



# UN-Iraq Humanitarian Update

## April 2006

### United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)

#### Introduction

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, have a leading role in emergency preparedness and response activities for Iraq. By using the Cluster approach to address areas of common concern, UN agencies combine resources and expertise to implement coordinated emergency humanitarian responses and regular programme assistance.

When emergency situations arise, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator manages the humanitarian response of the UNCT and its NGO partners through the Emergency Working Group (EWG) in Amman. The EWG benefits from the participation of the UN Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator in Baghdad as well as NGOs and other stakeholders there. EWG members focus on the material and protection needs of communities affected by armed conflict, internal displacements, or natural disasters.

#### Emergency Situations and Humanitarian Response Activities

Widespread displacement continued in April as a result of ongoing violence and inter-communal tensions affecting the country. The recent upsurge in displacements, which was primarily triggered by the bombing of the al-Askari Mosque in Samarra on 22 February, precipitated a wave of reprisals in its aftermath. By the end of April, it was estimated that between 11,500 and 14,500 families had become newly displaced since late February. As displacement is continuously taking place, it is difficult to verify these figures without improved security and access for comprehensive monitoring and assessments. Although these recent displacements represent a worrying trend, the UNCT estimates that there are over 1.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) throughout the country that require longer-term support for basic needs and durable solutions.

The Iraqi government has reportedly allocated US \$ 6 million to the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) to finance emergency distributions of food and NFIs to the newly displaced families. In addition, a significant portion of these funds will also be used to establish and maintain IDP camps. The UNCT has consistently taken the position that the establishment of IDP camps should be avoided; and that IDPs ought to be supported through host family

arrangements until alternative accommodation and durable solutions can be found. Nevertheless, given the fact that the government has already begun setting up IDP camps and is requesting assistance from the humanitarian community, the UNCT's IDP Working Group is preparing a guidance note on how the UNCT could support these camps as an option of last resort.

The UNCT is supporting government authorities where possible to respond to the emergency needs of the recently displaced families. IOM provided food and non-food items to over 2,350 IDP families in the Governorates of Anbar, Najaf, Kerbala, Wassit, and Babylon through its NGO partners. UNHCR provided tents and other non-food items to be distributed by the MoDM and NGO partners to IDP families in Najaf, Kerbala, Basrah, Missan, Thi Qar, and Anbar Governorates. In addition, UNICEF continued to provide water-tankering for over 2,000 vulnerable IDP families in Anbar Governorate. Additional UNCT emergency distributions are planned based on assessed needs to complement the government's efforts.

The UNAMI Humanitarian Advisor, who is based in Baghdad and working primarily to promote the continued development of the nascent Emergency Coordination and

