

UN-Iraq Humanitarian Update

May 2005



United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)

Background

As part of the UNAMI mandate to coordinate and deliver essential humanitarian assistance, the UN Country Team (UNCT) in collaboration with Iraqi authorities and NGO partners, has taken a leading role in emergency preparedness and response activities for Iraq. By using the Cluster approach to address areas of common concern, UN agencies have combined resources and expertise to implement coordinated humanitarian responses.

The six month update of the Interagency Agency Contingency Plan for Humanitarian Assistance in Iraq was completed incorporating contributions from the UNCT, NGOs and other humanitarian stakeholders. This plan is a reference and coordination tool for humanitarian actors in Iraq; setting out key planning assumptions and scenarios, indicating current response mechanisms and capacity, as well as recommending areas where capacity should be strengthened.

The UNCT for Iraq is:

- [ESCWA](#)
- [FAO](#)
- [ILO](#)
- [IOM](#)
- [OHCHR](#)
- [UNDP](#)
- [UNEP](#)
- [UNESCO](#)
- [UNFPA](#)
- [UN-HABITAT](#)
- [UNHCR](#)
- [UNICEF](#)
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- [UNOPS](#)
- [WFP](#)
- [WHO](#)

Humanitarian Overview

The UNCT constantly monitors and provides regular response to the overall humanitarian situation in the country, dealing with refugees, returnees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), migrants, host families, and families at risk.

When “hotspots” emerge requiring an emergency response, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator activates the UN Emergency Working Group (EWG) in Amman, which benefits from the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator in Baghdad as well as the NGO’s EWG mechanism there. Members of the EWG focus on the material and protection needs of communities affected by either military conflict or ethno-religious tensions. At the same time, there is intensive liaison with relevant Iraqi and MNF-I authorities to ensure optimal coordination, access to those in need and information exchange between concerned actors.

Humanitarian Response Activities:

Al Qa’im Update: A military offensive resulted in a humanitarian situation in and around the town of Al Qa’im in Anbar Governorate, which required an immediate and coordinated response. Although the operation ceased in the latter half of the month, an estimated 2,000 families fled the city, seeking refuge in neighbouring towns or in the surrounding desert.

Most of the estimated 2,000 families displaced by the recent fighting subsequently returned, although some families remain displaced. Working primarily with NGO partners, the UNCT delivered emergency supplies of water, food, health kits, and non-food items to the affected population.

Falluja Update: The UNCT continued to assist IDPs and returnees in and around Falluja re-establish basic facilities, education and health services, and livelihoods. Increasingly the need was for better access to income generating opportunities and to pay full compensation to all affected groups.

IOM supported 23 separate emergency distributions of food and non-food items to people affected by these two situations. This essential service, conducted by NGO partners often operating under difficult security conditions, reached a total of 83,886 beneficiaries across 13 different locations. In addition, UNICEF supported the delivery of emergency health kits, first aid kits, and 10,000 sachets of Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) to cover the needs of 10,000 thousand people in Al Qa’im.

Leaving No Man's Land....

UNHCR made significant progress on two critical cases concerning refugees residing in areas that were unsafe or difficult to access. In the first case, 743 Iranian refugees were relocated from a "No Man's Land" area in between the Iraqi-Jordanian border to a camp 60 kilometres inside Jordanian territory. This should improve access to the camp by humanitarian organizations and enhance the provision of essential services to the refugee population. In the second case, the Iraqi authorities approved a plan to relocate the remaining population of 3,100 Iranian refugees from Al Tash camp located 200 kilometres from Baghdad, which had become unsafe and inaccessible given the deterioration in security in the area. These refugees will move to a safer location in the north of the country; a decision that was welcomed by a majority of the refugees. 277 families from among those who moved from this camp to the North in 2003 and 2004, completed the construction of their new houses in May.



Destroyed House in Al Tash Camp - UNHCR



Damaged Library in Al Tash Camp - UNHCR

Additionally, 236 Iraqi refugees in Iran were assisted by UNHCR to return to Iraq. This brings to 20,697 the total number of Iraqis voluntarily repatriated since this operation began in July 2003.

