

HIGHLIGHTS

- Increasing numbers of people are returning to their areas of origin, according to IOM.
- Humanitarian activities resume and people begin moving back to Hawiga, following the end of security operations in the district.
- Progress on fast track visas, however registration process for NGOs still cumbersome.
- The 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan will be launched in February and aims to target the 3.4 million people in Iraq who are most vulnerable, costing approximately US\$ 569 million.
- IHF supports critical winterization assistance, Jad'ah camp management and NGO coordination.



Credit: OCHA/Sylvia Rognvik

In this issue

- Returns to conflict-affected areas increase P.1
- Humanitarian operations in Hawiga resume P.2
- Progress on fast-track visas, registration P.2
- 2018 Iraq HRP to be launched in February P.3
- IHF funding allocations P.4

As returns increase, there is a need to ensure these returns are voluntary, safe and dignified

Increasing numbers of people are returning to their areas of origin. Humanitarian partners continue to advocate for a voluntary, safe and dignified returns process.

In mid-January, for the first time since the beginning of the Iraq displacement crisis, which began in December 2013, IOM recorded more returnees (3.2 million individuals) than people displaced (2.6 million individuals) in Iraq. Returns have primarily occurred in the governorates of Anbar, Ninewa and Salah al-Din. These three governorates account for 82 per cent of the total returns, as well as 86 per cent of the current IDP population.

To ensure a safe and dignified return process, the Government issued a statement on 11 January strongly emphasizing the voluntariness of the returns process. While increasing return movements generally coincide with improving security and basic service delivery in places of origin, incidents of displaced families being compelled to prematurely return to unsafe locations, where explosive hazards may be present or basic services are lacking, have been reported.

FIGURES

# of people in need	8.7m
# of people targeted for assistance	3.4m
# of internally displaced persons (IDPs)	2.6m
# of IDPs who live outside camps	2.5m
# of affected ppl within host communities	3.2m
# of returnees	3.2m
# of Syrian refugees	0.24m

Source: 2018 Iraq HRP/IOM DTM

Humanitarian Response Plan 2017

FUNDING

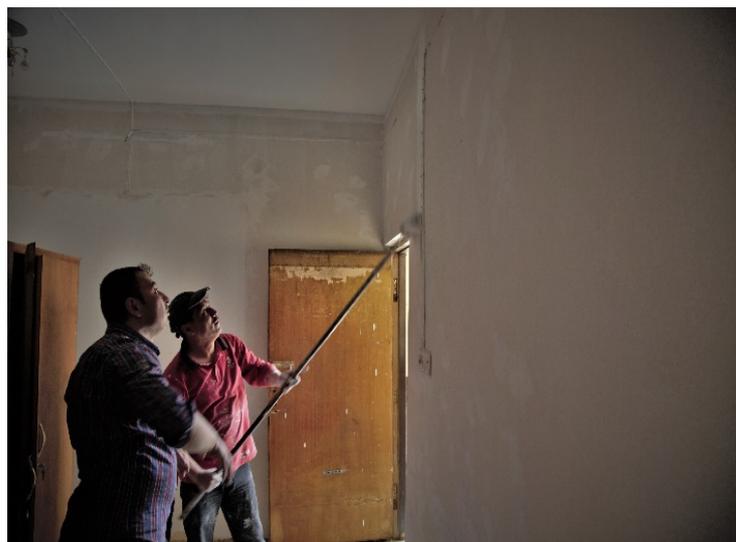
985 million

requested for 2017 (US\$)

91% (\$892 million)

(reflects funding on FTS as of 28 January 2018)

Source: <http://fts.unocha.org>



Concurrent with its commitment to voluntary and principled returns, the Government also maintains its plan to see all displaced people return to their areas of origin by May, prior to scheduled parliamentary elections. Concerns remain, however, that some displaced people may be unwilling or unable to sustainably leave areas of displacement. In early January, the Federal Ministry of Education (MoE) announced that all Arabic-language schools for displaced students in the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KR-I) have been instructed to

permanently close following the end of the new school year. This may potentially affect 160,000 students and 8,000 teachers attending 416 schools in the KR-I, creating an indirect push factor for displaced families to relocate. The UN and NGOs are currently advocating with the MoE to review this decision. To oversee the camp consolidation, camp decommissioning, and to ensure the returns process in each concerned governorate is voluntary, Voluntary Returns Committees will be established by the Government in February. UN agencies and NGOs will have representatives sitting on each of these committees.

Humanitarian operations resume in Hawiga

Humanitarian activities resume and people begin moving back to Hawiga, following the end of security operations in the district.

From 4-14 January, key checkpoints were closed and return movements and all humanitarian activities were suspended in the Hawiga district of Kirkuk governorate, as Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) conducted military operations against residual elements of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The security sweep reportedly covered 100 villages and resulted in the evacuation of more than 1,000 people to Daquq camp, while some displaced families fled to the Al-Zab area and toward Salah al-Din governorate.

