



October 2014

UNHCR POSITION ON RETURNS TO IRAQ

Introduction

1. Since the publication of UNHCR's 2012 Iraq Eligibility Guidelines,¹ and the 2012 Aide Mémoire relating to Palestinian refugees in Iraq,² Iraq has experienced a new surge in violence between Iraqi security forces (ISF) and Kurdish forces (*Peshmerga*) on the one hand and the group "Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham" (hereafter ISIS), which operates both in Iraq and Syria, and affiliated armed groups on the other hand.³ Civilians are killed and wounded every day as a result of this surge of violence, including suicide attacks and car bombs, shelling, airstrikes, and executions. As a result of advances by ISIS, the Government of Iraq is reported to have lost full or partial control over considerable parts of the country's territory, particularly in Al-Anbar, Ninewa, Salah Al-Din, Kirkuk and Diyala governorates. Although the ISF and Kurdish forces, supported by US airstrikes, have recently regained control over some localities, mostly along the internal boundaries with the Kurdistan Region,⁴ overall frontlines remain fluid. The conflict, which re-escalated in Al-Anbar governorate in January 2014 and since then spread to other governorates, has been labelled as a non-international armed conflict.⁵ Casualties so far in 2014 represent the highest total since the height of sectarian conflict in 2006-2007.⁶

Violations of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law

2. Widespread human rights abuses and violations of humanitarian law greatly impact on the lives of civilians beyond displacement and casualty figures. It has been documented that parties to the conflict are committing violations of international humanitarian law and gross violations of international human rights law. Systematic and widespread attacks by ISIS and associated armed groups against civilians may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The ISF and associated forces have reportedly carried out military operations in violation both of the principles of distinction and proportionality, and of the obligation to take

¹ UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Iraq*, 31 May 2012, HCR/EG/IRQ/12/03, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4fc77d522.html>. The "Risk Profiles" contained in this document remain valid, but should of course be applied in the context of up-to-date country of origin information.

² UNHCR, *Update of UNHCR Aide-Memoire of 2006. Protection Considerations for Palestinian refugees in Iraq*, July 2012, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/500ebee2.html>.

³ The self-proclaimed "Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham" (ISIS) (Arabic: *Ad-Dawlah Al-Islāmiyyah fi Al Iraq wa Al-Sham*), is also (formerly) known as the "Islamic State of Iraq" (ISI) or the "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant" (ISIL) and also referred to as 'Islamic State (IS)'. While ISIS is the most prominent anti-government force in the current conflict, a number of other armed groups, including the Naqshbandi Army (JRTN), the 1920s Revolutionary Brigades, Ansar Al-Islam, Islamic Army of Iraq, and some Sunni tribes, are also actively involved; UN OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview*, 26 September 2014, p. 6, <http://bit.ly/1xoOfCD>; BBC, *Iraq crisis: Key players in Sunni rebellion*, 1 July 2014, <http://bbc.in/1EoGfq0>.

⁴ The Kurdistan Region of Iraq consists of the governorates of Dahuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Moreover, the KRG exercises *de facto* control in several areas disputed between the Government of Iraq and the KRG; See, for example, AFP, *Jihadist drive allows Iraq Kurds to take disputed areas*, 12 June 2014, <http://shar.es/1mefrU>. See also footnote 29.

⁵ See, for example ICRC, *Syria and Iraq: ICRC calls for better compliance with humanitarian law*, 26 September, <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/syria-and-iraq-icrc-calls-better-compliance-humanitarian-law>; United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) / Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Non International Armed Conflict in Iraq: 5 June – 5 July 2014*, 18 July 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53ce0f0d4.htm>.

⁶ See Iraq Body Count, accessed 22 October 2014, <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/>.

precautions to protect civilians from the effects of violence, which may amount to war crimes. Furthermore, armed forces associated with the ISF have reportedly carried out kidnappings and targeted killings.⁷

3. ISIS and associated armed groups have reportedly committed gross human rights abuses “with an apparent systematic and widespread character,” including “attacks directly targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, executions and other targeted killings of civilians, abductions, rape and other forms of sexual and physical violence perpetrated against women and children, forced recruitment of children, destruction or desecration of places of religious or cultural significance, wanton destruction and looting of property, and denial of fundamental freedoms.”⁸ The situation has been described as particularly dire for members of religious and ethnic minority groups, including Christians, Yezidis, Turkmen, Shabak, Kaka’i, Sabaeans-Mandaeans and Shi’ites, as ISIS and associated armed groups “intentionally and systematically targeted these communities for gross human rights abuses, at times aimed at destroying, suppressing or cleansing them from areas under their control.”⁹
4. Military operations by ISIS against Iraqi and Kurdish Security Forces have frequently been carried out, reportedly in complete disregard of their impact on civilians. Furthermore, according to reports, the group has repeatedly and deliberately launched attacks, including with suicide and car bombs, against civilians or civilian infrastructure with the aim to kill or injure as many civilians as possible.¹⁰ ISIS has also been held responsible for targeted assassinations and abductions of community, political and religious leaders, government employees, policemen, and professionals.¹¹ ISIS and associated armed groups have also been implicated in executing *hors de combat* soldiers, police and government personnel.¹²
5. The imposition by ISIS of its particular interpretation of *Shari’a* law in areas under its control raises serious concerns for the rights of women, members of religious minority groups and persons considered as not conforming to their strict interpretation of Islam.¹³ It has further been reported that individuals who oppose or are considered to be opposing ISIS and/or are considered to be collaborating with the Iraqi or Kurdish security forces have been targeted for killing, abduction and wanton destruction of property.¹⁴

⁷ See successive reports on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq by UNAMI and OHCHR, HRW, and others.

