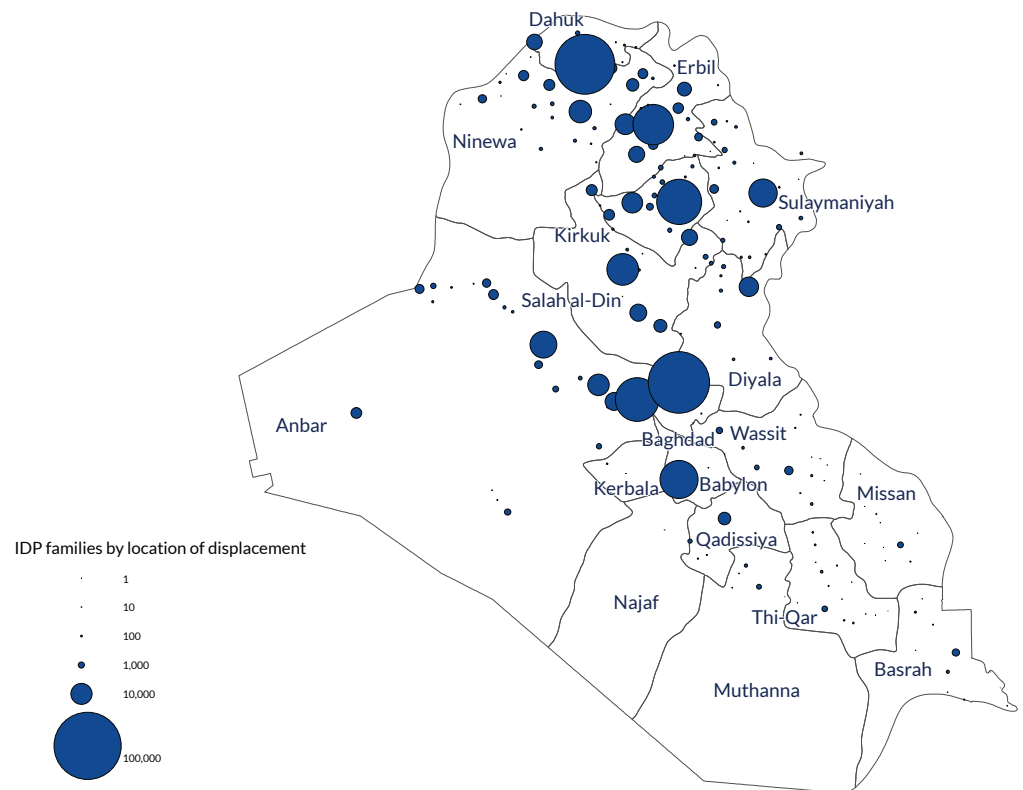
2.8 million
number of IDPs who live
outside camps

3.2 million
number of affected people
in host communities

0.9 million
number of returnees

Source: UN Office for the Coordination
of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

NUMBER OF IDP FAMILIES BY DISTRICT OF DISPLACEMENT, OCTOBER 2016



Source: Displacement Tracking Matrix, International Organization for Migration

the handful of groups that worked in the camp, as well as occasional money sent to them from a son who had stayed in Ramadi and was fighting ISIS. They felt safe in the camp but wanted to go home.

The family's situation was a noticeable change from the conditions RI saw in privately-run IDP sites one year ago.⁴ In late 2016, people were receiving food regularly, which had been unusual in IDP settlements in the same area of Baghdad in 2015. Medical care remained expensive, difficult to access, and of low quality; yet in a change for the better, government officials were allowing people into health facilities outside the camp if they needed attention there. The school was low on teachers, books, and supplies, but some of the children in the camp did attend classes. Living conditions were hard, and there were shortages of money and goods, but the situation had stabilized and at least three local Iraqi organizations appeared to come to the camp with some regularity to provide assistance. However, these changes were not widespread across the various IDP settlements in the central region.

The government of Iraq has succeeded in offering more humanitarian response – such as shelter and food – in the central provinces in the past year, but only modestly. The most

recent financial crisis, underway since 2013, has left Baghdad with limited resources for supporting the IDPs that are one of its most pressing responsibilities, and its capacity to coordinate effectively with the range of players in the humanitarian arena has been slow to evolve. The central government thus relies heavily on the UN and international organizations to help the displaced, but those organizations are in turn constrained by security concerns. So in spite of the developments noted above, conditions for IDPs in central Iraq are quite similar to what they were at this time last year, including the fact that local groups are doing much of the heavy lifting in humanitarian aid.