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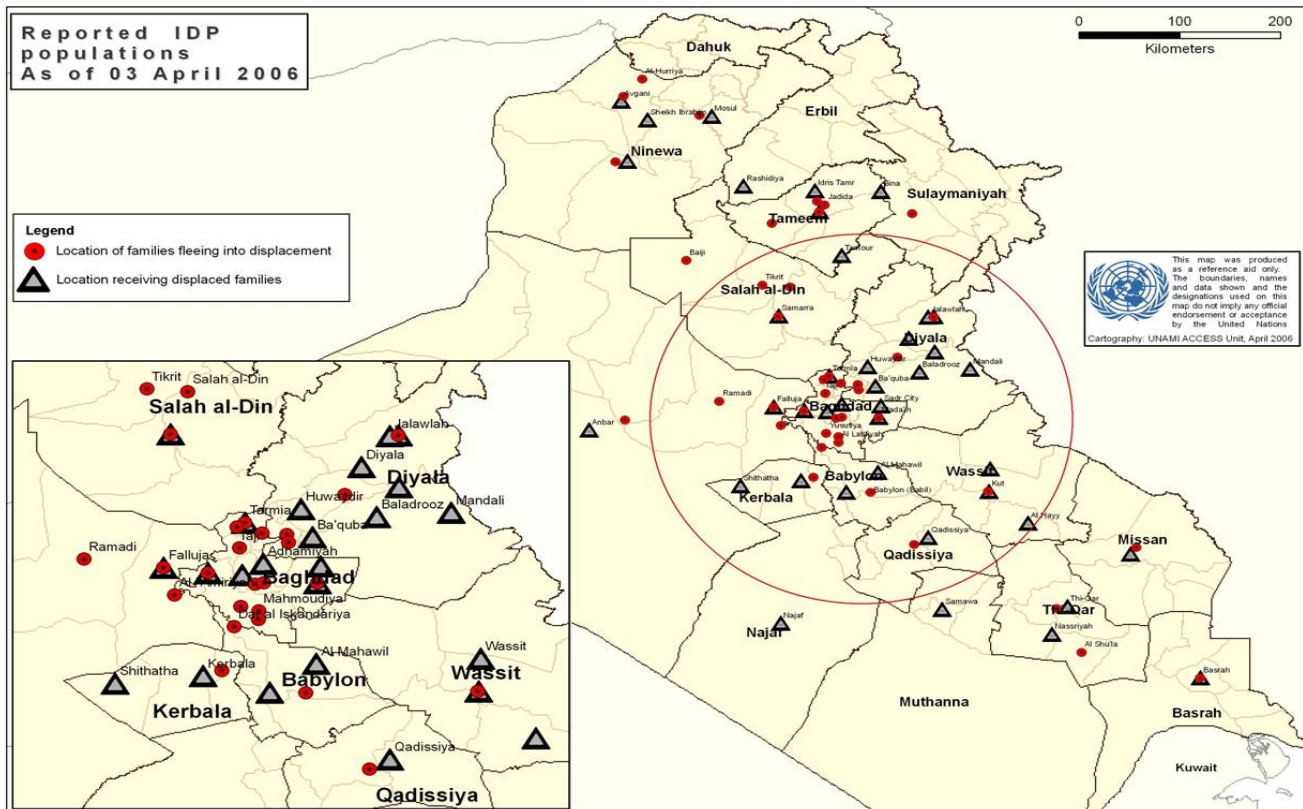
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Response Cell initiative of the Prime Minister's Office, has been tasked to liaise and coordinate more closely with the MoDM and the Iraqi Red Crescent Society on their joint IDP assistance plans in order to better target UNCT support where appropriate.

A proposal for an initial US \$ 3.7 million in emergency funding submitted to the UN Development Group Iraq Trust Fund (UNDG ITF) is still under review. This proposal seeks to allocate a portion of



the accrued interest from the UNDG ITF to Cluster F to cover the immediate basic needs of up to 5,000 of the most vulnerable recent IDP families over three months, including the provision of some assistance to the affected host communities. In the meantime, alternate sources of funding are also being considered. It is clear that without additional sources of funding

dedicated to the provision of emergency assistance, the operational agencies of the UNCT will be unable to continue supporting the government in responding to such recurring displacement crises.

Towards the end of April, an increased mobilisation of Turkish troops and Iranian military operations along the

border areas in northern Iraq reportedly prompted limited and temporary displacements of several hundred families away from border villages. Many of the IDPs were reported to have returned to their homes shortly afterwards. The UNAMI Erbil Area Coordinator and Military Advisors continue to monitor the situation and the potential for further displacements.

## Providing Regular Programme Assistance

UNICEF maintained the daily trucking of water to certain residential areas and hospitals in Baghdad using private contractors, permitting approximately 180,000 residents and 4,000 hospital patients and staff to have continued access to potable water. In addition essential chemicals were delivered to warehouses of the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works (MoMPPW) in Baghdad and Basrah to assist the authorities with water purification.

