

Relevant Country of Origin Information to Assist with the Application of UNHCR’s Country Guidance on Iraq

Ability of Persons Originating from Formerly ISIS-Held or Conflict-Affected Areas to Legally Access and Remain in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation

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This document provides decision-makers with specific country of origin information in relation to access and residency restrictions applicable to Iraqis originally from areas formerly held by the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS) or affected by conflict, who seek to return from abroad to areas other than their area of origin. This document is not intended to provide comprehensive guidance on the assessment of the availability of an internal flight or relocation alternative (IFA/IRA), which includes an assessment of the relevance as well as the reasonableness of the proposed IFA/IRA.¹ Instead, this document is limited to factual information on access and residency restrictions as applicable at the time of writing.²

Information contained in this document has been collected and verified by UNHCR. The information reflects the situation as of 11 January 2021.

This information updates information on access and residency restrictions in Iraq contained in *Iraq: Country of Origin Information on Access and Residency Requirements in Iraq – Ability of Persons Originating from Formerly ISIS-Held or Conflict-Affected Areas to Legally Access and Remain in Proposed Areas of Relocation* of 4 November 2019.³ Given the volatility of the situation in Iraq as well as changes to regulations and practices concerning access to and residency in relatively safer areas,

*The information in this COI note is current as of 11 January 2021. However, a revised version of this note was issued in March 2021 in order to clarify that only ethnic Arabs and Turkmen require an Asayeh-issued residency permit to enter or remain in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I).

¹ For further information on access and residency restrictions as part of the “relevance analysis” when considering the availability of an IFA/IRA, see UNHCR’s International Protection Considerations with Regard to People Fleeing the Republic of Iraq of May 2019; UNHCR, *International Protection Considerations with Regard to People Fleeing the Republic of Iraq*, May 2019, www.refworld.org/docid/5cc9b20c4.html, pp. 118-119.

² UNHCR considers that an IFA/IRA is not available in areas formerly controlled by ISIS or otherwise affected by conflict in light of continued human rights violations and abuses by state and non-state actors, continued ISIS presence and ongoing anti-ISIS military operations in these areas. UNHCR further considers that an IFA/IRA is not available in the disputed areas due to these areas’ sensitive security, political and demographic dynamics and the risk of further destabilizing the situation through population movements, including in the Districts of Kirkuk, Khanaqin (Diyala Governorate) and Tuz Khurmatu (Salah Al-Din Governorate); see UNHCR, *International Protection Considerations with Regard to People Fleeing the Republic of Iraq*, May 2019, www.refworld.org/docid/5cc9b20c4.html, p. 117.

³ UNHCR, *Iraq: Country of Origin Information on Access and Residency Requirements in Iraq (Update I) Ability of Persons Originating from Formerly ISIS-Held or Conflict-Affected Areas to Legally Access and Remain in Proposed Areas of Relocation*, 4 November 2019, www.refworld.org/pdfid/5dc04ef74.pdf.

decision-makers need to verify the accuracy of the information at the time of making a decision. UNHCR intends to update this document as needed.

1. Background

In the face of large-scale displacement of people due to ISIS' expansion and subsequent anti-ISIS military operations between 2014 and 2017, many local authorities introduced stringent entry and residency restrictions, including, among others, sponsorship requirements and, in some areas, near-complete entry bans for persons fleeing from conflict-affected areas, particularly Sunni Arabs. At the time of writing, security screening and clearance requirements remain in place for persons from formerly ISIS-held or conflict-affected areas across Iraq, particularly Sunni Arabs and Sunni Turkmen. While access bans and entry restrictions have all been lifted by early 2020,⁴ sponsorship and other requirements remain in place for residency in several governorates for persons from formerly ISIS-held or conflict-affected areas.

Access and residency requirements are not always clearly defined and/or implementation can vary or be subject to changes depending mostly on the security situation. Sponsorship and other clearance requirements are generally not grounded in law nor are they officially announced.