“Every day is an emergency.”

-Aid worker in Iraq

Another ongoing difficulty for local groups is the coordination structure used by the international aid actors. There are a range of reasons local groups gave to RI for not being involved in the system through which the UN, INGOs, and donors share information and plan work: not knowing how to join the system, not being able to spare anyone from a tiny staff to attend the many meetings coordination often requires, and not speaking English well enough to be comfortable in meetings. While there have been some genuine efforts to get local Iraqi groups more connected to the international entities, the fact is that including them fully in information-sharing, program planning, and awarding funds is still a problem that needs to be solved. These groups are the people who work on

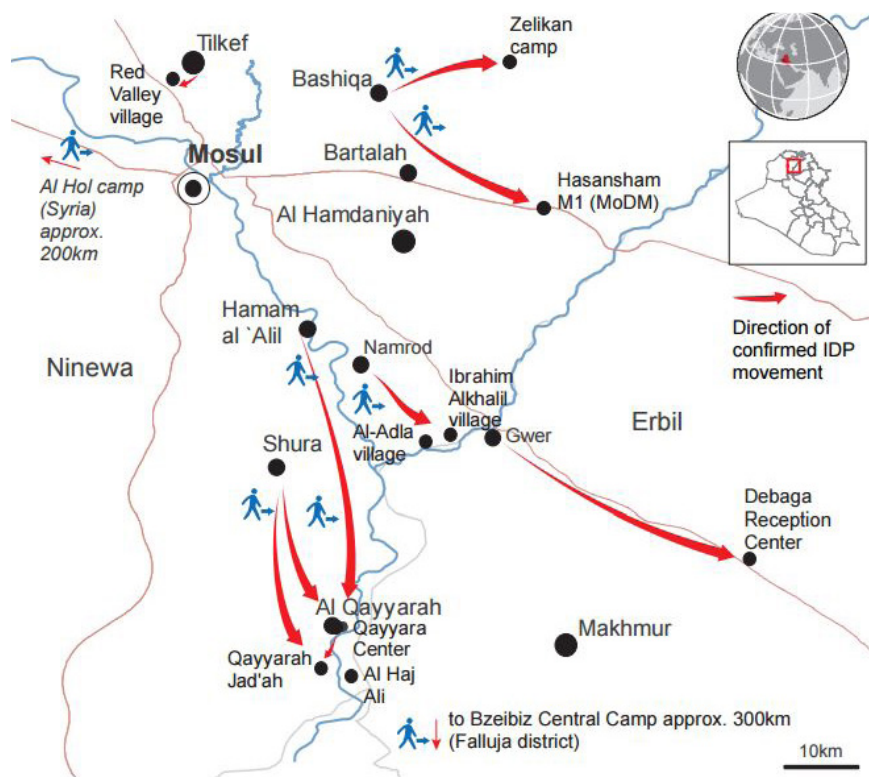
the ground with the displaced every day in some of the most dangerous areas of Iraq. The information they can offer about people's needs, logistical complications, and finding and identifying the vulnerable is invaluable and needs to help inform the work of the international structure to make it as effective as possible. Though many of the local groups are technically part of one or more clusters (humanitarian agencies coordinated through the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA), their ability to have much of a voice in the cluster system has been limited for the reasons listed above.

Related to the ability to provide assistance and services in central Iraq, last year saw an effort by the UN and INGOs to establish more of a presence in Baghdad in order to serve the central and south areas of the country. But while more groups saw the need to have people positioned closer to the most vulnerable populations, there was not a corresponding ability to register groups outside of the KRI (where so many of them had concentrated operations over the past two years) and to acquire visas so staff members could relocate to Baghdad.

The government of Iraq should improve its humanitarian coordination with both international and local aid groups and facilitate the work of international groups seeking to register and operate in Iraq outside the KRI through expedited registrations and visas.