⁸ UNAMI/OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 6 July – 10 September 2014*, 2 October 2014, p. i, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/542d3eb64.html>.

⁹ Ibid. According to Deputy UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Flavia Pansieri, “[T]hese inhumane and odious offences constitute a serious and deliberate attack on human dignity and on human rights, likely amounting to a crime against humanity”; OHCHR, *Human Rights Council convenes a Special Session on abuses committed in Iraq by ISIL*, 2 September 2014, <http://shar.es/1lhzuk>. According to then UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, “[ISIL] is systematically targeting men, women and children based on their ethnic, religious or sectarian affiliation and is ruthlessly carrying out widespread ethnic and religious cleansing in the areas under its control”; UN News Service, *Iraqi civilians suffering ‘horrific’ persecution, ethnic cleansing – UN rights chief*, 25 August 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53fc7eb94.html>. See also AI, *Ethnic cleansing on a historic scale: The Islamic State’s systematic targeting of minorities in northern Iraq*, 2 September 2014, MDE 14/011/2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/540889bc4.html>. See also OHCHR, *Human Rights Council convenes a Special Session on abuses committed in Iraq by ISIL*, 2 September 2014, <http://shar.es/1lhzuk>; Amnesty International (AI), *Ethnic cleansing on a historic scale: The Islamic State’s systematic targeting of minorities in northern Iraq*, 2 September 2014, MDE 14/011/2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/540889bc4.html>; UNAMI / OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Non International Armed Conflict in Iraq: 5 June – 5 July 2014*, 18 July 2014, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_POC_Report_FINAL_18July2014A.pdf; AI, *Northern Iraq: Civilians in the line of fire*, 14 July 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53c4e1c84.html>; Human Rights Watch (HRW), *Iraq: ISIS Abducting, Killing, Expelling Minorities*, 19 July 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53cf79964.html>; HRW, *Iraq: ISIS Execution Site Located*, 27 June 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53ce1d8b4.html>.

¹⁰ “In the conduct of their operations, ISIL and associated armed groups have shown no consideration to protect civilians or civilian infrastructure, and at times, have carried out such operations deliberately to directly target civilians and civilian objects”; UNAMI/OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 6 July – 10 September 2014*, 2 October 2014, p. 8, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/542d3eb64.html>.

¹¹ “ISIL and associated armed groups also continued to systematically perpetrate targeted assassinations and abductions, including community, political, and religious leaders, government employees, education professionals, journalists, and health workers”; UNAMI/OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 6 July – 10 September 2014*, 2 October 2014, p. i, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/542d3eb64.html>. See, for example, BBC, *Islamic State militants kill two Iraq journalists*, 14 October 2014, <http://bbc.in/1Db75QS>; AFP, *IS militants execute four women in northern Iraq*, 11 October 2014, <http://bit.ly/1r7KGeX>; UN News Centre, *UN rights chief condemns ‘brutal’ killings by ISIL of women politicians in Iraq*, 25 September 2014, <http://bit.ly/1CjGVsN>; Washington Post, *Female human rights lawyer in Mosul shot by firing squad*, 25 September 2014, <http://wapo.st/1wMVnsk>.

¹² In one particular serious incident documented by UNAMI/OHCHR, 1,500 soldiers and security force personnel from former Camp Speicher military base (Salah Al-Din) were reportedly captured and executed around 12 June 2014. ISIS claimed responsibility for the killings; UNAMI/OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 6 July – 10 September 2014*, 2 October 2014, pp. 5, 6, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/542d3eb64.html>. See also UN Iraq, *UN Envoy Calls for Investigation into Camp Speicher Massacre*, 3 September 2014, <http://bit.ly/1uB4pJz>; HRW, *Iraq: Islamic State Executions in Tikrit*, 2 September 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/540991ea4.html>.

¹³ UNAMI/OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 6 July – 10 September 2014*, 2 October 2014, pp. 6, 10, 11-17, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/542d3eb64.html>; UNAMI / OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Non International Armed Conflict in Iraq: 5 June – 5 July 2014*, 18 July 2014, pp. 13-14, 18, 20-21, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53ce0fd4.htm>.

