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An IHF-funded mobile medical clinic in Diyala (October 2021) [Credit: OCHA]

Closure of Ameriyat Al Fallujah IDP Camp



File Photo of AAF Camp [Credit: OCHA/C. Attefors]

On 10 November 2021, one of the remaining two formal camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in federal Iraq—the Ameriyat Al-Falluja (AAF) camp in Al-Anbar—was closed and reclassified by the Government of Iraq (GoI) into an informal settlement. The Government has repeatedly stated its intention to close all camps and assist IDPs return to their areas of origin or re-settle elsewhere.¹ AAF housed 2,173 IDPs (approximately 470 households), mostly from within Al-Anbar, as well as Babil, Baghdad and Salah Al-Din governorates. Reclassification of the camp as an informal site has meant that services previously provided by the government have been suspended, such as distribution of food and non-food items, and kerosene for winter heating. Humanitarian actors operating in the camp are assessing current needs and reviewing the resources available to continue assistance.

Many of the families remaining in AAF have particular challenges which make returns complicated. Approximately 50 families are originally from Jurf Al-Sakhar in Babil governorate, an area which has been blocked for returns by armed actors since the end of the conflict against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Another 120 families have thus far been unable to obtain the necessary clearances from authorities to return to their areas of origin, for reasons including tribal disputes and perceived affiliations to extremists.

Since the camp's closure, departures have been minimal; protection actors note that they have not observed any coercive or forceful tactics to compel return. On 1 December 2021, cash grants were announced by the Governor of Al-Anbar, the Minister for Migration and Displacement, and the Sunni Endowment² to incentivize camp departures and returns to areas of origin; however, in practice, IDPs who receive cash assistance are not obligated to leave the now-closed camp and thus far are able to remain on site. Nevertheless, some families have elected to leave, provided they are able to take their tents.

In addition to AAF's former residents, an estimated 15,000 out-of-camp IDPs inhabit informal sites near AAF in conditions of significant deprivation; these families are largely unserved by humanitarian actors, as are vulnerable host families living in the region. Many of these families previously lived in other now-closed IDP camps in Al-Anbar and have been unable or unwilling to return to areas of origin, due to destroyed shelters or social cohesion concerns.

¹ The remaining IDP camp in federal Iraq, Jad'ah 5 camp in Ninewa, is also slated for closure, but as of late December 2021, no official closure date or additional details had been confirmed. There are 25 IDP camps in areas administered by the Kurdistan Regional Government who have expressed their intention to keep camps open for the foreseeable future.

² The Sunni Endowment is a governmental body established in 2003 to administer religious sites and land holdings. The religiously-affiliated organization also carries out community outreach and charitable works.

