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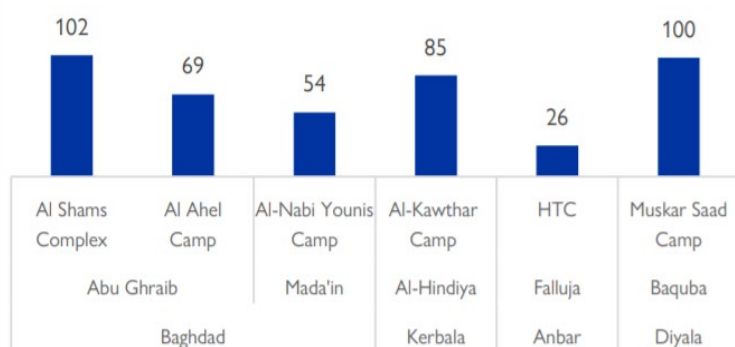


OCHA and the Humanitarian Coordinator on Mission to Laylan 1 IDP Camp in Kirkuk [Photo Credit: HC's office]

## Closure and Consolidation of IDP Camps

From 2014-2017, more than six million Iraqis were internally displaced by violence perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and subsequent Government of Iraq operations to defeat them. Since large-scale military operations against ISIL concluded in 2017, some 4.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) have returned home. As of 1 October, approximately 1.3 million people remained in displacement, including approximately 250,000 in 43 formal IDP camps. Many of the remaining IDPs face significant barriers preventing an end to their displacement, including: lack of civil documentation required to travel domestically or use public services; lack of housing and services, due to destruction and other causes; the presence of explosive remnants of war in home areas; and threats to their safety and security, including due to perceived affiliation to ISIL.

NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS WHO LEFT CAMP SETTINGS PER CAMP/SITE



On 8 October 2020, the Government announced the closure of all remaining IDP camps. In mid-October 2020, the Government began efforts to close and consolidate IDP camps and by 31 October, 436 households (2,370 individuals) had departed six camps and large informal sites in Al-Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala and Kerbala. Families who left camps and sites in these four governorates 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.

On 30 October, the Humanitarian Coordinator released a [press statement](#) noting that the decision to close and consolidate camps was taken independently of the United Nations and that primary responsibility for the protection and welfare of IDPs rests with national authorities. The United Nations continues to coordinate with the Government on humanitarian issues. Humanitarian organizations are working to ensure that IDPs who have newly left camps, as well as other Iraqis who are already displaced (outside camps) or have returned home but remain vulnerable, have access to necessary support, based on assessed need and humanitarian principles.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM)'s Displacement Tracking Matrix estimates that of the 436 households that left Al-Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala and Kerbala between 18-30 October, 45 per cent have become secondarily displaced in other non-camp locations. Not all IDPs were able to successfully return to their areas of origin due to the barriers described above, among others. Protection actors catalogued a number of concerns regarding the camp closure process, including a lack of consultation with affected IDPs, significant delays at checkpoints due to security screenings, and limited efforts to maintain COVID-19 prevention protocols. Humanitarian actors are monitoring the returns and are responding, based on assessed need, in both the secondary displacement and return areas.

## Humanitarian Coordinator visits Ninewa to Discuss Durable Solution to Protracted Displacement



Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano on her visit to Ninewa. [Photo Credit: UNAMI]

In October, the Humanitarian Coordinator, Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, travelled to Ninewa to assess the situation of the 300,000 IDPs in protracted displacement in the governorate. She met with local and governorate-level authorities, community leaders and humanitarian and development partners. On 1 October 2020, eight IDP camps hosting 65,000 IDPs were located in Ninewa Governorate. An additional 238,000 IDPs who hail from Ninewa are displaced in other governorates, including 118,000 who are displaced outside of IDP camps.

Discussions centered around operational challenges to IDP returns, durable solutions, protection concerns and humanitarian access issues. Key barriers to return for IDPs in Ninewa and other conflict-affected areas of origin include uninhabitable damaged or destroyed homes, lack of basic

services and infrastructure, presence of explosive ordnance which requires mine clearance, delays in the issuance of civil documentation required to obtain security clearance to return, and social cohesion concerns.

The Humanitarian Coordinator visited the Salamiyah and Hasansham U3 IDP camps, including a newly established COVID-19 isolation facility in Salamiyah. Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano met with camp residents who spoke of the challenges they face as well as the obstacles that prevent them from leaving the camp and ending their displacement. She also met with camp managers and returnees, noting concerns about the sustainability of returns to areas which have not undergone sufficient preparation to welcome back IDPs, and remarked that returns must be informed, safe, voluntary and dignified. Some 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 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. Other solutions to end displacement – such as local integration – have not been made available to many of those still residing in the camps.