¹⁴ UNAMI/OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 6 July – 10 September 2014*, 2 October 2014, pp. 5-9, 11, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/542d3eb64.html>; OHCHR, *Press briefing notes on Iraq and Bahrain*, 5 September 2014, <http://shar.es/11ALh>. See

6. Reports also describe severe sexual violence to which women and teenage girls and boys have been exposed by ISIS. The UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Nikolay Mladenov, condemned in the strongest terms the “*barbaric acts*” of sexual violence and “*savage rapes*” perpetrated by ISIS against members of minority groups in areas under its control.¹⁵ There are also reports of human trafficking within and outside Iraq and of abduction of women, particularly those belonging to minority groups, by ISIS and associated groups.¹⁶
7. On 1 September 2014, the UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution calling on the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to dispatch a team of investigators to Iraq to inquire into alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law by ISIS and associated armed groups.¹⁷
8. UNAMI, OHCHR and human rights organizations have also documented war crimes and human rights violations committed by the ISF and associated forces. These include extra-judicial executions of Sunni prisoners in retaliation for military advances by ISIS,¹⁸ as well as kidnappings and summary executions by security forces and associated groups of Sunni civilians.¹⁹ Furthermore, the ISF are held responsible for the killing of civilians by indiscriminate artillery shelling and aerial bombardments, including with barrel bombs, on civilian areas.²⁰
9. Reports indicate a resurgence of sectarian reprisal with bodies of Sunni men found blindfolded, handcuffed and apparently executed, in different parts of the country, primarily in Baghdad.²¹ UNAMI reported that Sunnis in Basra governorate had been exposed to threats, abductions and killings.²²

also Reuters, *Islamic State executes eight Sunnis in northern Iraq*, 14 September 2014, <http://reut.rs/1tRcR4H>; NBC News, *Christians Flee ISIS Rule in Northern Iraq Amid Persecution*, 10 September 2014, <http://nbcnews.to/1tKV2rz>.

¹⁵ UN News Service, *'Barbaric' sexual violence perpetrated by Islamic State militants in Iraq – UN*, 13 August 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53f1bba24.html>.

¹⁶ HRW, *Iraq: Forced Marriage, Conversion for Yazidis*, 12 October 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/10/11/iraq-forced-marriage-conversion-yezidis>; UNAMI/OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 6 July – 10 September 2014*, 2 October 2014, pp. 15-16, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/542d3eb64.html>; AFP, *Dozens of Yazidi women 'sold into marriage' by jihadists*, 30 August 2014, <http://shar.es/11jhtj>; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 8, 16 August – 22 August 2014*, 22 August 2014, pp. 2, 4, <http://shar.es/11zKe4>.

¹⁷ UN Human Rights Council, *Human Rights Council requests the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to urgently dispatch a mission to Iraq*, 1 September 2014, <http://shar.es/11jGWx>.

¹⁸ AI, *Iraq: Absolute impunity: Militia rule in Iraq*, MDE 14/015/2014, 14 October 2014, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE14/015/2014/en>; OHCHR, *Human Rights Council convenes a Special Session on abuses committed in Iraq by ISIL*, 2 September 2014, <http://shar.es/11h9uU>; HRW, *Iraq: Campaign of Mass Murders of Sunni Prisoners*, 11 July 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53c4e8124.html>; AI, *Iraq: Testimonies point to dozens of revenge killings of Sunni detainees*, 27 June 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53b2662c4.html>.

¹⁹ AI, *Iraq: Absolute impunity: Militia rule in Iraq*, MDE 14/015/2014, 14 October 2014, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE14/015/2014/en>; UNAMI/OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 6 July – 10 September 2014*, 2 October 2014, pp. 19-20, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/542d3eb64.html>; HRW, *Iraq: Pro-Government Militias' Trail of Death*, 31 July 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53df9ad54.html>.

²⁰ UNAMI/OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 6 July – 10 September 2014*, 2 October 2014, pp. 18-19, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/542d3eb64.html>; HRW, *Iraq: Survivors Describe Government Airstrike*, 14 September 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5416d1de4.html>; OHCHR, *Human Rights Council convenes a Special Session on abuses committed in Iraq by ISIL*, 2 September 2014, <http://shar.es/11h9uU>; HRW, *Iraq: Civilian Toll of Government Airstrikes*, 23 July 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53d211344.html>; AI, *Northern Iraq: Civilians in the line of fire*, 14 July 2014, MDE 14/007/2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53c4e1c84.html>; UNAMI / OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Non International Armed Conflict in Iraq: 5 June – 5 July 2014*, 18 July 2014, pp. 14-15, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53ce0f0d4.htm>; HRW, *Iraq: Government Attacking Fallujah Hospital*, 27 May 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/538d99144.html>.

