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HIGHLIGHTS

- Military operations displace 7,000 from Hawiga in the first week.
- Displacement from western Anbar rose sharply in late September, as military operations began.
- IDP intentions survey reveals safety is the critical factor in the decision to return, followed by access to services and employment.
- Donors pledge generously in the margins of the UN General Assembly.

FIGURES

# of people in need	11m
# of people targeted for assistance	6.2m
# of internally displaced persons (IDPs)	3.2m
# of IDPs who live outside camps	2.5m
# of affected ppl within host communities	3.2m
# of returnees	2.2m
# of Syrian refugees	0.23m

Source: 2017 Iraq HRP/HNO/IOM DTM

Humanitarian Response Plan

FUNDING

985 million

requested for 2017 (US\$)

57% (\$561 million)

(reflects funding on FTS as of 1 October 2017)

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



Credit: OCHA/Themba Linden

Military operations displace 7,000 from Hawiga

The first phase of military operations to retake Hawiga and east Shirqat from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) began on 19 September, followed by the start of the second phase 10 days later. The operations displaced over 7,000 people in the first week. Initially, front lines have moved through sparsely-populated outlying villages, and humanitarian partners are preparing for displacement patterns similar to Mosul and Telafar, in which displacement sharply increases when the fighting reaches the outskirts of Hawiga town. The exact number of people remaining in Hawiga is unknown, but could be as high as 78,000.



IDPs wait in a shaded area for buses to transport them to camps.
Credit OCHA/Kate Pond

Displaced people travel a hazardous route to safety

The majority of people leaving the conflict zone flee west towards Salah-al Din, with smaller numbers moving north to Kirkuk. The westwards route has seen the largest IDP traffic over a period of several months prior to the start of military operations, and is understood to be the safest route out of the area. Nonetheless, most people without access to a vehicle walk for up to 12 hours and those coming from deeper inside Hawiga district have to swim or wade across the Little Zab river on their journey to safety.

The widespread presence of ISIL operatives and explosive devices meant the Kirkuk route was discontinued for almost a year before the conflict began in mid-September as it was too dangerous to use. In addition, smugglers were not using this route. The difficulties of the journey are not over when people reach Kirkuk governorate. The majority of people fleeing along this route pass through Dibis checkpoint where almost 1,300 people are currently stuck, awaiting transportation to camps. The checkpoint was intended to hold 300 people and facilities are overstretched: people are sleeping in the open and food supplies are insufficient to meet demand. The Shelter and Food Security Clusters are mobilizing partners to respond urgently while transportation begins.

The majority of people arriving at mustering points and screening sites behind the front lines paid smugglers to transport their families to safety at a cost of US\$100-\$250: a prohibitively expensive price for the poorest and most vulnerable, rendering the journey even more treacherous. People leaving Hawiga district have no official documentation as it was confiscated or destroyed by ISIL. This poses additional problems for vulnerable families as it compromises their access to services, including enrolling their children in schools.

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Return movements to villages in east Shirqat began almost immediately after the villages were retaken from ISIL: IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) records almost 600 families returning to their homes by the end of September. With 48 hours of people returning, food and water distributions were provided in the villages by humanitarian partners and local community leaders. A rapid assessment of the situation indicates that the most pressing humanitarian needs in the villages are clean drinking water and sanitation facilities.

Measures in place to ensure the humanitarian response continues

More than two thirds of people displaced by the current conflict are currently in camps in neighbouring Salah al-Din, Ninewa and Kirkuk governorates. A smaller number of people moved into host communities when sponsorship by family and friends was an option. By the end of September, over 7,000 vulnerable people from Hawiga and east Shirqat were reached with emergency food, water and hygiene items, including displaced families and those who had remained in their homes in the villages of east Shirqat.

Displacement spikes as hostilities begin in Ana

Displacement from western Anbar increased sharply in the second half of September, rising four-fold in the space of a week. This spike shortly preceded the onset of military operations in ISIL-held Ana district on 19 September. The district was retaken by the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) inside a week, displacing an estimated 6,000 people who were screened inside the district. Humanitarian



Displaced children in an informal settlement in Fallujah district, eastern Anbar. Credit: OCHA/Kate Pond

partners do not currently have access to Ana district while operations to clear the district of the last few pockets of ISIL fighters are ongoing. A preliminary distribution of 1,500 food parcels was undertaken by the Iraqi authorities on 27 September, and private citizens in Haditha sent dry food and vegetables.

Subsistence conditions in ISIL-held areas

People fleeing report that conditions inside ISIL-held areas are becoming critical. Food is increasingly scarce, and drinking water comes directly from the Euphrates River and is untreated before use, causing illnesses. Healthcare is largely unavailable and only smuggled medicines are available at an exorbitant cost, reportedly leading to deaths among people with chronic diseases. Schools are not functioning and women must adhere to a strict dress code. Livelihood opportunities are minimal, and people are relying on savings and subsistence agriculture to survive.