Further hampering an efficient humanitarian response in Iraq is the widespread and varied presence of popular mobilization units (PMUs) in liberated territories. The PMUs are a state-backed group of militias that were convened to help the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) fight ISIS. As ground was gained, a variety of PMUs took control of pieces of territory that were important to them. In practical terms, this means that many different groups administer sections of adjacent territory, creating significant complications for humanitarians seeking to access roadways. Aid groups might receive permission from the central government to travel a particular route to deliver aid. However, along the way they may use roads and land under the jurisdictions of multiple PMUs that do not necessarily recognize Baghdad's authority or travel permits. This entails lengthy delays at checkpoints, repeated negotiations with a shifting list of PMU officials, and sometimes the inability to get aid delivered at all. The government of Iraq should improve its process for requesting and granting travel permission for the delivery of essential humanitarian supplies and services. It should be made more accessible, consistent, and transparent, and should happen more quickly so that aid groups can deliver in a timely manner.

Displacement from Mosul



Map Sources: OCHA, CCCM, IOM DTM, Clusters
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Map created on 29 October, 2016

In this context as well, local Iraqi groups play an essential role in humanitarian aid, especially with delivering and distributing food and non-food items (NFIs). Many local groups employ national staff who are known in the communities where they work and travel, and who can form constructive relationships with PMUs or government agencies as necessary in order to keep the work moving.

It is important to recognize that faced with this complex working environment, funding is only one concern for the international humanitarian aid system. More money will not create safety for aid workers on the ground, nor will it convince the diverse authorities in central Iraq to play nicely together for the sake of saving lives. This is where local groups play an essential role.

“We are prioritizing response on access, not need. We are not prioritizing those most in need.”

-UN staff member in Iraq



Distribution of food and hygiene kits in Anbar province, in a town recently liberated from ISIS.

LOCAL GROUPS AS PART OF THE SYSTEM

As was apparent last year, at the height of the summer's displacement crisis, Iraqi NGOs offering humanitarian goods and services continue to be at the forefront of the efforts to save lives, both with new displacement close to conflict areas and with longer-term IDPs in areas considered insecure. These groups work independently in some of their projects, and in conjunction with international organizations in others. They range from registered groups of professionals to informal teams of volunteers who are interested in serving Iraqis and their communities. Many are composed of people with specialized skills – medical students, licensed attorneys, and education professionals to name a few.

These groups are succeeding in gaining access to displaced people in areas where the UN and international agencies cannot or do not go. For example, while the RI team was in Iraq, a days-long assault on the city of Shirqat in Salahaddin governorate was underway, concluding with ISIS being pushed from the area. Even with fighting forces still lingering and conflict not fully stopped, Iraqi groups were on the road to the town with food distributions and hygiene kits. Their approach, as described to RI, was as follows: First, aid groups mobilized volunteers and staff members who already knew the communities where people were displaced, or were themselves displaced from or

to the same locations. Once on the scene, these people would immediately monitor the situation to see how many people were arriving and what their immediate needs were. They would then communicate this to management – often based in Baghdad – who would authorize the release or purchase of supplies and the hiring of transportation, and the delivery would be made.

When displaced people began pouring out of the villages near Shirqat in late September, RI was accompanying a local NGO that has been providing assistance throughout the central governorates for years, including to the besieged areas around Fallujah during the height of ISIS's occupation. The staff members worked tirelessly to ensure that aid was moved quickly. Access was negotiated, funding secured, and supplies delivered all in a matter of hours. By contrast, the large international groups can rarely respond so quickly to an evolving situation, which is why they often work with local groups to do the actual aid provision in urgent circumstances.

But these local groups face challenges that make their work – and sometimes their very existence – unpredictable. Smaller local groups generally do not have core funding and rely upon agreements with larger organizations that may involve activities like distributing their supplies, doing needs assessments to plan their work, or identifying IDPs living in host communities and figuring out how to get help to them. This is the ground-level work that informs much of what happens



A transit site in Salahaddin governorate for IDPs who recently left the Mosul corridor.

“ **Local groups will take more risks and have better access because of it.** ”

-INGO staff member in KRI

at higher levels, and it is often the mainstay of a local group's budget. But agreements with collaborating groups often do not allow for overhead and administrative expenses in their funding agreements, and so these groups are in a constant struggle to make funding from short-term or one-off projects stretch to keep the NGO running. The constant cycle of finding projects/funding diverts so much of the effort that could go to humanitarian response if projects were longer-term and predictably funded.