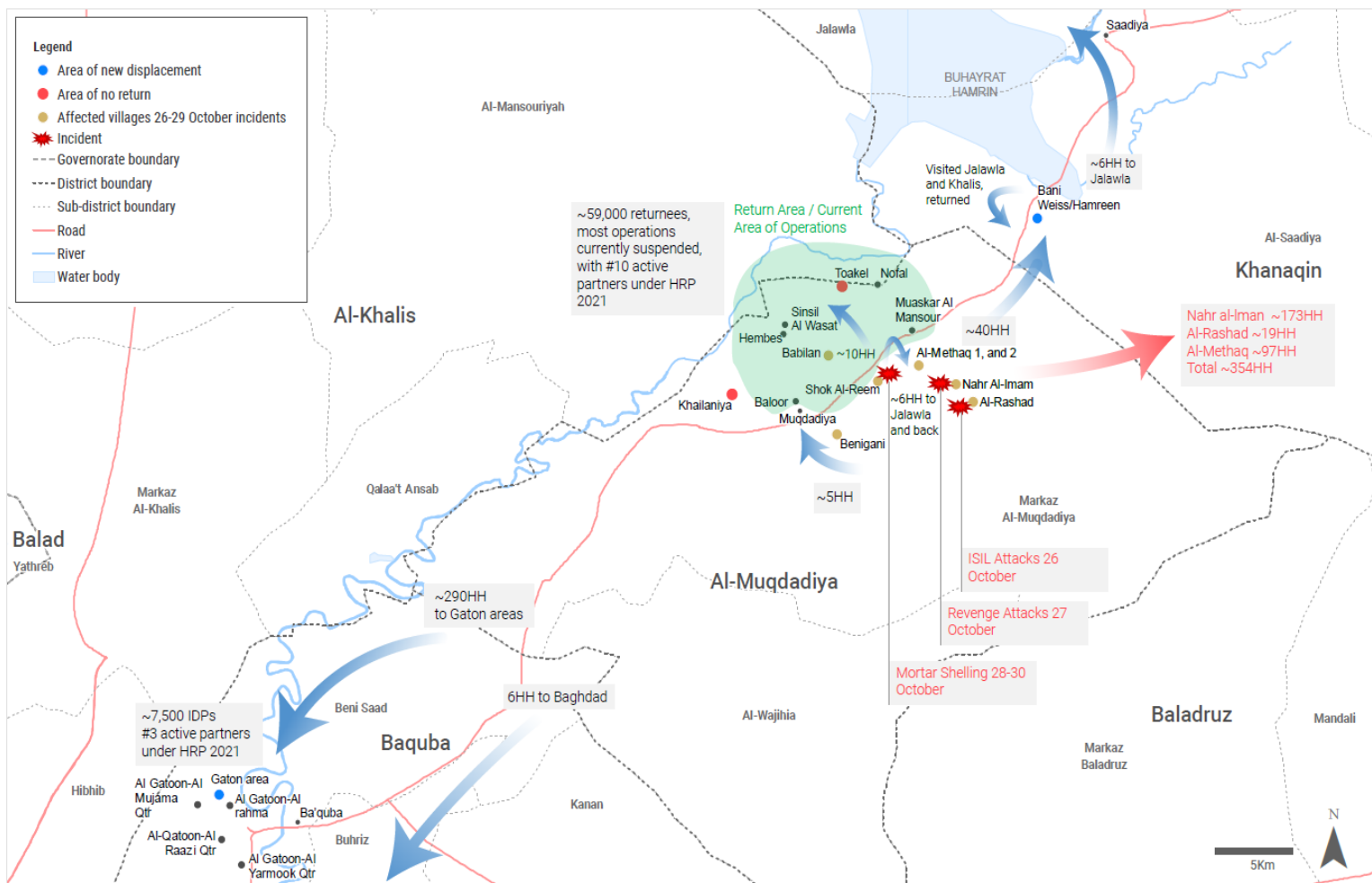
Unrest in Diyala Leads to Internal Displacement

On 26 October 2021, 15 people were killed and 17 were injured in armed clashes following a reported ISIL assault on Rashad village in Muqadiyah district, Diyala. During the following days, retaliatory attacks by unknown assailants on neighboring villages resulted in the death of an additional eight persons and the displacement of an estimated 350 households (approximately 2000 people). The unrest had sectarian undertones. An estimated 290 displaced families went to Al-Gatoon in Baquba district in Diyala; approximately 40 families went Bani Wais Village in Himreen area/ Al-Saadiya, in Khanaqin district, and smaller groups moved elsewhere, including in Karkh district in Baghdad. Throughout November and December 2021, their immediate needs were met by humanitarian actors and via cash grants provided by the GOI and the Sunni Endowment; most families are living with the host community or in temporary rented accommodations.

However, Baquba district hosts thousands of other IDP families who have been historically underserved; there are a limited number of humanitarian organizations active in the area, and it has proven difficult to attract targeted humanitarian funding. Community leaders have expressed concern that assistance offered to new arrivals may cause tension among those who have been in the area for years without support. Prior to the most recent arrivals, Al-Gatoon had become a destination for approximately 23,000 displaced people from previous displacement waves, not all of whom are registered as IDPs or recognized as such, making the provision of assistance challenging. Several thousand families who were previously displaced and still reside in the area date back to periods of sectarian armed conflict in 2006-2007.

Obstacles to return for the previously displaced are related to tribal tensions, perceived affiliations to extremists, disputed internal boundaries between the GOI and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), and security concerns, including a resurgent ISIL presence in areas of origin. Affected people say that their most immediate needs are rent and furniture, medical expenses, educational costs (textbooks, stationary, clothes, transportation), and livelihoods. Humanitarian partners have noted that IDPs may be taking on unsustainable levels of debt to meet their needs, and protection actors have recorded very high levels of gender-based violence and domestic violence in the region.