The Humanitarian Coordinator was joined on the visit by OCHA, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and noted the joint efforts of the United Nations to provide recovery and reconciliation assistance in tandem with life-saving humanitarian aid for people in acute need.

## Quarantine and Isolation Units in IDP Camps

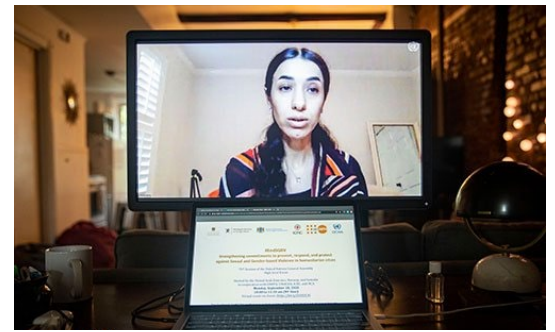
On 25 October, OCHA attended a ceremony with the Kirkuk Directorate of Health formally opening the COVID-19 isolation area in Laylan 2 IDP camp in Kirkuk. The isolation area will serve 8,874 IDPs from Laylan 1 and Yahyawa camps. IOM will provide health management for the isolation area, which is linked through a referral system to the nearby Médecins Sans Frontières treatment centre and Kirkuk Hospital. UNICEF will provide WASH services, UNHCR will support with shelter and non-food assistance and the World Food Programme (WFP) will provide food assistance. At the time of writing, [there were no COVID-19 cases in either camp](#), although limited numbers of cases had been recorded in recent months. The Health and Shelter/NFI clusters [issued guidelines on COVID-19 Preparedness and Response in IDP Camps](#), including the establishment of quarantine and isolation units, which were published on 7 October 2020.



Breaking ground in Kirkuk [Credit: OCHA Kirkuk office]

## SGBV Event Shines Spotlight on Violence Against Yazidi Women

More than 1,000 delegates took part in a high-level virtual event during the 75<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly aimed at strengthening commitments to prevent, respond and protect against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in humanitarian crises. The high-level event was hosted by the governments of the United Arab Emirates, Norway and Somalia, in coordination with OCHA, UNFPA, and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Keynote speakers and Nobel Peace Prize laureates Nadia Murad and Denis Mukwege highlighted the disproportionate concentration of SGBV in conflict and disaster zones, especially in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Murad, a Yazidi survivor of conflict-related sexual violence, spoke of the need to work collectively and collaboratively to address SGBV in armed conflict. Ms. Murad also highlighted the importance of appropriately resourcing communities to self-protect, and the importance of justice in recovery.



Nobel Peace laureate Nadia Murad addresses delegates in the virtual high-level event. [Photo Credit: United Nations]

It is estimated that 2,800 Yazidi women and children remain missing since the ISIL attacks on Sinjar in August 2014. Humanitarian partners continue to provide SGBV and other protection services for Yazidis and other conflict-affected Iraqis, including case management, referrals, training, legal assistance and community awareness. COVID-19 has brought new challenges to the provision of such assistance, particularly during periods of movement restrictions which limit ability to access services. Partners have adjusted to tele-case management by phone and remote monitoring where possible.



Exhumation of mass graves in Sinjar. [Photo Credit: IOM]

## Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Yazidi Community as Mass Graves Exhumed

After pausing activities earlier in 2020 due to COVID-19 mitigation efforts, the Government of Iraq resumed the exhumation of mass graves in Kojo and Solagh in Sinjar in October, continuing the process of identifying Yazidis who were victims of ISIL atrocities.

Given the traumatic nature of the work and the level of distress inevitably affecting the local Yazidi community during the period of the exhumation, IOM provided a team of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) staff to work with members of the community to

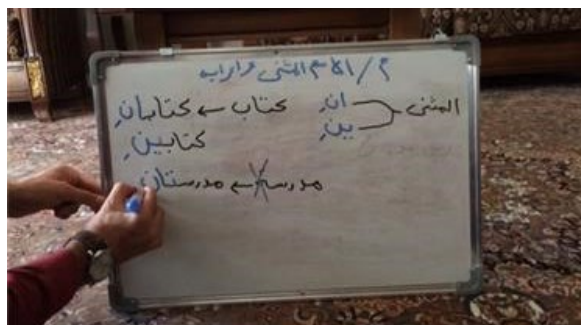
prepare them for the difficult period ahead. Several preparatory meetings were attended by Yazda, a national NGO working with the Yazidi community, the United Nations [Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL](#) (UNITAD) and IOM's MHPSS experts to ensure coordination and alignment of activities. Individual support was provided by more than 20 Yazda and IOM psychologists and psychosocial workers on site; the MHPSS teams were deployed to the area throughout the day to provide emotional and practical support to bereaved families. The exhumation is expected to continue until mid-November. There are thought to be hundreds of other mass graves around the conflict-affected areas of Iraq.