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After making the decision to flee, civilians face new difficulties. Not dissimilar to the situation faced by people fleeing Hawiga, the journey to safety through western Anbar is also perilous, and smugglers extort a high price for their services. Ka'im is the largest population centre in western Anbar, and people fleeing the city travel for up to 500 kilometres before they receive comprehensive humanitarian assistance. Most of this journey is through ISIL-held territory, and families pay an estimated US\$300-\$450 to smugglers to get them to safety. Despite the high cost and immediate danger, thousands of families have made and continue to make the journey.

Over 50,000 people fled western Anbar since the start of the year

An estimated 52,200 people fled western Anbar since the start of the year, according to the DTM, 85 per cent of whom remain within Anbar governorate. It is estimated that two-thirds are in formal camps in Ramadi and Fallujah districts in the east, where the Iraqi authorities are encouraging people in protracted displacement to return to their homes to make space for the new arrivals. The remainder of the displaced are largely in private settings with family and friends. Almost all of the people displaced from western Anbar since the start of the year passed through Kilo 18 transit site where emergency food, water, shaded areas, sanitation facilities and health care are provided. Kilo 18 has only a small capacity and limited services, so people are moved to camps in the east as quickly as possible. The current population under ISIL control in western Anbar is believed to be around 85,000, the majority of whom could flee in a worst-case scenario.

Safety is the decisive factor in IDP returns

Almost 1 million people were displaced during military operations to remove ISIL's hold on Mosul, and more than 3 million Iraqis remain displaced in communities and in camps across Iraq.

IDP intentions survey reveals motivation, wishes

Enabling people who wish to return home to their own communities is a priority for the authorities and humanitarian actors. In order to better

understand what motivates and prevents internally displaced people from returning home, Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster partners conducted a survey between 14 August and 8 September to understand the motivation and wishes of displaced people. This information is important because listening to and acting upon the wishes of people allows the humanitarian community tailor the response to their specific needs. Giving people control over their own lives also assists in their recovery from the psychological trauma they endured.

More than 4,900 households at 14 emergency camps and sites sheltering the displaced from Mosul were interviewed for the survey.

Access to services and employment key to decision-making process

People were asked questions about whether they planned to return home and asked to explain the factors guiding their decision-making process. Families were also asked what would make it possible for them to return home. Not surprisingly, the provision of basic services such as water, electricity, sanitation and waste removal were referenced, as well



Return is currently unfeasible in areas that are heavily damaged.
Credit: OCHA/Themba Linden

as safety, the ability to generate income, access to food and healthcare. Assistance with home repairs as well as access to education, psychosocial services and legal assistance for home and property issues were also listed.

The primary factor guiding intentions to return is safety. A third of those interviewed intend to return because they believe they can do so safely. It is also the reason why many people do not wish to return home.

Overwhelmingly, the primary factor guiding respondents' intention to return home hinged upon whether they could do so safely. A third of those interviewed reported they intend to return home because they believed they could do so and live in relative safety and feeling unsafe or frightened was also the reason why many people do not wish to return home. More than half those interviewed do not plan to return to their home of origin. Considering the condition of many families' homes, this is not surprising. Only 3 per cent of those surveyed reported their home was available to them, while 53 per cent reported their home was either partially damaged, heavily damaged, or completely destroyed. Almost a third of respondents are unaware of whether their homes are physically damaged or useable. In such cases, humanitarians will continue to support people in their sites of displacement until a durable solution can be found. It is of the utmost importance that all movements of return are voluntary, safe and sustainable.

Generous pledges to Iraq in the margins of UNGA

The ministerial-level event on Iraq held in the margins of the UN General Assembly in September resulted in \$292 million in pledges to humanitarian and stabilization efforts in Iraq. The event, entitled 'Saving lives, protecting lives and re-building lives: developing a common agenda with and for the Iraqi people' was co-chaired by representatives from Iraq, the EU, US, Germany and OCHA. Two panels – one on protection and principled humanitarian assistance, and the other on stabilization and recovery – were followed by discussion from the floor. During the event, generous pledges were made to fund the humanitarian response by the US, EU, Canada and South Korea. In addition, support to stabilization was pledged by Australia and the UAE.

The extra funds are sorely needed in Iraq as the humanitarian response struggles to keep pace with needs in the face of fresh displacement and underfunding. At the end of September, the Humanitarian Response Plan is still only 57 per cent funded, and life-saving projects are closing. The humanitarian community welcomes the rapid disbursement of these generous new pledges.

For further information, please contact:

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

Kate Pond, Public information/Reports Officer, pond@un.org, Tel. (+964) 0782 780 608

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