In April, WFP did not dispatch food commodities into Iraq as commodities were not procured as a result of

resource constraints. During the course of this project WFP has dispatched a total of 28,978 metric tonnes (MT) of commodities to Iraq during the last 14 months. Under vulnerable group feeding activities, an estimated total of 13,929 MT of wheat flour, vegetable oil and pea-wheat blended food has now been distributed to approximately 2,181,750 beneficiaries including pregnant and lactating women, TB patients and malnourished children at 933 Primary Healthcare Centres and Community Child Care Units. Under the Food for Education activities, approximately 10,960 MT of high energy biscuits and 1,927 MT of

vegetable oil have now been distributed to approximately 1,424,000 primary school children

The WFP operation in Iraq is experiencing a break in its pipeline to deliver essential food commodities into the country due to a lack of funding. This means that commodities normally destined for malnourished children less than 5 years, primary school children and pregnant and lactating women could not be procured. WFP continues to appeal to the international donor community to respond to this situation as recent surveys show increasing levels of food insecurity in the country.

## Advocacy and Human Rights

UNAMI issued a press statement in which the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) strongly condemned the terrorist attack on the Buratha Mosque in Baghdad which killed more than 60 innocent

worshippers and caused the injury of at least 160 others. The SRSG called on political and religious leaders to dedicate efforts to ensure the respect for human rights and the protection of holy sites and places of worship. He

reiterated the continued support of the UN to assist Iraq to promote inter-communal dialogue and national reconciliation.

In a second UNAMI press release, the SRSG deplored the violence which affected the Baghdad neighbourhood of Adhamiya. He called on all religious, political and community leaders to ensure restraint by their followers and to

refrain from sheltering those engaged in criminal behavior.

On 23rd April, the SRSG offered his congratulations on behalf of the UN Secretary-General on the election of

the new Iraqi political leadership. The SRSG called on all Iraqis to unite in a spirit of national reconciliation and compromise to foster the establishment of peace and stability in Iraq. (Click [HERE](#) to link to the UNAMI press releases.)

## IDPs, Refugees and Durable Solutions

Despite the challenges in coordinating the logistics and timing of the delivery of food and relief items, UNHCR continued to deliver assistance to Palestinian refugees located at the Iraqi-Jordanian border. An additional 146 refugees arrived bringing the total at the end of April to 237 persons. On 28th April, the Syrian authorities officially confirmed that Syria is prepared to receive this group. UNHCR is grateful for the solution offered by the Syrian Government and will subsequently coordinate the transfer of this group with the relevant authorities and IOM.

UNHCR continued pursuing solutions for Palestinian refugees in Iraq including holding discussions with the Ministry of Interior (MoI) in Baghdad regarding strengthening the protection afforded to these people. One of the most surprising, and hopefully effective, outcomes of this was a request from the MoI to Grand Ayatollah Al-Sistani to issue a fatwa, a religious decree calling for the protection of the Palestinian refugees. A fatwa was subsequently issued on 28th April strongly

condemning attacks on Palestinians and calling for their protection.

UNHCR received reports that Iranian Arab refugees in southern Iraq are facing serious security threats, including direct attacks and verbal threats. With access to this group significantly limited by ongoing insecurity, UNHCR is exploring means to continue assistance to these refugees. In an effort to enhance their protection, the 143 refugee families previously registered in 2005 will be issued with official UNHCR Refugee ID Cards in June.

UNHCR delivered 12 tents to a group of Iranian Kurdish refugees at the Iraqi-Jordanian border to replace tents damaged in violent sand storms. The refugees recently sent a fax to UNHCR outlining their concerns and demanding that UNHCR facilitate a solution for them; primarily a resettlement to a third country. UNHCR is cooperating closely with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in an effort to convince these refugees to relocate to a settlement in Erbil

Governorate. One initiative will be the screening of a video to show conditions at the Erbil settlement which UNHCR prepared in March. A second initiative is the possibility of the KRG authorities accompanying UNHCR to the Iraqi-Jordanian border to demonstrate their support and commitment to helping the refugees to relocate.



Father and son at the Iraqi / Jordanian border – UNHCR

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