[Engagement with communities in a key tenet of the IASC's 2017 Commitments on Accountability to Affected People](#), which, among other things, asks humanitarians to adopt agency mechanisms that enable women, girls, boys, and men, (including the most marginalised and at-risk people among affected communities) to participate in and play an active role in decisions that will affect their lives, well-being, dignity and protection. Ideally, their voices and priorities will be solicited, heard and acted upon before, during and after an emergency.

## Engaging Vulnerable Children in Virtual Learning During COVID-19

To respond to the educational needs of conflict-affected children whose schools were closed due to the pandemic, Education Cluster partners have rolled out several innovative programmes to bring remote and online learning to students. With electricity supply and internet connection not uniformly available, and access to smartphones and tablets variable, education partner Catholic Relief Services has been able to adapt its established remedial support programme to a virtual format, to ensure continued access to education.





Grade 5 study group supplementing remote learning at home  
[Photo Credit: Catholic Relief Services]

The initiative, designed with students' involvement, supported 250 virtual study groups for students in grades 5-12 (1,400 students). Each group focused on one subject and connected five or more students with qualified teachers for four weeks of virtual support. Each virtual group had access to teachers sharing daily videos or audio recordings of lessons and answering questions to support their independent studies. The most vulnerable students were included, and girls-only groups with female teachers available.

Initial assessments were conducted via SMS to determine whether students have an adequate internet connection for the virtual groups, or whether alternate options such as printed resources were required.

Ninety-two per cent of students reported that participating in a virtual study group helped them prepare for exams, and 93 per cent said that the videos or voice messages shared by teachers were an effective way of delivering lessons. The Education Cluster intends to continue providing virtual remedial support to students during the 2020-2021 academic year given the ongoing and unpredictable nature of the pandemic.

## Safely Supporting Food Security During the Pandemic

By the end of October, there were 4.5 million people with insufficient food consumption in Iraq—an increase of 1.05 million people since September. An increasing number of households are reporting challenges in accessing markets or grocery stores, largely due to concerns about COVID-19, as well as due to the distance of markets and closures of stores. Approximately 850,000 households (14 per cent of households) are using negative coping strategies to meet their food needs, including buying cheaper food, borrowing food or restricting consumption.

Against this backdrop, WFP and its food security partners have continued to provide life-saving assistance in displacement camps across Iraq, scaling up to support up to 45,000 additional internally displaced and refugee families.

Several cash-based transfer delivery mechanisms, including mobile money transfers and electronic vouchers (e-vouchers), are being used to support recipients to purchase sufficient food to meet their needs. In response to a request from the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD), WFP is also assisting more than 28,000 vulnerable returnees (5,771 households) in Sinjar with emergency food items. There is additional scope to support more vulnerable and food-insecure people.

Distributions take place using COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures. During distributions, food security partners practice safe distancing as people redeem their food or cash entitlements. Staff use face masks and hand sanitizer, sterilizing frequently used items and washing hands regularly. Rigorous training has been provided to partners and to staff in camp markets around COVID-19 safety.

In support of governmental efforts to address food insecurity, WFP and the Food Security Cluster are closely monitoring the closure of IDP camps currently taking place to ensure vulnerable people in areas of return or those who are re-displaced are able to access adequate food. Should any urgent, humanitarian food needs arise during the period, WFP is procuring a three-month contingency stock of ready-to-eat food packages (Immediate Response Rations) to cover the emergency food needs of returnee households. On top of MoMD's commitment to distributing food at informal displacement sites, the Minister for MoMD has extended assistance to returnees in Ninewa, with MoMD in Telafar and Mosul distributing food, hygiene kits and clothing to 500 families returning to each of those two locations. MoMD has also committed to providing food assistance to IDPs returning from Kirkuk to Salah Al-Din, along with a return grant.



[Photo Credit: WFP]