Hundreds of displaced families returned to Hawiga shortly after the completion of the security interventions. The process continues to be facilitated by the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD). Security risks continue to stifle the returns process in Hawiga, however, as explosive hazards remain a significant obstacle throughout the district.

Following this security operation, humanitarian actors have restored the delivery of assistance and services in Hawiga, particularly the provision of primary healthcare, water trucking, and education. Preparations for the decontamination of explosive hazards in the district are ongoing, including coordinated mine risk education and awareness raising sessions.

Progress on fast track visa, registration process for NGOs still cumbersome

Progress made on registration and visa processes for NGOs, but further streamlining of registration process required

Following the military realignment in areas disputed by the Government of Iraq (GoI) and the Kurdish Regional Government in October 2017, adherence to the GoI's visa regime became essential for all humanitarian staff, irrespective of where they operate in Iraq. In addition, registration of humanitarian non-governmental organizations in Baghdad also became more strictly enforced. Following advocacy from the UN and the NGO community, the Government facilitated a fast-track visa procedure for humanitarian staff currently in the country without valid entry visas. Since this process was established, more than 1,000 fast track visas have been approved for international humanitarian staff, allowing humanitarian operations to continue with as little interruption as possible.

Displaced people are starting to return once again to Hawiga following a two-week security operation against residual ISIL elements. Humanitarian assistance in Hawiga also resumes.



The registration process for NGOs, remains a slow and cumbersome process, and negotiations are ongoing to further streamline this process. Since October, six more NGOs have been able to finalise their registration, while a further 18 applications are in process. At the same time, obstacles are being identified and raised with the authorities to find interim solutions. In late January, the Government announced it would issue a temporary

letter authorizing concerned INGOs to continue their operations, while the registration process is ongoing. Efforts continue to enable the provision of humanitarian assistance to those people in need with as few bureaucratic impediments as possible.

2018 Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan to be launched in mid-February

The 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan will be launched in February, targeting the 3.4 million people in Iraq who are most vulnerable, and costing approximately US\$ 569 million

Humanitarian partners in Iraq plan to launch the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) in February. Partners estimate that 8.7 million people will require some form of humanitarian assistance in 2018. The estimated cost of assisting the 3.4 million most vulnerable people who are targeted in the 2018 HRP is approximately US\$ 569 million.

Humanitarian operations in Iraq will contract significantly in 2018. The 2018 HRP aims to ensure that this contraction is not haphazard and does not increase vulnerabilities. Humanitarian operations will be managed in conjunction with government and regional authorities.

Given the centrality of the returns process in 2018, the humanitarian community will continue to advocate against forced, premature, or obstructed returns. Returns should be safe, dignified, and voluntary. The 2018 HRP will support highly vulnerable families living in camps and sub-standard accommodation by providing services and assistance packages. The humanitarian community will also give high priority to ensuring that vulnerable people can access the Government's social protection floor

The 2017 Iraq HRP, the eighth largest humanitarian appeal in 2017, received generous donor contributions of US\$892 million, which covered 91 per cent of the total funding requirements. The highly prioritized HRP targeted 6.2 million people affected by the crisis in Iraq with critical life-saving and protection assistance.

The 2018 Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan expected to launch in February. The plan will address the humanitarian needs of Iraq's 3.4 million most vulnerable people. The plan is expected to cost US\$ 569 million.

IHF supports critical winterization assistance, Jad'ah camp management and NGO coordination



The Iraq Humanitarian Fund is allocating \$4.5 million under a Reserve Allocation to cover winterization gaps, upgrade basic services in Jad'ah camp, and establish an NGO liaison office to address NGO visa and registration issues

The [Iraq Humanitarian Fund \(IHF\)](#) is allocating \$4.5 million under a Reserve Allocation to support three urgent humanitarian operations in Iraq. The allocation includes: a) US\$1 million to address critical gaps in winterization assistance; b) \$3 million for urgent camp management and upgrading services in Jad'ah camp, which was designated by the Government as a preferred camp consolidation location to receive returning refugees from Syria and internally displaced people; and c) \$280,000 to establish a Bureaucratic Liaison Unit in the [NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq \(NCCI\)](#) to address key impediments for NGO operations related to registration and visas. These funds will together support five partners implement six projects, targeting over 113,000 of the most vulnerable people in Iraq.

Having allocated US\$71.7 million through Standard and Reserve Allocations, the IHF was the third largest country-based pooled funds in 2017. With the remaining programmable balance of US\$36 million, the Fund is now preparing to launch the first 2018 Standard Allocation to jumpstart the prioritized activities of the 2018 HRP. The Standard Allocation will focus on: 1) support to highly vulnerable returnees; 2) support for principled returns and protection; and 3) service provision in camps to support the remaining displaced families. In preparation for the allocation, OCHA is currently undertaking capacity assessments of potential new partner organizations and will be holding partner training sessions in Sulaymaniyah, Dahuk, Erbil and Baghdad in February.

For further information, please contact:

Susan Le Roux, Head of Office a.i.: leroux@un.org

Damian Rance, Chief, Communications and Reporting: rance@un.org

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