²¹ “There were a large number of assassinations and killings recorded from various parts of the country. Baghdad Governorate was particularly affected, where a large number of bodies, often unidentified, had been recovered on a daily basis. Many of the victims were found shot with their hands tied behind their back executed while a high proportion exhibited signs of having been tortured prior to death. A majority of these attacks appear to be of a sectarian nature”; UNAMI/OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 6 July – 10 September 2014*, 2 October 2014, pp. 21-22, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/542d3eb64.html>. See also NPR, *Fears Of Sectarian Violence Grow In Baghdad*, 6 September 2014, <http://n.pr/1nAQAVm>; HRW, *Iraq: Pro-Government Militias' Trail of Death*, 31 July 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53df9ad54.html>; Reuters, *Iraqi security forces find 53 blindfolded bodies south of Baghdad*, 9 July 2014, <http://yhoo.it/1pldqQ5>; UPI, *In Iraq, execution-style killings revive civil war horrors*, 12 February 2014, <http://upi.com/2667631>; Reuters, *Execution-style sectarian killings on upswing in Iraq*, 27 November 2013, <http://reut.rs/18nVRCv>.

²² According to Chief of the Human Rights Section in UNAMI, Francesco Motta, “[S]ince 23 June 2014, at least 19 Sunni civilian men have been killed and a further 19 injured in a spate of targeted killings and abductions. Many of the incidents were not reported in the media but each has been verified by UNAMI through multiple sources. In each incident the local community has expressed the view that the victims were targeted for no other reason than their faith. Authorities have listed perpetrators as “unidentified gunmen” and there have been no arrests in relation to any of the incidents;” UN in Iraq, *SRSG Mladenov warns against increased targeting of Sunni minorities in Basra Governorate*, 20 August 2014, <http://bit.ly/1q0P7gt>. See also UNAMI/OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 6 July – 10 September 2014*, 2 October 2014, p. 24, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/542d3eb64.html>; Institute for the Study of War, *Rise in Targeting of Iraqi Sunni Tribal Leaders in Southern Iraq*, Iraq Update #40, 27 November 2013, <http://bit.ly/1q0Pacm>; Al-Monitor, *Southern Iraq Swept By Sectarian Displacement*, 23 September 2013, <http://almon.co/fze>; Associated Press, *Iraqi Sunnis say sect targeted in southern city*, 17 September 2013, <http://yhoo.it/1thXaF>.

10. The violence has impacted severely on Iraqi children. Up to 700 children have been killed or maimed in Iraq since the beginning of the year, including in summary executions.²³ Reports indicate that children are at risk of recruitment by armed groups from all sides of the conflict, including those supported or backed by the government and those fighting alongside ISIS and associated armed groups.²⁴ ISIS has reportedly used children as suicide bombers.²⁵

Displacement and Civilian Casualties

11. Before the onset of the current crisis in early 2014, Iraq already had one of the largest internally displaced populations in the world, at an estimated 1.3 million. The advancement of ISIS and associated armed groups and resulting fighting and massive human rights violations in 2014 have triggered successive large-scale waves of displacement.²⁶ Between January and early October 2014, over 1.8 million individuals, nearly half of them children, have been displaced from mainly Ninewa, Al-Anbar, Salah Al-Din, Diyala, Baghdad, Kirkuk and Babel governorates to over 1,850 distinct locations across Iraq.²⁷ In August 2014 alone, over 720,000 individuals have been newly displaced, mostly from Ninewa. Most internally displaced persons (IDPs) have fled to northern parts of Iraq, including to the Kurdistan Region and other parts of Ninewa, or have been displaced within Al-Anbar. The Kurdistan Region now hosts over 850,000 IDPs,²⁸ with the majority (nearly 550,000) having sought refuge in Dahuk governorate.²⁹ In addition, the Kurdistan Region hosts some 200,000 IDPs, who arrived from previous waves of violence since 2003, as well as over 200,000 Syrian refugees.³⁰ Displacement also continues into and within Baghdad and to governorates south of Baghdad, mainly Najef, Kerbala, Wassit and Babel.³¹ Among the IDPs displaced in 2014, there are likely

²³ UN Office of the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict, *Open Debate Security Council Statement*, 8 September 2014, <http://shar.es/1a0JxY>.

²⁴ UNAMI/OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 6 July – 10 September 2014*, 2 October 2014, pp. 17-18, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/542d3eb64.html>; UN News Service, *Grave crimes committed on 'unimaginable scale' in Iraq*, *UN Human Rights Council told*, 1 September 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5405bb8b4.html>; UNAMI / OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Non International Armed Conflict in Iraq: 5 June – 5 July 2014*, 18 July 2014, p. 20, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53ce0f0d44.htm>.

²⁵ UN Office of the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict, *Open Debate Security Council Statement*, 8 September 2014, <http://shar.es/1a0JxY>.