The UN's Humanitarian Pooled Fund for Iraq, like the pooled funds of some other countries, is one possible mechanism for getting more funds to Iraqi NGOs. The most recent distribution of the fund went mostly to INGOs with local partners, along with a few Iraqi groups. However, local groups expressed confusion about the application process; the amount of documentation, in particular, was difficult for them to produce with limited personnel who were needed for operations. In addition, most groups found out about the pooled fund's existence through the clusters they belonged to, meaning that local groups with no presence in the clusters were mostly overlooked. Some local

aid groups told RI that they would have liked to apply, but did not have an international partner with which to submit the application. And among those groups that did receive pooled fund support, RI also repeatedly heard frustration about the slowness of the disbursement process.

The UN's Humanitarian Pooled Fund for Iraq should seek procedural changes that create wider outreach to local Iraqi groups and more possibilities for independent Iraqi groups to apply for and receive funding independently.

Further, the local groups for the most part are not coordinated among themselves either. This is due in large part to the lack of time and personnel available within small aid groups to participate in working groups or coalitions. It also derives from a sense of competition among the locals, who are constantly looking for partnerships and funding from international groups. Like the need to better coordinate the activities of the government of Iraq with those of the international groups, local groups and their programs must also become a regular part of the countrywide coordination for humanitarian response, and should be included in assessment, planning, and responses.

OLD, NEW AND RECENT DISPLACEMENT

While everyone was waiting for Mosul to start, Mosul started. One hundred thousand people left the Mosul corridor even

before the assault on the city began in October 2016, and the response to their needs has been sporadic. Many of them landed in Salahaddin and Kirkuk governorates, where insecurity still prevents many international groups from operating. Local groups, by contrast, have quickly activated food and water distributions, provided shelter options, and gathered information about what is happening to IDPs as they move south from Ninewa through screening centers and checkpoints and on to their final (if temporary) destinations.

Large numbers of these most recent IDPs went into host communities or to tent sites, but just as many are living in unfinished buildings, public facilities, or with friends and family where they can find them. Local authorities like those in Tikrit have been accommodating, but the economic reality of Iraq constrains them from offering a comprehensive response. At the same time, many international groups still consider the areas of northern Salahaddin too dangerous to operate in. When Shirqat and Qayyara were recently liberated, it was primarily local Iraqi groups – some had some support from international aid groups – providing the response near the front lines. Unfortunately, the capacity of local aid groups is still limited.

Part of the urgency of the displacement crisis is the need to continue assisting the 3.3 million people already displaced in Iraq, who are often hard to reach but in desperate need.

When RI asked local groups how long it might be before the UN and its partners began regular support and services for IDPs, their responses were not optimistic. Many thought it would take six weeks or more for most of these agencies to determine the scope of the problem, get internal security permissions, get security clearances to use the roads, and plan just how much they could do and how close to the front lines. UN and INGO staff members confirmed to RI that indeed, their local partner groups could get aid moving in a much shorter period of time, but they also pointed out that the scale of such a response would be small compared to if a well-funded international agency took on the programming. This tension highlights the importance of better and more formal coordination among international aid groups and local Iraqi organizations.

The displacement out of Mosul is going to last for some time, most likely beyond the emergency phase. Knowing this, it is understandable – and responsible – for humanitarian groups

to prepare and plan for the crisis that is in progress. If current events really do add another million IDPs to the tally within Iraq, all humanitarian assistance groups are going to be overstretched and underfunded. But part of the urgency of the displacement crisis is the need to continue assisting the 3.3 million people already displaced in Iraq, who are often hard to reach but in desperate need. Some of them have been away from home for more than two years, and their situations have only deteriorated in that time. They are still part of the humanitarian response and must be included in all planning and implementation.

There is no question that this will be a huge challenge. One of the hallmarks of the Mosul offensive is its unpredictability: 200,000 traumatized people may flee eastward toward the KRI, or 1.5 million may come out in a chaotic manner that is hard to regulate, or tens of thousands may be trapped inside the city and out of reach of most humanitarians. All the careful planning and preparation for displacement from Mosul in the end rests on unknowable ground, and humanitarians have little choice but to be mostly reactive. But the 3.3 million IDPs, and the 10 million people in need of humanitarian aid, are known quantities.

PROTECTION CONCERNS

Security screening

The screening process to identify suspected ISIS members and combatants who might leave Fallujah with IDP streams was a topic of great concern this summer. Families were separated and women and children left without protection while male members of the family were screened. This process sometimes took as long as several months, with people receiving little aid while they waited for themselves or a loved one to be cleared to move on to a camp where they could receive services. One man RI spoke to had spent 18 days at a screening center while his wife and six children waited at another location for him to be cleared. Some local and international groups provided food, water, and sanitation at the sites where people ended up living long-term while they waited, but in general, the conditions at these places were considered far below acceptable humanitarian standards.