2. Access Requirements

An individual's ability to pass checkpoints and be admitted to the proposed area of relocation will require the individual to hold valid identity documentation (such as an ID card, nationality certificate or passport).⁵

a) *Central and Southern Iraq*

At the time of writing, persons from formerly ISIS-held or conflict-affected areas (including persons who returned to Iraq from a third country) do not require a sponsor to enter Babel, Baghdad, Basrah, Dhi-Qar, Diyala,⁶ Kerbala, Kirkuk City, Missan, Muthanna, Najef, Qadissiyah, and Wassit Governorates. Sponsorship requirements in order to enter Missan and Muthanna Governorates were lifted in January 2020.

b) *Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I)*

Ethnic Iraqi Arabs and Turkmen not originating from the KR-I, including persons from formerly ISIS-held or conflict-affected areas, do not require a sponsor in order to enter Dohuk, Erbil or Sulaymaniyah Governorates. Upon entry to the KR-I (at either an internal border checkpoint or the airports in Erbil or Sulaymaniyah) and following security screening, the *Asayish* (Kurdish security agency) generally provides such persons with a temporary entry authorization valid for 30 days. This authorization is issued for short-term visits (for the purposes of medical care, business, shopping or similar reasons). It

⁴ With the exception of some areas in Diyala Governorate, see footnote 6.

⁵ UNHCR, *International Protection Considerations with Regard to People Fleeing the Republic of Iraq*, May 2019, www.refworld.org/docid/5cc9b20c4.html, p. 118.

⁶ A sponsor is required in order to access villages in the north of Muqdadiah District, Sinsil villages, Saadiyah Sub-District in Khanaqin District, as well as villages located in the north of Al-Udhim Sub-District in Khalis District (bordering Salah Al-Din Governorate). For those from other parts of Iraq seeking to access these areas it has been observed that such individuals as well as their sponsors were asked to surrender their ID cards at the district entry checkpoint and are allowed to collect it upon leaving.

enables the holder to enter and remain in the KR-I within the validity period of the authorization. The holder of such authorization is unable to rent a house or secure regular employment.

3. Residency Requirements

In order to legally take up residency, valid civil documentation is required in addition to the approval (through a confirmation/recommendation/support letter) of the relevant local authority such as the *mukhtar* (head of local administration) and/or the local council, depending on the area. Depending on the individual's profile, particularly his/her family/religious/ethnic background and place of origin, a sponsor may be required by the local authorities in order to take up legal residency. In addition, security clearance from relevant security agencies is generally needed in all areas, irrespective of the person's profile/origin. Sunni Arabs and Sunni Turkmen from formerly ISIS-held or conflict-affected areas may be denied security clearance or run the risk arbitrary arrest and detention under the Anti-Terrorism Law of 2005 (Law No. 13 of 2005) on the basis of broad and discriminatory profiling.⁷

At the time of writing, UNHCR is aware of the following residency requirements in respect of persons from formerly ISIS-held or conflict-affected areas, particularly Sunni Arabs (including for persons who returned to Iraq from a third country):

a) *Central and Southern Iraq*

Baghdad Governorate

All persons, including persons from formerly ISIS-held or conflict-affected areas, require two sponsors from the neighbourhood in which they intend to reside as well as a support letter from the local *mukhtar*.⁸

Diyala Governorate

Persons from formerly ISIS-held or conflict-affected areas require a sponsor from the neighbourhood in which they intend to reside as well as a support letter from the local *mukhtar*. Those seeking to reside in villages in northern Muqadiyah District, Sinsil villages, Saadiyah Sub-District in Khanaqin District, as well as villages located in the north of Al-Udhim Sub-District in Khalis District require support letters from three different administrative and security entities, namely from the local *mukhtar's* office, the National Security and the Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS).

Kirkuk City

Persons from formerly ISIS-held or conflict-affected areas require a support letter from the local *mukhtar* in the neighbourhood in which they intend to reside.

Southern Governorates

Persons from formerly ISIS-held or conflict-affected areas require a local sponsor as well as a support letter from the local *mukhtar* in order to legally reside in Babel, Basra, Dhi-Qar, Kerbala, Missan, Muthanna, Najef, Qadissiyah and Wassit Governorates. In addition, the relevant Operations Command at the Governorate level must grant specific security clearance (in addition to security clearance by local security actors).

⁷ UNHCR, *International Protection Considerations with Regard to People Fleeing the Republic of Iraq*, May 2019, www.refworld.org/docid/5cc9b20c4.html, pp. 30-39, 59-65 (and sources therein).