Approximately 7,000 IDPs in Baquba have been identified as being in acute need in the forthcoming 2022 Iraq Humanitarian Needs Overview. All are assessed as severity level 5 (the most severe).



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

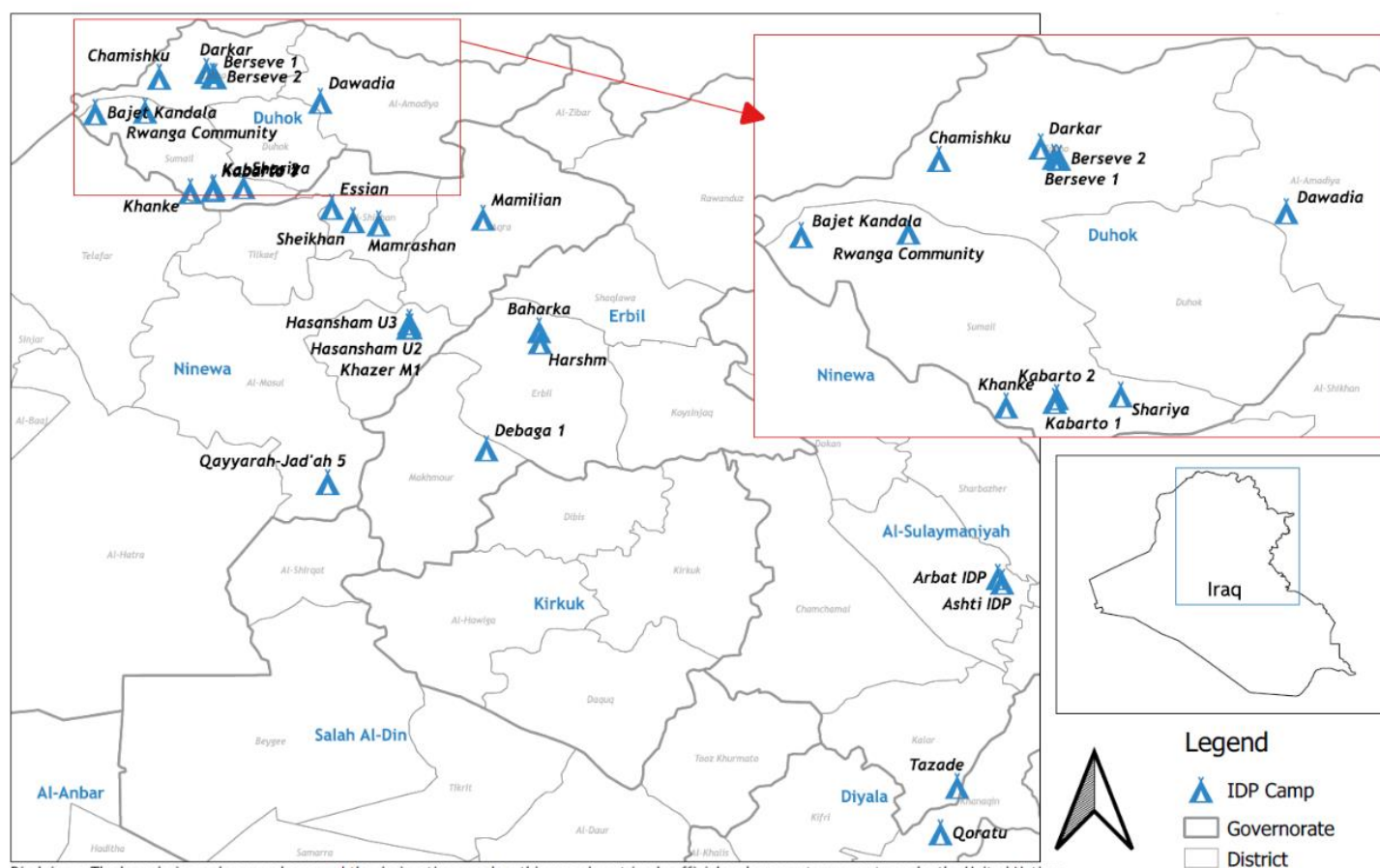
Map Credit: OCHA, November 2021

Gaps in the 2021 Iraq Humanitarian Response

Throughout the second half of 2021, clusters and service-providing agencies in Iraq began reporting critical gaps in services and funding in many IDP camps. As of late November 2021, there were approximately 180,000 individuals living in 26 IDP camps in Iraq (25 in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and one in federal Iraq). Humanitarian organizations have recorded a deterioration of living standards in certain IDP camps, with gaps in service attributed to an evident lack of funding and partners compared to previous years. Shortfalls in food, WASH, and the provision of kerosene are particularly critical. Partners have noted an increase in higher household debt levels and negative coping standards in the camps most affected by the service gaps.

The IDP camp population remained stable throughout 2021, after seeing a significant decrease in late 2020 and early 2021 following the government-led initiative to close most of the remaining IDP camps in federal Iraq, leading to a departure of approximately 47,000 people from camps. Many, but not all, of the former camp inhabitants returned to areas of origin; others ended up in informal settlements near the former sites of camps. The Government has expressed its intention to close the remaining camp in federal Iraq (Jad'ah 5, in Ninewa) as soon as practicable; however, no official closure date has been announced. Approximately 1200 households (6000 individuals) remain in the camp. Barriers to return for these families include security issues and social cohesion concerns in areas of return. Major services continue to be provided in Jad'ah 5 at present, albeit with fewer partners. Funding gaps in health, child protection and food security are predicted within 3-6 months.

Approximately 175,000 people remain in 25 camps administered by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), which has expressed its general support for keeping camps open for the foreseeable future, while indicating that its ability to contribute funding or services to the camps is declining; humanitarian partners have been requested to step up efforts to fill gaps. However, the availability of overall humanitarian funding in Iraq is also falling, and service-providing agencies have little clarity on partner funding