



UN-Iraq Humanitarian Update

March 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, has 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 either military conflict or ethno-religious tensions.

Emergency Situations and Humanitarian Response Activities

The bombing of the Al-Askari Mosque in Samarra on 22nd February, which killed and injured dozens of worshippers and partially destroyed the shrine, sparked a wave of violence and displacements across the country. In the aftermath, hundreds of civilian casualties and the displacement of thousands of families were seen as retaliatory attacks contributed to prior insecurity. This situation represents a worrying trend as subsequent population movements continue to rise. The UNCT is closely monitoring the situation and coordinating responses through the inter-agency EWG mechanism.

According to figures from IOM monitors and the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM), it is estimated that between 6,500 and 13,500 families were newly displaced since late February. The most affected Governorates include Baghdad, Anbar, Diyala, Najaf, and Karbala where the concentration of new IDP families is estimated to be significant.

While some immediate needs are being addressed, a comprehensive assessment of the total needs and prospects for solutions is still to be undertaken. Of particular concern is the impact of the displacement on receiving communities, who themselves are often faced with inadequate resources and limited access to basic services. Some schools

and health centres in the affected areas are reportedly overwhelmed by the population influx, and many families are going without their monthly rations as the Public Distribution System tries to accommodate for the movements of beneficiaries.

The UNCT is responding with emergency distributions through NGO partners and supporting the MoDM where possible to provide shelter, food, and non-food items to the displaced families. In particular, a UNHCR partner distributed tents, blankets, mattresses, and heaters/stoves to approximately 270 newly displaced families in Anbar Governorate. An IOM partner distributed intermediate food rations and non-food items (hygiene kits, sleeping sets, and cooking supplies) to 470 recent IDP families in Baghdad Governorate. UNICEF provided emergency water-tanking to 12,500 beneficiaries in western Anbar in addition to distributing essential hygiene items to 3,500 beneficiaries in Salah al-Din Governorate.

Although the authorities in some areas with significant displacement have begun to set up IDP camps, the UN has strongly recommended that tented camps be avoided, and only used as a last resort. Instead IDPs should be supported to stay with host families until alternate arrangements and durable solutions can be found.

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[Introduction ----- 1](#)

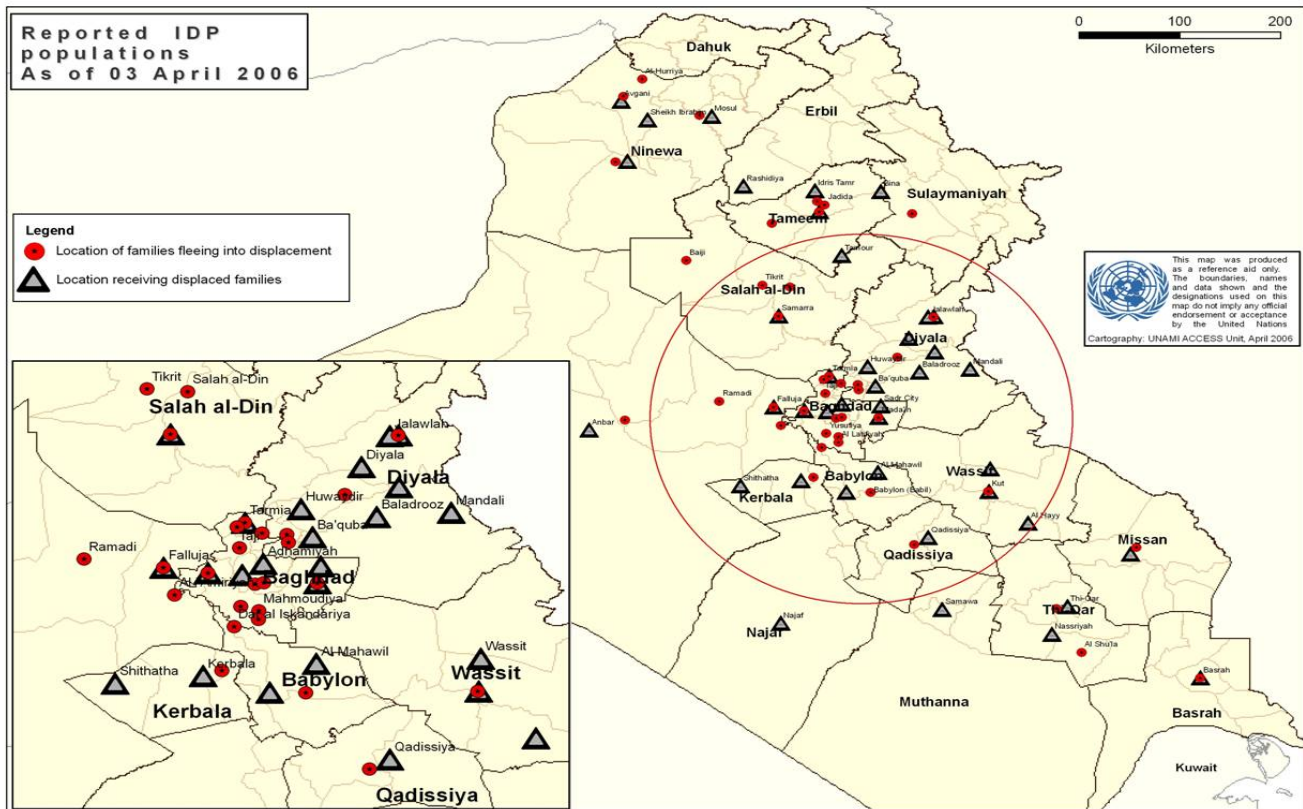
[Emergency Situations and Humanitarian Response ----- 1](#)