⁸ Former residents of Baghdad who hold a housing ("information") card issued in Baghdad do not need to have a sponsor or a support letter from the *mukhtar* if they seek to take up residency again in the same neighbourhood. The housing card is a document which shows the address where the head of household rents or owns a residence. The General Directorate for Nationality of the Ministry of the Interior is responsible for the issuance of housing cards. It is used in both Federal Iraq and in the KR-I.

b) Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I)

Dohuk Governorate

Ethnic Iraqi Arabs and Turkmen not originating from the KR-I, including persons from formerly ISIS-held or conflict-affected areas, and who wish to stay in Dohuk Governorate beyond one month, must approach the local *Asayish* office in the neighbourhood in which they seek to reside. They must be accompanied by a sponsor and apply for a residency permit issued by the *Asayish*. If approved, s/he will be provided with a (renewable) *Asayish*-issued residency permit valid for up to six months.

Erbil and Sulaymaniyah Governorates

Ethnic Iraqi Arabs and Turkmen not originating from the KR-I, including persons from formerly ISIS-held or conflict-affected areas, must approach the local *Asayish* in the neighbourhood in which they seek to reside in order to obtain a residency permit issued by *Asayish*.⁹ A sponsor is not required. Such permit is usually valid for a year.

Single Arab and Turkmen men however generally only receive a one-month renewable *Asayish*-issued residency permit. Holders of a one-month residency permit face difficulties to finding regular employment due to the short duration of their permits. Single Arab and Turkmen men who have proof of regular employment and a support letter from their employer can apply for a one-year *Asayish*-issued residency permit, but few of those who do so are successful in obtaining one.

4. COVID-19-Related Movement Restrictions

After the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the authorities at the national and regional level introduced a range of restrictions, including on internal movement. The approach of local authorities to the enforcement of these restrictions varied across Governorates. Most restrictions were lifted as of August 2020; at the time of writing there are no internal movement restrictions related to COVID-19.¹⁰ However, as government and security officials may not report to their offices regularly, delays in the issuance of security clearances and/or support letters may be experienced.¹¹

5. Pressure to Return to Areas of Origin¹²

Governmental authorities have repeatedly emphasized their priority to resolve the “displacement file” by 2021 through the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their areas of origin and the closure of IDP camps and informal sites.¹³ In numerous areas across Iraq, particularly central and southern Iraq, persons displaced from formerly ISIS-held or conflict-affected areas are increasingly pressured or coerced by central and local authorities and other actors to return to their home areas. Reported means

⁹ This permit is commonly referred to as “residency permit”; however it is a security clearance permit issued by the *Asayish*.

¹⁰ “In late September [2020], the *Gol* [Government of Iraq] lifted all curfews that were in place across the country; they had previously been active between 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. daily. Additionally, citizens remain permitted to travel between governorates, following the lifting of public health restrictions in August”; International Organization for Migration (IOM) Iraq, *COVID-19 Mobility Restrictions and Public Health Measures: 20 October to 2 November 2020*, 5 November 2020, <https://bit.ly/3g6YrgB>.

¹¹ At the time of writing, Iraq reported over 600,000 COVID-19 cases and more than 12,800 COVID-19 related deaths; WHO, *Iraq COVID-19 Dashboard*, accessed 11 January 2021, <https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/iq>.

¹² UNHCR described in its 2019 Protection Considerations, “it needs to be assessed whether the individual concerned will be able to durably remain in the proposed areas of relocation without coming under undue pressure to return to his/her area of origin. Areas in which an individual may be pressured by local authorities or other actors to return to an area previously held by ISIS or otherwise affected by conflict would not constitute a relevant internal flight alternative”; UNHCR, *International Protection Considerations with Regard to People Fleeing the Republic of Iraq*, May 2019, www.refworld.org/docid/5cc9b20c4.html, p. 119.

¹³ “Government officials say that by pushing IDPs to return, aid groups can shift from managing camps to assisting development. ‘We need them to return to rebuild their towns and villages,’ said Najm Jibouri, governor of Nineveh province (...). ‘Yes, they will suffer ... But that doesn’t mean we should keep them in camps without a deadline’”; Associated Press, *Camp Closures Force Iraqi Families Back to Shattered Homes*, 16 December 2020, <http://bit.ly/3nF66Wg>. According to Karim al-Nouri, representative for the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, “the existence of camps after 2020 is wrong”; Financial Times, *Iraq Empties Camps for the Displaced as Military Warns on ISIS*, 29 November 2020, <http://on.ft.com/3aw6EKh>. See also, Iraqi News Agency, *Al-Ghazi Confirms the Resolution of the IDPs File During the Next Year*, 13 December 2020, <http://bit.ly/3pclZio>.