²⁶ Between January and August 2014, three major waves of displacement can be identified. The first wave of displacement was in eastern Al-Anbar governorate, starting in the last days of December 2013 and in January 2014, after major military operations and bombings of urban areas were recorded. The second major wave of displacement occurred after 6 June 2014, when IS and associated armed groups assaulted Mosul, the country's second largest city. Over the course of a few days, more than 450,000 people, or nearly a quarter of the population, including many members of religious and ethnic minority groups, fled the city. The most recent wave of displacement commenced on 3 August after IS and associated armed groups captured the town of Sinjar (Ninewa), resulting in the displacement of some 300,000 mostly Yazidis, many of whom fled to Mount Sinjar en route to Syria and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq; UN OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview*, 26 September 2014, p. 5, <http://bit.ly/1xoOfCD>. A fourth wave of displacement is reported to be underway with an estimated 180,000 individuals displaced as a result of IS and associated groups taking control of the town of Heet and its surroundings (Al-Anbar) in early October 2014. Many of those newly displaced are said to be IDPs displaced earlier from other parts of Al-Anbar; UNHCR, *Iraq's displacement crisis deepens as civilians flee latest ISIS offensive*, 14 October 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/543d10119.html>. At the time of writing, the displacement of 40,000 persons from Heet has been verified, although the total number is difficult to gauge due to extremely limited humanitarian access; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 16, 11 - 17 October 2014*, 17 October 2014, p. 1, <http://shar.es/1mQFiG>.

²⁷ This figure excludes the most recent displacement from Heet in Al-Anbar. The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) is using the figure of 1.8 million for planning purposes; IOM, *Displacement Tracking Matrix*, Report I of Round VII, 20 October 2014, p. 1, <http://shar.es/1mQDKl>.

²⁸ Figure is inclusive of the disputed bordering districts assisted through the KRG, which are Akre and Al-Shikan, in Ninewa governorate and Kifri and Khanaqin, in Diyala governorate; IOM, *Displacement Tracking Matrix*, Report I of Round VII, 20 October 2014, p. 3, <http://shar.es/1mQDKl>. The Immediate Response Plan (IRP) for the IDPs crisis in the Kurdistan Region, jointly authored by the Ministry of Planning - KRG and the UN, assessed that there are 862,000 IDPs in the Kurdistan Region, with Dahuk hosting the largest number of IDPs (63 percent), followed by Erbil (20 percent) and Sulaymaniyah (16 percent); Ministry of Planning - KRG / UN, *Immediate Response Plan (IRP) for the IDPs crisis in the KR-I: 15 Sept - 15 Nov 2014*, 28 September 2014, p. 2, <http://shar.es/1molzo>.

²⁹ The total figure includes IDPs in the disputed districts of Akre and Al-Shikan (Ninewa governorate) and Kifri and Khanaqin (Diyala), to which both the Central Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) lay claim and whose status was to be resolved in line with Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution of 2005. These areas are *de facto* under control of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), which also provides services and assistance to IDPs; IOM, *Displacement Tracking Matrix*, Report III of Round VI, October 2014, p. 3, <http://iomiraq.net/file/1270/download?token=aH5gsss0>; Joint Analysis and Policy Unit (JAPU), *Diyala Governorate Profile*, October 2014, p. 1, <http://www.jauiraq.org/gp/print/GP-Diyala.asp>; JAPU, *Ninewa Governorate Profile*, October 2014, p. 1, <http://www.jauiraq.org/gp/print/GP-Ninewa.asp>.

³⁰ The figure of Syrian refugees is set to increase as thousands of new arrivals from the Syrian town of Kobane have been recorded after the recent opening of the border between Turkey and the Kurdistan Region. By 20 October 2014, over 10,000 Syrians have arrived via Turkey in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq; UNHCR, 22 October 2014. See also UNHCR, *Syria Regional Refugee Response – Iraq*, updated 30 September 2014, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=103>; Ministry of Planning - KRG / UN, *Immediate Response Plan (IRP) for the IDPs crisis in the KR-I: 15 Sept - 15 Nov 2014*, 28 September 2014, p. 3, <http://shar.es/1molzo>; IOM / UNAMI / UN OCHA, *Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) most affected by recent wave of violence with over 850,000 displaced Iraqis this year*, 30 August 2014, <http://bit.ly/1oUo8Nz>.

³¹ IOM, *Displacement Tracking Matrix*, Report I of Round VII, 20 October 2014, p. 4, <http://shar.es/1mQDKl>. Tens of thousands of (Shi'a) Shabak and Turkmen communities originating from the Ninewa Plains and Tal Afar area reportedly sought refuge in the southern governorates; REACH, *Displacement of Shabak & Turkmen Shi'a Minorities from Tal Afar & Ninewa Plains, June - 18 August 2014*, 18 August 2014, <http://shar.es/11jici>. See also Associated Press, *Displaced Iraqis trade war for hardship in a Shiite holy city far from home*, 14 August 2014, <http://fxn.ws/1sZCWk8>.

many that had already been displaced as a result of earlier conflicts in Iraq.³² As the conflict moved, many individuals have reportedly been displaced multiple times,³³ including from IDP camps set up in the disputed areas in Ninewa governorate and in close proximity to the internal border with the Kurdistan Region.³⁴ As fighting continues across northern and central Iraq, further displacement is anticipated.³⁵