[Providing Regular Programme Assistance ----- 2](#)

[Advocacy and Human Rights ----- 2](#)

[IDPs, Refugees and Durable Solutions ----- 3](#)

As a result of escalating needs and gaps in assistance, the UNCT has begun developing an inter-agency rapid response proposal to mobilise funds to cover the immediate basic needs of up to 5,000 of the most vulnerable recent IDP families over the next three months, incorporating the needs of the affected host communities. It is envisaged that a portion of the accumulated interest from the United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund may be



allocated to the UN Cluster F (Refugees, IDPs and Durable Solutions) to undertake this particular emergency response using the collaborative approach to IDP assistance. The proposed interventions would also enable the UNCT to gather more detailed and concrete data regarding IDPs' needs and intentions.

The UN Humanitarian Coordinator convened the EWG to coordinate information and responses to the increase in displacements. EWG

members agreed to update the Inter-Agency Contingency Plan to take into account the evolving context and to articulate more clearly the operational aspects of the proposed response strategies. The IDP Working Group of involved UN agencies and NGOs recommended that each key sector nominate a focal point to ensure the revised plan reflects the full scope of possible scenarios which Iraq may face.

It is expected that over the next few

weeks, a workshop will be held to draft an overall disaster management framework which includes conflict mitigation measures. This document will be shared with Iraqi authorities, donors, and other stakeholders for feedback. The recent appointment of a UNAMI Humanitarian Advisor to the Prime Minister Office's newly established Emergency Coordination and Response Cell will significantly facilitate this process by providing strategic support to Iraqi counterparts on national contingency planning and disaster management.

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 (MoMPW) in Baghdad and Basrah to

assist the authorities with water purification.

In March, WFP dispatched 185 metric tonnes (MT) of food commodities to Iraq, bringing the total to 28,978 MT of food delivered during the last 13 months. Under vulnerable group feeding activities, an estimated total of 13,793 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 9,226 MT of high energy biscuits and 1,812 MT of vegetable oil have now been distributed to approximately 1,424,000 primary school children.