of pressure employed include, *inter alia*, camp closures, notifications with deadlines to leave, denial of or restrictions to the access to public health services and livelihood opportunities, harassment (mostly verbal and in some cases sexual), as well as arbitrary arrest.¹⁴ In some instances, authorities have reportedly either resorted to eviction threats or ignored private actors' eviction threats against IDPs residing in informal settlements.¹⁵ Following several camp closures at the end of 2019, between October 2020 to December 2020 the authorities engaged in a further round of large-scale closure of IDP camps and informal sites across Federal Iraq,¹⁶ leaving those affected often with very little time to make plans for their future.¹⁷ Decisions to close camps were taken without consultation with affected populations¹⁸ and despite serious safety and humanitarian concerns.¹⁹ While some IDPs have been able to return to

¹⁴ UNHCR information, January 2021.

¹⁵ In late November 2020, UNHCR received information that the Baghdad Operations Command was actively seeking to identify persons from other governorates who have not regularized their stay in Baghdad (i.e. who do not hold a valid Baghdad-registered housing card or Public Distribution System / PDS card) for possible enforcement action, most likely without any legal recourse. No further developments had been reported at the time of writing; UNHCR information, January 2021.

¹⁶ In October 2020, the Government of Iraq announced its intention to close multiple camps and informal sites for internally displaced persons (IDPs). Several camps were subsequently closed. Between 18 October and 13 December 2020, the authorities initiated the closure of 11 camps and two informal sites in Baghdad, Kerbala, Diyala, Al-Anbar, Ninewa and Kirkuk Governorates, resulting in the departure of over 34,000 individuals (over 6,800 families), mostly from Ninewa Governorate, but also from camp settings in Al-Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kerbala, Kirkuk and Salah Al-Din Governorates. Two more camps were reclassified as informal sites meaning that humanitarian organizations will either reduce or end their activities; IOM, *Movement of Camp IDPs: Arrival of IDPs From Camps to Non-Camp Settings*, 13 December 2020, <https://bit.ly/37DJfom>, p. 3; UNHCR, *UNHCR Ramps Up Support to Iraqi Returnees amid Large-Scale Closure of IDP Camps*, 13 November 2020, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2040920.html. While camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) are expected to remain open for the time being, their future is uncertain; Associated Press, *Camp Closures Force Iraqi Families Back to Shattered Homes*, 16 December 2020, <http://bit.ly/3nF66Wg>; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Iraq Humanitarian Snapshot November 2020*, 7 December 2020, <https://bit.ly/3n1VeRQ>. "The KRG [Kurdistan Regional Government] doesn't appear to be planning the mass closure of its camps – home to over 200,000 Iraqi IDPs, according to the KRG's Joint Crisis Coordination Centre (JCC), with another 500,000 IDPs living in urban communities – though it continues with its years-long push for voluntary returns"; Rudaw, *Neither Heaven nor Hell: Iraqi IDPs Live in Purgatory at Hassan Sham Camp*, 17 December 2020, <http://bit.ly/3ayEPB0>. See also, Rudaw, *KRG Interior Ministry, Iraqi Security Service Discuss IDP Returns*, 22 December 2020, <http://bit.ly/3aDojzM>. At the time of writing, five formal camps (Amriyat Al-Fallujah / AAF camp in Al-Anbar Governorate; Jeddah 5 and Salamiyah camps in Ninewa Governorate; and Latifiyah camps 1 and 2 in Baghdad Governorate) remain open in Federal Iraq, hosting over 25,800 individuals. On 10 January 2021, families in Salamiyah camp were given notice by MoMD and the National Security Service (NSS) to leave the camp within 48 hours. Humanitarian organizations operating in the AAF camp also received indications that the camp will be closed by the end of January 2021. Meanwhile Al-Anbar Governorate's Emergency Cell, which is responsible for camp management in the governorate, indicated that the Habbaniyah Tourist City (HTC) informal site (previously a formal camp) will be fully closed, although no timeline has been given. Furthermore, the decision over the status of the two camps in Baghdad is pending with the MoMD. A further 25 IDP camps are located in the KR-I or are under KRG administration, hosting over 182,000 individuals. The KRG authorities have previously stated that they intend to close the remaining camps by March 2021; UNHCR information, January 2021. See also, OCHA, *Camp Closures 2020*, <http://bit.ly/38nJXW6>.