12. Recent events have also forced Iraqis to flee abroad in search of safety and protection in countries in the region.³⁶ UNHCR offices in the region have noted increased arrivals as well as registration of Iraqis already present in the country in recent weeks, notably in Turkey,³⁷ Jordan³⁸ and Syria, with smaller numbers reported in Egypt³⁹ and Lebanon.⁴⁰ In northeastern Syria, UNHCR is currently assisting more than 6,000 Yazidi refugees from Iraq. Tens of thousands had arrived in August as they were fleeing advances by IS in Sinjar (Ninewa). The refugees, and especially women and children, arrived extremely weak, thirsty, and hungry, and many had untreated wounds, as they had to undertake long walks from across the border.⁴¹ Also in Europe, applications from Iraqi asylum-seekers have increased in 2014 compared to the previous year.⁴²
13. Casualty figures in 2014 have been spiking compared to previous years. Iraq Body Count (IBC) documented the death of over 13,600 civilians between January and late October 2014. This compares to 7,800 civilian deaths in the first ten months of 2013 and is the highest total since the height of sectarian conflict in 2006-2007.⁴³ The UN has documented more than 7,700 civilian deaths in Iraq (excluding Al-Anbar) between January and September 2014. These include more than 4,800 estimated civilian casualties since June 2014, when IS and associated armed groups launched a major offensive in northern and eastern Iraq.⁴⁴ According to

³² REACH, *Iraq IDP Crisis Overview, 3–18 August, 2014*, 18 August 2014, p. 1, <http://shar.es/1moZ0V>; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 1*, 4 July 2014, <http://shar.es/1moZA0>. On Iraq's waves of displacement since the 1970s, see Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Iraq IDP Figures Analysis*, 8 September 2014, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/iraq/figures-analysis/>.

³³ For example, some 50,000 predominantly Christian IDPs, who had been displaced from Mosul City to villages and towns in the Ninewa Plains in early June 2014, were once again displaced when IS advanced into these areas in early August; REACH, *Displacement of Christian Communities from Ninewa Plains, 3 - 7 August 2014*, 7 August 2014, <http://shar.es/11jCUE>. Similarly, many Shabak and Turkmen from Mosul and Tal Afar have repeatedly been displaced as IS and associated groups expanded their hold in northern Iraq; REACH, *Displacement of Shabak & Turkmen Shi'a Minorities from Tal Afar & Ninewa Plains, June - 18 August 2014*, 18 August 2014, <http://shar.es/11jici>. See also UNHCR, *Iraq's displacement crisis deepens as civilians flee latest ISIS offensive*, 14 October 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/543d10119.html>; REACH, *Iraq IDP Crisis Overview, 3 - 18 August 2014*, 18 August 2014, p. 1, <http://shar.es/1moZtn>; Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), *Iraq aid response 'inadequate' despite funding boost*, 15 August 2014, <http://shar.es/11jQNu>.

³⁴ IDPs in the Khazair and Garmawa camps had to flee once again when armed groups advanced into these areas in August 2014. IDPs later returned again to the camps, but security concerns remain; ACAPS, *Briefing Note: Humanitarian Implications of Violence in Northern and Central Iraq*, 4 September 2014, p. 4, <http://shar.es/11j9od>; IRIN, *Iraq aid response "inadequate" despite funding boost*, 15 August 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53f322794.html>; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 7, 9 August – 15 August 2014*, 15 August 2014, p. 2, <http://shar.es/1moZ8c>; New Internationalist, *Iraq's displaced forced to flee militant group for a second time*, 11 August 2014, <http://shar.es/11zRkz>; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 6, 2 – 8 August 2014*, 8 August 2014, p. 2, <http://shar.es/11zB7N>.

³⁵ UN OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview*, 26 September 2014, p. 5, <http://bit.ly/1xoOfCD>.

³⁶ UNHCR, *Sharp increase in Iraqi refugees fleeing ISIS into Jordan and Turkey*, 23 September 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/54214cfe9.html>.

³⁷ Some 103,000 Iraqi refugees have come forward to be registered by UNHCR or its partners in Turkey, including 65,000 since June 2014 when IS forces took over Mosul and its environs. UNHCR is aware of many thousands more Iraqis currently present in eastern Turkey that have yet to come forward for registration. During a profiling exercise among more than 2,500 Iraqis seeking to be registered with UNHCR's partner in Ankara, almost half said that they had escaped IS attacks, while another 20 percent said they fled for fear of IS attacks. A further 20 percent indicated they had escaped sectarian violence. Almost half of all interviewed households were of Kurdish origin, while 33 percent were Arabs.

³⁸ Violence in Al-Anbar as of late 2013 resulted in increased arrivals of Iraqis in Jordan. Since IS and associated groups took control of Mosul in early June 2014, arrival numbers have further increased. While an average of 30 Iraqis approached UNHCR every day in the first five months of 2014, this number has doubled to 65 per day since June and culminated with 120 persons per day in August and September. So far this year, over 10,600 Iraqi refugees have registered with UNHCR in Jordan, with 1,383 registering in August alone – the highest monthly tally of new registrations since 2007. This growing population in need of protection and assistance is joining the existing protracted Iraqi refugee population in Jordan (more than 30,300 registered at the end of July 2014). Almost two thirds of new arrivals (60 percent) originate from IS-controlled areas in Ninewa, Salah Al-Din and Al-Anbar governorates. Refugees from these areas said their flight was triggered by their homes being burned, threat of forced conversion to Islam, fears of forced marriage, kidnapping and public threats. The rest of the newly arriving refugees in Jordan have fled sectarian violence in Baghdad and Basra.