Advocacy and Human Rights

The UNAMI Human Rights Office issued the first bi-monthly report of 2006 on the human rights situation in Iraq for the period of January and February. The report noted "a marked deterioration in the security environment resulting in hundreds of cases of killings, torture, illegal detention and displacement" and called on the government "to

assert control over the security forces and all armed groups." The report also stated that "families living in mixed neighborhoods were forcibly evicted from their homes or left voluntarily because of threats of violence from militias, insurgents and other armed groups." UNAMI called on the Iraqi authorities to ensure that citizens enjoy

the rights and protection stipulated in the Iraqi laws as well as in the international treaties and agreements that Iraq has ratified. (Click [HERE](#) to link to the full report.)

UNAMI also issued a press statement in which the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) strongly

condemned the continuing deterioration of the human rights situation in Iraq. The SRSG said he was saddened and appalled by the daily cases of torture, arbitrary arrests, and extrajudicial executions that have affected all communities and led to the internal displacement of Iraqi civilians.

A second UNAMI press release condemned the criminal bombings in four crowded markets situated in Baghdad which killed more than 64 innocent civilians, and injured more than 300 people. The SRSG extended his condolences to the families of the

bereaved and called upon the Iraqi political and religious leaders to redouble their efforts to form a broad based government as soon as possible in order to promote national reconciliation. In a third press release, the SRSG denounced the continued targeting of Iraqi journalists and violence against media representatives stating the freedom of the press was an absolute prerequisite in a new democratic Iraq. (Click [HERE](#) to link to the UNAMI press releases.)

UNAMI and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights organised a workshop called

"Building a National Human Rights Commission in Iraq" to discuss the establishment of an independent national human rights commission in the country. The three day event which took place in Cyprus brought together Iraqi Government officials, members of the country's Council of Representatives, as well as representatives from civil society organizations and UN agencies. The workshop concluded with the participants adopting a statement of principles and plan of action for follow up work toward the creation of a national commission.

IDPs, Refugees and Durable Solutions

On 18 March, 88 Palestinian refugees, including 42 children as well as women and elderly persons, traveled to the buffer zone along the Iraq-Jordanian border with the hope of crossing into Jordan. The Jordanian authorities continued their previous policy that the border is no longer open to new refugee arrivals, and Iraqi authorities returned the group into Iraqi territory on the evening of 22 March. UNHCR and the Iraqi Red Crescent Society delivered water, food, tents, mattresses, blankets, jerry cans and other non-food items for all refugees on 23 March. An additional six refugees arrived on 24 March, and were provided with assistance, including health access for emergency cases. The group remained in temporary shelter at the close of the month, and UNHCR was planning another distribution of assistance.

The authorities in Anbar Governorate conducted an intentions survey among 319 refugees remaining in a former camp in Anbar, only surveying 267 due to detentions by security forces. Results provided UNHCR with a basis to analyze refugee intentions and strengthen ways for forward planning. UNHCR continued to encourage the

relocation of refugees from this former camp, including spontaneous departures to the Iraqi-Jordanian border, to a settlement in Erbil. UNHCR prepared and filmed a video highlighting the benefits of relocation to Erbil.

In the South, UNHCR and its partner discussed the ongoing registration of Iranian Arab refugees, primarily located in southern Iraq, in light of the increased direct violence and security threats faced by this group. UNHCR and its partners also launched a series of child protection activities targeting the needs of at-risk children.

Consultations with communities on issues and solutions to be included in the National Policy on Displacement started in all Governorates in March. The first outcomes were reported to UNHCR and will be shared with the MoDM and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). UNHCR reviewed prepared comparative analysis of national policies and displacement legislation for feedback and approval by the MoDM and the IDP Working Group. UNHCR also supported the MoDM in the setup of a MoDM core group for drafting the components of

the National Policy. The secondment of liaison and legal officers will be explored with the MoDM and the KRG, to support drafting and facilitate communications.

A final template for the IDP Intentions Survey, which will reach some 8,000 families throughout Iraq, was agreed upon by all concerned parties and progress was made on the Survey's statistical methods. Partners for survey implementation were selected for the South and Centre. Selection for the three northern Governorates will be completed shortly; training of survey monitors will begin in April.



Father and son in No Man's Land – UNHCR

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(UNAMI)

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