¹⁷ "The government's newest push to close all remaining camps is so rapid that it is forcing people out with no time for them to figure out where it would be safe for them to go or how to get housing"; Human Rights Watch (HRW), *Iraq: Camp Expulsions Leave Families Homeless, Vulnerable*, 2 December 2020, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2041712.html. "Families who left camps and sites (...) were sometimes compelled to do so at short notice. In at least two cases, families being moved back to areas of origins became stuck at checkpoints for hours, without food or water, due to lack of advance coordination between security actors"; OCHA, *Humanitarian Bulletin October 2020*, 30 November 2020, <https://bit.ly/37n6Qbl>, p. 1. See also, Business Insider, *Displaced People in Iraq Are Running Out of Options as the Government Shuts Down Refugee Camps*, 18 December 2020, <http://bit.ly/38o9JJH>; UNHCR, *UNHCR Ramps Up Support to Iraqi Returnees amid Large-Scale Closure of IDP Camps*, 13 November 2020, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2040920.html.

¹⁸ "Human Rights Watch reporting has documented that the Iraqi authorities have generally made decisions on where these families can live without adequate consultation, deciding either to leave them in the area which they fled, move them to another camp, or force them to return to their home areas"; HRW, *Iraq: Camp Expulsions Leave Families Homeless, Vulnerable*, 2 December 2020, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2041712.html. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) highlighted that the decisions to close camps was taken "independently from the UN" and stressed the importance of safe, dignified and voluntary returns; UNAMI, *Statement by the Office of the DSRSG for Iraq/Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq*, 30 October 2020, <https://bit.ly/386We2x>. See also, OCHA, *Iraq Humanitarian Bulletin November 2020*, 22 December 2020, <http://bit.ly/3mH0utm>.

¹⁹ "Those still in camps face significant barriers to return, including houses that are partially or completely destroyed or contaminated with unexploded ordnance, reduced access to critical basic services in areas of return -including water and healthcare – lack of livelihoods and threats to their security due to perceived affiliation with ISIS or tribal disputes"; Danish Refugee Council (DRC), *Camp Closure in Iraq*, 7 December 2020, <http://bit.ly/34uKGTZ>. "Many of the families have stayed [in displacement] because they have been unable to obtain civil documentation and because they fear retaliation if they return home because they may have family links to ISIS. Others are unable to afford rent, basic services, or to rebuild their destroyed homes, or their home areas lack basic services including health care and education"; HRW, *Iraq: Camp Expulsions Leave Families Homeless, Vulnerable*, 2 December 2020, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2041712.html. "[S]ome areas of origin in Ninewa have not been rehabilitated since the conclusion of large-scale military operations against ISIL, and as such, these areas currently lack the conditions conducive

their areas of origin after the closure of camps, significant numbers have been unable to return and face renewed displacement,²⁰ including to informal settlements or other, often inadequate conditions.²¹

to sustainable returns. There are ongoing concerns regarding security clearance and acceptance by host communities, including repeated examples of stigmatization, discrimination, collective punishment and even targeted violent attacks on returnees in places where the necessary social cohesion and reconciliation measures have not yet taken root"; OCHA, *Humanitarian Bulletin October 2020*, 30 November 2020, <https://bit.ly/37n6Qbl>, pp. 1, 2. See also, Al-Monitor, *Iraq's Camp Closures Could Leave 100,000 Homeless as Winter Looms*, 11 November 2020, <https://bit.ly/2HWYFKt>.