³⁹ Given that Egypt does not share a border with Iraq and Iraqi nationals require a visa to enter Egypt, no significant new arrivals are expected. However, there has been a noted increase in Iraqis already present in Egypt approaching UNHCR for registration. This trend is expected to continue due to Iraqis' decreasing economic means, reduced possibilities for return to Iraq, and limited remittances from family members in Iraq.

⁴⁰ Since July 2014, there has been a daily increase in the numbers of new arrivals in Lebanon and it is projected that with the current rate, up to 3,000 additional Iraqis will be registered before the end of 2014, joining the around 7,000 Iraqis currently registered.

⁴¹ A large number of Yazidis only transited through Syria and continued their journey to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq; UNHCR, *The difficult route to safety across Iraq's sun-baked Sinjar mountains*, 20 August 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/53f490159.html>; UNHCR, *Yazidis stream into Syria from Mount Sinjar, UNHCR steps up aid*, 14 August 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53ecc9c54.html>.

⁴² Comparing the second quarter of 2014 with the second quarter of 2013, the number of asylum applicants in the EU increased by one third, i.e. from 2,355 applicants to 3,130; Eurostat, *Asylum applicants and first instance decisions on asylum applications: second quarter 2014*, p. 5, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-QA-14-011/EN/KS-QA-14-011-EN.PDF.

⁴³ See Iraq Body Count, accessed 22 October 2014, <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/>.

⁴⁴ These are estimates and the real numbers could be much higher, according to UNAMI. Figure includes civilian police but excludes the recorded deaths of more than 2,500 members of the ISF, Peshmerga, SWAT and associated forces fighting alongside the ISF killed between January and September 2014; UNAMI, *UN Casualty Figures for September 2014, Anbar province excluded*, 1 October 2014, <http://bit.ly/1vKq2p8>. UNAMI also received unverified casualty figures from the Health Directorate in Al-Anbar. According to these, there have been over 1,600 deaths and 5,500 injuries between January and August 2014 (no information as to the status of those killed or injured as civilians is available); see UNAMI monthly casualty reports,

the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Baghdad was the worst affected governorate in most of 2014 in terms of casualty figures. It is followed (excluding Al-Anbar and not always in the same order), by Ninewa, Salah Al-Din, Kirkuk, Babel and Diyala governorates.⁴⁵ The Iraqi government released casualty figures for the months of January to June 2014, accounting for 6,676 deaths, including 5,322 civilians, 512 police, and 842 members of the armed forces.⁴⁶

14. The escalation in violence has further generated additional deaths from a lack of access to food, water and medical care,⁴⁷ injuries and disabilities,⁴⁸ destruction of property and livelihoods⁴⁹ and serious impairment of access to basic, life-sustaining services.⁵⁰
15. The current conflict is largely concentrated in the central and northern governorates of Al-Anbar, Ninewa, Salah Al-Din, Diyala, Kirkuk and Babel. Baghdad remains the centre of frequent mass casualty attacks, often, but not exclusively, launched against predominantly Shi'ite neighbourhoods,⁵¹ and has seen an upsurge in sectarian violence.⁵² The security situation in the Kurdistan Region remains relatively stable, with security forces remaining on high alert and imposing tightened security to prevent IS and associated groups from staging attacks.⁵³ Armed clashes also occur between Kurdish forces and ISIS and associated armed groups on the borders of the Kurdistan Region as the latter had also advanced into areas previously controlled by the Kurdish forces. The southern governorates also continue to see security incidents, including in the form of car bomb attacks,⁵⁴ as well as targeted killings/kidnappings and sectarian reprisal attacks against individuals, including members of political parties, religious and tribal figures, government employees, and professionals.⁵⁵

Humanitarian Situation

16. As a result of conflict, displacement and interruption of services due to siege tactics and attacks against vital infrastructure, humanitarian needs have escalated rapidly, adding to the already existing significant

available at: http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=category&id=159:civilian-casualties. See also UNAMI/OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 6 July – 10 September 2014*, 2 October 2014, p. 1, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/542d3eb64.html>.

⁴⁵ For up-to-date UN casualty figures and comparative data per governorate, see http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=category&id=159:civilian-casualties.

⁴⁶ This compares to 6,522 deaths recorded in 2013, 2,174 in 2012, 2,645 in 2011, 3,605 in 2010, 3,481 in 2009, and 6,798 in 2008; Iraq Government Casualty Figures, compiled by AFP, accessed 22 October 2014, <http://bit.ly/1vNKju8>.

⁴⁷ UNAMI/OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 6 July – 10 September 2014*, 2 October 2014, p. 1, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/542d3eb64.html>.

⁴⁸ UNAMI has recorded over 12,000 conflict-related injuries between January and September 2014; UNAMI, *UN Casualty Figures for September 2014, Anbar province excluded*, 1 October 2014, <http://bit.ly/1vKq2p8>.