In addition, the screening itself came under scrutiny for unfairness, inconsistent application, and human rights violations. Thousands of people were detained – sometimes just for mix-ups with names or on the basis of unsubstantiated allegations. Humanitarian, military, and political officials alike are trying to figure out how not to repeat these mistakes with Mosul. There is wide anticipation of retribution and revenge against perceived ISIS members once military activity slows down in Iraq. Discriminatory and disorganized screening procedures have the potential to put many civilians in unnecessary danger.



Remains of a building in Anbar province in a town liberated from ISIS.

Many humanitarians told RI that CMCoord officers did indeed provide a critical service in Iraq, and requested that their work be more accessible to partners. At the same time, some expressed a fear for their safety if information about specific movements and installations were shared with armed actors; or if participating in civil-military coordination made them appear linked to an armed actor, a government, or a political party. These worries are valid, and no NGO should be forced to participate in civil-military coordination. But there needs to be a more concerted effort to include those humanitarian groups who wish to coordinate for their own safety, and to educate those groups who may not know about this service or how it works.

Humanitarians interviewed by RI indicated that a CMCoord working group or cell was not operational in Iraq⁵; establishing one should be a priority. The working group should include interested NGOs, and should conduct regular outreach and advocacy with not only government officials in Baghdad and Erbil, but also PMUs and militias – localized groups meant to provide protection to civilians – as possible.

One critical shift needed in CMCoord is more deliberate involvement of local Iraqi NGOs. As discussed above, they are often the first – and sometimes the only – responders in insecure areas, and they tend to have local people on the ground who know the affected areas, the people in them, and the flow of events that create humanitarian need. While a majority of the local groups RI spoke to said they would be willing to share deconfliction information with a civil-military coordinator or group, they also did not know whom to contact to do this. This reflects, in part, the larger challenge of connecting local NGOs with the UN-led cluster system. Yet at the same time, even those local groups that had become members of official clusters did not necessarily know how to share – or with whom to share – information for deconfliction.

There is not wide agreement about how to improve the screening process for people displaced as part of the Mosul offensive. Nonetheless, at the very least, people must not be delayed at transit and screening centers for long periods of time and with no services; families must not be separated for long periods of time as this leaves women and children without protection; the screening procedures and any resulting detention should be fair, impartial, justified and up to international standards.

Civil-military coordination

Even with the understanding that humanitarian and military support are meant to be separate interventions, the two sectors are supposed to coordinate with the ultimate intention of saving civilian lives. And in a conflict setting, protection of humanitarian actors through deconfliction (the process of making sure there is not interference between the activities of humanitarian and military actors) is often one of the highest civil-military priorities. In Iraq, this particular aspect of civil-military coordination (CMCoord or CIMIC) is crucial: military actors need to be able to distinguish humanitarians and their assets, so they can be avoided during hostilities. This not only protects humanitarians, but also the people they serve, who could easily become caught up in an offensive if their civilian status is not understood. The end goal of protecting civilians through effective deconfliction must be better addressed by humanitarians, armed actors, and governmental authorities.

Documentation

Many IDPs lack proper personal and national identification. While a number of organizations in Iraq work to help IDPs re-establish proof of identity and register marriages and births, their workload is formidable in light of how many IDPs are fleeing without their papers. As returns to liberated areas begin, returnees will also face the problem of missing land and property titles. The lack of civil documentation can cause protection problems as simple as a child who cannot register for school, or as complicated as a family not being allowed to return home or being detained.

One IDP site RI visited had developed an interesting, protection-oriented system of recording IDPs in the camp. When people arrived, they were documented fully with names, birthplaces, family composition, and date of arrival at the camp; any identity documents available were copied. Births, deaths, and marriages

were duly recorded with the camp management, along with lists of any assistance people had received while living there. When people decided to leave the camp, management issued them a formal (though unofficial) document verifying who they claimed to be (based on initial registration information), that they were camp residents for a declared period of time, and that they were on their way home. They even provided a list of items that IDPs had taken with them from the camp and were authorized to have as they returned. At the same time, a legal aid organization came to the camp regularly to find out who needed help and to provide services.