²⁰ UNHCR and partners have reported several instances of failed or blocked returns of IDPs affected by recent camp closures. For example, in late October 2020, several families forced to leave two of the now closed camps in Baghdad to their area of origin in Garmah, Al-Anbar Governorate, were prevented from accessing the district due to tribal and security issues. Some of the families attempted to settle in Fallujah City but were unable to regularize their residency there without support letters from the local *mukhtar*. Similarly, several IDP families displaced to Al-Anbar Governorate were prevented by the Baghdad Operations Command to return to their area of origin in the Baghdad Belt due to tribal concerns; UNHCR information, January 2021. A joint survey by the Iraq Information Centre (IIC), CCCM and Protection Clusters found that 60% of the surveyed households who departed camps returned to their area of origin; however, a third of these (33%) did not return to their habitual residence. Of those not returning to their area of origin, the primary reasons for not doing so were destroyed, damaged or occupied shelters, and lack of basic services in the area of origin; CCCM Cluster, *Camp Departure Follow-Up Survey: Sudden Camp Closures 14th October to 30th November 2020*, 23 December 2020, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/83876>. "Humanitarian aid groups are warning that if the camps are closed, tens of thousands of people, most of them women and children, risk homelessness or violent reprisals from Shiite militiamen and even from their own tribes and kin over perceived affiliation with the Islamic State or simply because they share its Sunni Muslim faith"; Washington Post, *Iraq wants thousands displaced by the ISIS war to go home. They may be killed if they do*, 22 December 2020, <http://wapo.st/3nKbLuc>. "(...) while some IDPs have been able to return to their areas of origin, others have been subjected to secondary displacement; they have been forced to move to other camps or to informal settlements. Some had faced threats from their communities in their areas of origin, while others were blocked by local authorities from entering their home areas, despite having received clearance prior to departure from the camps"; Amnesty International, *Marked for Life: Displaced Iraqis in Cycle of Abuse and Stigmatization*, 24 November 2020, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2041230.html, pp. 9-10. "The forced closure of camps due to the camp consolidation and closure policy implemented by the Government of Iraq since August 2019 (...) has led to premature and unsafe returns to areas highly affected by intra-group violence. Returning IDPs with perceived affiliation to extremist groups such as ISIL might be exposed to harassment or retaliatory attacks, which might in turn reignite community violence. In some instances, returned IDPs with perceived affiliation have become displaced a second time after having been rejected by their communities of origin"; IOM, *Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2020*, 6 November 2020, <https://bit.ly/2J87a5R>, p. 2.

²¹ "Expelled camp residents are left to live in wrecked homes or in tents, or drain savings renting in expensive urban sprawls"; Associated Press, *Camp Closures Force Iraqi Families Back to Shattered Homes*, 16 December 2020, <http://bit.ly/3nF66Wg>. "Unable to access shelter, many families have been forced into informal settlements, living in tents, crowded shelters or damaged buildings in winter, during a global pandemic"; DRC, *Camp Closure in Iraq*, 7 December 2020, <http://bit.ly/34uKGTZ>. "[T]housands of children and their families are forced to live in badly damaged houses in abandoned areas with unexploded bombs, dead bodies and rubble, after the sudden closure of several camps for displaced people in Iraq"; Save the Children, *Iraq: Children Forced to Live among Corpses, Unexploded Bombs and Rubble after Camp Closures Strand Thousands*, 27 November 2020, <http://bit.ly/3paVgYm>. "Around the capital, the closure of two small camps in the Sunni neighbourhood of Abu Ghraib (Shams and Al-Ahl) hosting 105 and 74 families, has resulted in the rise of informal small ghettos"; The New Arab, *Nowhere to Go: Iraq's IDP Camp Closures Leave Thousands Destitute*, 19 November 2020, <https://bit.ly/3fVEx7X>. "Some IDPs have moved from the camps to rented accommodation, but fear eviction given their limited resources. Others, citing lack of information about alternatives and unable to return to their homes, have joined crowded accommodation with friends and family"; UNHCR, *UNHCR Ramps Up Support to Iraqi Returnees amid Large-Scale Closure of IDP Camps*, 13 November 2020, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2040920.html. "Tracking of people who have been forced to leave camps in Baghdad and Kerbala in the past weeks shows that nearly half of them have not been able to return to their areas of origin, according to the International Organisation of Migration. Many end up in precarious settings on the edge of towns, in damaged, unsafe apartments or unfinished buildings, lacking basic necessities and health care, and forced into further displacement"; NRC, *Iraq's Camp Closures Leave 100,000 People in Limbo*, 9 November 2020, <https://bit.ly/3qgHmVQ>. "Secondary displacement to non-camp areas also stretches the absorption capacity of the host communities (...)"; IOM, *Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2020*, 6 November 2020, <https://bit.ly/2J87a5R>, p. 2. Data from IOM indicates that more than one third of those departing from camp settings returned to areas with the highest severity of needs, hence adding further pressure on available shelter options and basic services; IOM, *DTM Emergency Tracking: Movement of Camp IDPs*, 20 December 2020, <https://bit.ly/3nKHVFY>, p. 3. UNHCR is aware that the Ministry of Planning and the MoMD announced or drafted plans to address the housing and other needs of those affected by camp closures; however, at the time of writing, no final plan has been confirmed or implemented; UNHCR information, January 2021.