Meeting Basic Needs

UNICEF continued the daily tankering of water to Eastern Baghdad using private contractors, thus permitting approximately 180,000 people to have access to clean drinking water. 450 tons of essential chemicals were delivered to water treatment plants to assist the Baghdad water authorities with water purification.

As part of ongoing nationwide vaccination programmes for children, UNICEF and WHO supported the Ministry of Health (MoH) in a second stage of the National Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) Campaign to immunize children between one and five years, which was completed in five Northern Governorates. Approximately 1.2 million children were immunized during the 14-day campaign with a daily coverage rate of 90 per cent. The National Vaccine Store in Baghdad was supplied with one million doses of Diphtheria, Pertussis and Tetanus (DPT) vaccine to remedy shortages which occurred when the normal MoH delivery process experienced delays. In addition, five million sachets of Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) were delivered to primary health care centres across the country in anticipation of diarrhoeal outbreaks in the summer.

Assessments

Using the IDP Integrated Monitoring Framework tool, IOM and UNOPS monitored IDP population movements over the course of February, March and April. The findings of this quarterly monitoring exercise were recently finalised.

An estimated total of 180,725 IDP families were assessed in all 18 Iraq Governorates. Of this total, the two largest IDP groups in Iraq were IDP returnees, estimated to be 78,221 families, and pre-2003 conflict IDPs, estimated to be 71,997 families. The total number of post-2003 conflict IDPs arising out of recent flashpoints was estimated at 24,019 families.

There were recurring themes of immediate needs for these groups, namely: appropriate shelter, adequate water and sanitation facilities. Assessed families were living in a mixture of tented accommodation, public buildings (including schools), with host families or in collective towns with restricted space and inadequate services. Access to safe drinking water and hygienic living conditions in light of the approaching summer months was a concern. Most of the assessed families reported having access to primary health care and schools, but these facilities were often in a

state of disrepair, poorly equipped or lacking in basic supplies. General unemployment and a lack of income generating opportunities limited possibilities for families to improve their economic situation.

Advocacy

Against a backdrop of escalating violence adversely affecting the civilian population, the UNCT and its partners continue to urge the relevant authorities to respect humanitarian space and the human rights of civilians, and to facilitate the safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian actors to those in need. This issue of humanitarian space and access was at the forefront of discussions between the UN and NGO's in recent weeks with unconfirmed reports of humanitarian convoys being fired upon, and the offices of humanitarian organisations being raided, resulting in the confiscation of equipment and confidential information regarding beneficiaries. The Office of the UN Humanitarian Coordinator is investigating these reports.

UNAMI issued a press release highlighting the plight of families who fled the fighting in and around Al Qa'im, underlining the impact of hostilities on civilians to access adequate medical care and education services. [\(CLICK HERE FOR PRESS RELEASE\)](#)

Heading Home

None of the 25 Moroccans arriving in Jordan from Iraq could really believe they had arrived. At the invitation of the Moroccan Embassy in Baghdad, they came from Falluja, Ramadi, Baghdad, and elsewhere, in buses, taxis and private cars. Some had been in Iraq for more than twenty years, many had been born there. The group was met at the Iraq - Jordan border by IOM staff, who accompanied them to Amman and then onwards to Morocco.

"Living and working in Iraq was not always bad," said one woman as she prepared to board the flight to Casablanca. "We saved money, it was good, but then things steadily got worse. Last year the house we stayed in fell in on us and everything was lost. It was then that I knew we must leave."

For most, the story was similar: Iraq in the Eighties offered good wages and living conditions. After this there was the invasion of Kuwait, the resulting war, and sanctions, with things becoming more and more difficult.

There was concern for the welfare of the children in particular, but when asked if they would only remember the recent troubles, one mother, while acknowledging the inevitability of such memories, added: "They have also experienced the generosity of the Iraqi people, the kindness of the Moroccan embassy, of the officials in Jordan, IOM and all the many people who helped and welcomed us along the way. God willing, this is what they will remember."



Boarding the Bus - IOM

In coordination and cooperation with both the Iraqi and the third countries' authorities, IOM has to date assisted 5,581 third country nationals to return to their home countries.