into next year. As of 31 December 2021, the Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for 2021 was funded at 62 per cent, compared to approximately 93 per cent funded at the same point the previous year. Income for the Iraq Humanitarian Fund has also dropped to its lowest level since its establishment in 2015; contributions in 2021 amounted to \$25.5 million, as compared to a median annual average of \$58 million in previous years. Continuation of funding is needed to maintain minimum agreed living standards.



Map Credit: CCCM Cluster 7 December 2021

Conditions are particularly stark in the East Mosul Camps (Hasansham U2, Hasansham U3, and Khazer M1) which have a high proportion of female-headed households, and where partners have already observed negative coping mechanisms and serious protection concerns. Gaps in these camps include education, health, electricity provision, food and hygiene kits and WASH.

Significant funding shortages and associated service shortfalls are predicted for 2022 by the Food Security Cluster (in 26 out of 26 camps), the Health Cluster (in 14 out of 26 camps) and the Child Protection Sub-cluster (in 13 out of 26 camps). Financial gaps for the UN and NGOs in IDP camps remain a real and present concern, and will require substantial resource mobilization efforts by humanitarian actors and renewed focus from donors to cover the gaps identified.

Launch of the Global Humanitarian Overview and 2022 Needs in Iraq

On 2 December 2021, the United Nations and partner organizations launched the [2022 Global Humanitarian Overview](#), which estimated that \$41 billion will be required to provide relief and protection to 183 million of the most vulnerable people in 63 countries worldwide, covered by 37 humanitarian response plans.

Overall, the humanitarian context in Iraq has not seen significant changes since the publication of the 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview. Between December 2020 and September 2021, the number of IDPs in Iraq only decreased by about 35,000 people,³ and millions of Iraqis have yet to recover from the years of extreme violence and widespread displacement, which took place during the ISIL crisis from 2014 to 2017.

While the country is gradually recovering from the multiple shocks that it experienced in 2020, including the outbreak of COVID-19, the drop in oil prices, and the devaluation of the Iraqi dinar, significant structural challenges remain to ensure equitable economic growth and address large-scale issues of poverty and unemployment that continue to affect Iraqis in many parts of the country, beyond the ISIL-affected areas.