This system requires a certain amount of cooperation between camp managers and local authorities and probably cannot be implemented countrywide. It also does not provide formal legal protection inside or outside IDP sites. IDPs who possess such documents and who have problems with the authorities must rely on the good will of those officials to recognize their IDP status and work with camp administration to solve issues. But in places where local contacts and community connections can influence how people are treated, these papers can be a genuine protection tool for the displaced. Local or site-based systems for providing documentation should be respected as much as possible, with the understanding that official documents will eventually have to be acquired. Donors should prioritize support for the groups doing the nuts-and-bolts work of helping IDPs get official documentation, both to increase current legal protection and to avoid protection issues during and after return.

Returns

IDP returns in Iraq must be safe, voluntary, and dignified. While returns were not the specific focus of RI's mission, they did come up repeatedly as a topic of concern. RI did not witness any forced returns, nor did they speak with anyone who claimed to have been forcibly returned. However, there seemed to be an implicit understanding on the part of IDPs and humanitarians that many IDPs were being encouraged to return to areas that were not yet safe according to humanitarian standards. The reasons for this varied. In some instances, local authorities were said to be forcing returns in order to make room for anticipated waves of displacement related to the battle for Mosul. In other situations, people suspected that the returns were an attempt to control the ethnic or sectarian profile of civilians returning to a particular area.

The physical environment in many of the liberated area is a major concern for humanitarians. Former ISIS-controlled areas are generally littered with IEDs and booby traps, and the military clearance that is done in order for troops to move in does not cover much beyond the specific routes needed for entry and exit. RI repeatedly heard stories of how returnees removed IEDs and unexploded ordnances (UXOs) from their homes and property themselves, and simply piled them up outside

on the sidewalks. Humanitarian clearance of explosives is a painstaking process that requires extensive training, and so far the system used in Iraq does not make it easy for commercial or humanitarian groups to do effective work.

In one returnee village RI visited in Anbar, some residents were beginning to open small businesses in the center of town. There were running water and electricity, as both systems had been rehabilitated in a matter of months once ISIS was forced out. The local government was working to keep the area functioning, and the ISF was there maintaining security. People were returning to their ruined homes and trying to get by, because they were tired of being displaced. However, this situation appeared to be an anomaly and is not an indication that returns are to safe areas in other cases. IDPs themselves did see some areas as safe for return, especially where there is water and electricity and local government willing to support people as they rebuild. But so far, it has been mostly security forces and local government involved in the returns process, and few humanitarian actors verifying the voluntariness and safety of all steps in the process.

There is no doubt that the humanitarian situation in Iraq is going to get worse before it gets better. The months-long planning for Mosul is unlikely to cover all the humanitarian needs that arise from that crisis: there were simply too many unknowns for aid groups to be ready for all possible variations of people's movement. This means there will almost certainly be many more IDPs in Iraq by the end of the year. Safe and voluntary returns are not going to happen overnight. They will require the support of the international community for some time into the future. Thus, OCHA and humanitarian partners should ensure that the 2017 Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan accounts for prolonged displacement of new IDPs from Mosul as well as other all other vulnerable IDP populations in Iraq.

Daryl Grisgraber and Michael Boyce visited central and northern Iraq in September and October 2016.

ENDNOTES

1 See Grisgraber, Daryl, "Displaced In Iraq: Little Aid And Few Options," *Refugees International*, November 2, 2015, <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2015/11/02/displaced-in-iraq>.

2 "Iraq: Mosul Humanitarian Response, Situation Report #1, 17-19 October 2016," UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ochairaqmosulhumanitariansituationreport1_final.pdf.

3 There are also 225,000 Syrian refugees in Iraq, located mostly in the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI), who need humanitarian assistance.

4 Conditions at IDP sites in Iraq vary according to the location of the site and the nature of the management. Nonetheless, in August 2015 most IDP locations could be described as struggling and disorganized, with even less international presence than there is now.


5 A CMCoord Working Group was called for in the 2015 civil-military coordination guidelines for Iraq. However, none of the NGOs whom RI spoke to were aware of its existence. See: "Iraq country specific humanitarian civil-military coordination guidelines," UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Iraq Humanitarian Country Team, November 16, 2015.

REFUGEES INTERNATIONAL

2001 S Street, NW · Suite 700 · Washington, DC 20009

PHONE: [202] 828-0110 · FACSIMILE: [202] 828-0819 · E-MAIL: ri@refintl.org

www.refugeesinternational.org

 Refugees International

 @RefugeesIntl