OCHA and humanitarian partners used strengthened criteria to define and assess humanitarian needs in Iraq for 2022. Analysis indicated that some 2.5 million Iraqis remain highly vulnerable and in need of assistance in the year ahead, a 41 per cent reduction from the 4.1 million people assessed as being in need in 2021. This includes all IDPs who live in camps (180,000), just over half of out-of-camp IDPs (549,000), and one third of all returnees (1.7 million). The reduction in the number of people in need is the result of methodological decisions to focus more tightly on people with the deepest levels of vulnerability, rather than a reflection of any improvement in the overall operational context in Iraq. The financial shocks of 2020 led to a significant contraction of the country's economy, disproportionately impacting IDPs and returnees, many of whom lost their livelihoods and primary sources of income. With the lifting of most COVID-19 preventative measures and the increase in oil prices, Iraq's economy is now growing. However, many people previously assessed as being in need remain so, often for socio-economic or other medium-term support, and should be assisted in 2022 through Government and development action.

IDPs living in camps are experiencing a significant drop in services amid decreasing humanitarian funding, discontinuation of assistance by the Government, and limited partner presence. Among the one million IDPs living outside camps, 55 per cent are assessed as being highly vulnerable and in need of humanitarian assistance in 2022. Their situation is often more precarious than IDPs living in the camps due to greater challenges accessing services or livelihoods in their host communities; risks of eviction; and exposure to protection risks, including higher reliance on negative coping mechanisms. IDPs living in critical shelter, including several hundred informal sites throughout Iraq, and those that lack core civil documentation are also of particular concern and focus. Many of the 1.7 million returnees who remain in humanitarian need do so because of the conditions in the areas of return, where many continue to live in critical shelter, without access to essential services or livelihoods and where the resumption of safe and dignified living is not yet feasible.

OCHA and humanitarian partners are nearing finalization on the 2022 Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan. It is projected that the 2022 response in Iraq will target 991,000 people (180,000 in-camp IDPs, 230,000 out-of-camp IDPs, 580,000 returnees) at a cost of USD\$400 million.



³ IOM-DTM Master List Round 119 (November-December 2020) and Master List Round 123 (August-September 2021).

2021 Reserve Allocation of the Iraq Humanitarian Fund

In late November, the Iraq Humanitarian Fund (IHF) launched a \$12 million Reserve Allocation for 2021. The allocation strategy—issued by the Humanitarian Coordinator in consultation with clusters and the IHF Advisory Board—was designed to help address key response gaps identified in the 2021 Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).

A mid-2021 gap analysis conducted by the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group revealed that substantial response gaps still persisted in certain areas, largely attributed to limited funding, lack of partners, and programme reprioritization due to camp closures. The most acute humanitarian needs continue to be observed in the five governorates—Al-Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din—that were directly affected by the counter-ISIL military operations from 2014 to 2017 and received and hosted significant numbers of IDPs.

The allocation aims to address unmet priorities among out-of-camp IDPs and vulnerable returnees in under-served locations, and will strategically support humanitarian response in areas where significant gaps exist and where the severity of needs is highest. Given the limited funding available, the allocation will prioritize health, multi-purpose cash assistance, protection, and WASH, and those projects which mainstream gender (especially women and girls), address gender-based violence (GBV), and consider the specific needs of persons with disability. The allocation will also support IHF's commitment to localization through promoting submissions from national and international NGOs as first responders.

The IHF was launched in 2015 to support humanitarian partners in responding to the complex and dynamic crisis in Iraq; it facilitates timely resource mobilization for the most critical humanitarian needs as defined by the HRP, while retaining flexibility to allocate funds to unforeseen emergency needs and critical gaps as they emerge. Since 2016, the Fund has mobilized \$317 million in donor contributions and allocated \$325 million towards humanitarian assistance in Iraq, through partners including national and international NGOs, UN agencies and Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement organizations.

Prior to the reserve allocation, in 2021 the IHF distributed \$13.5 million in its first Standard Allocation, targeting 342,000 people through 11 projects implemented by 31 partners (including consortia). All information relating to IHF allocations can be tracked on OCHA's [County-Based Pooled Fund Data Hub](#).