⁴⁹ The Shelter Cluster assessed that damage to buildings and infrastructure as a result of the conflict is most pervasive in Al-Anbar. Informants reported that 35 percent of physical structures in Al-Anbar are completely destroyed and another 38 percent have suffered moderate to heavy damage; Shelter Cluster, *Rapid Assessment: Area of Origin Assessment Report*, October 2014, p. 4, <http://shar.es/1moZLp>. See also IRIN, *Heavy toll in Iraq's "forgotten" Anbar*, 6 October 2014, <http://shar.es/1moWK6>.

⁵⁰ See below "Humanitarian Situation".

⁵¹ See above para 4.

⁵² See above para 9.

⁵³ On 17 September 2014, the Kurdistan Region Security Council issued a statement warning the population to raise their level of alertness because of the possibility of IS militants attempting to infiltrate the region and execute terrorist attacks; Ekurd.net, *Kurdistan Region-Iraq News in brief*, 17 September 2014, <http://bit.ly/1CUDbQM>. On 23 August 2014, a car bomb exploded in the Kurdish capital Erbil and Kurdish security forces are reportedly highly wary of possible IS " sleeper cells"; Christian Science Monitor, *In northern Iraq, Islamic State switching to terror tactics*, 25 August 2014, <http://yhoo.it/1qsuxov>; McClatchy, *In Kurdish Irbil, first car bomb raises fears of onslaught by Islamic State militants*, 24 August 2014, <http://bit.ly/1tgbGvm>.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Al Jazeera, *Deadly car bombings hit Iraq's Karbala*, 20 October 2014, <http://aje.me/1tEF435>; Associated Press, *Iraq car bomb attacks kill 17*, 11 September 2014, <http://yhoo.it/1t29egz>; Al Jazeera, *Iraq bombings target Shia areas*, 25 August 2014, <http://aje.me/1wrN88q>; Reuters, *Twin blasts kill at least three in Iraq's Basra*, 5 July 2014, <http://reut.rs/1xo5Dr8>; National Iraqi News Agency (NINA), *Five killed, four injured in a car bomb explosion north of Karbala*, 11 June 2014, <http://bit.ly/1ZQKeMz>; Iraqi News, *Mol: 23 persons killed, injured in Babel, Najaf, Dhi-Qar bombings*, 2 June 2014, <http://bit.ly/1vLWop3>; Associated Press, *Attacks across Iraq kill at least 15 people*, 2 June 2014, <http://dailym.ai/1kxuzlS>; Anadolu Agency, *10 killed, 20 injured in bomb attack in Iraq's Wasit*, 21 April 2014, <http://u.aa.com.tr/316421>; Al Akhbar, *Thirteen car bombs rip through Iraq*, 9 April 2014, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/19360>; NINA, *BREAKING NEWS. 17 people killed and wounded in a roadside car bomb explosion north of Karbala*, 18 March 2014, <http://bit.ly/1rgsQ9k>; New York Times, *Suicide Bomber Kills at Least 45 at Checkpoint in Southern Iraq*, 9 March 2014, <http://nyti.ms/1fi0buR>.

⁵⁵ See, for example, NINA, *House of TV reporter targeted by a bomb in Qadisiyah province*, 2 September 2014, <http://bit.ly/1vTaL5n>; NINA, *A roadside bomb targeting the house of the director of culture department in Al-Ataba al-Hosseiniya in the center of Karbala*, 26 August 2014, <http://bit.ly/1yM8oXU>; NINA, *Two Sistani representatives' homes targeted by homemade bombs in Diwaniya*, 10 August 2014, <http://bit.ly/1vNcwkJ>; NINA, *A cleric killed and another wounded in Basra*, 8 August 2014, <http://bit.ly/1oPLkGy>; NINA, *Basra governor's secretary injured in sticky bomb*, 28 July 2014, <http://bit.ly/1EsNTzD>; NINA, *Gunmen assassinate Faw council member*, 19 July 2014, <http://bit.ly/1vT4uqi>; NINA, *MP escapes an assassination attempt*, 4 May 2014, <http://bit.ly/1oPLF3f>; NINA, *Two bombs exploded outside the home of a judge and the communications tower in Basra*, 18 April 2014, <http://bit.ly/1sc14RK>; NINA, *Senior police officer killed in Basra*, 22 March 2014, <http://bit.ly/1ncCAGs>; Institute for the Study of War, *Rise in Targeting of Iraqi Sunni Tribal Leaders in Southern Iraq*, Iraq Update #40, 27 November 2013, <http://bit.ly/1q0Pacm>.

humanitarian needs in Iraq, including those of the over 200,000 Syrian refugees who sought refuge in Iraq, mostly in the Kurdistan Region. More than 5 million people are currently in need of humanitarian assistance across Iraq. This contrasts with only 1.5 million people that are currently reached by humanitarian actors.⁵⁶ Given the scale and complexity of the humanitarian crisis, the UN, on 12 August 2014, declared a “Level 3 Emergency” for Iraq, the highest-level emergency designation.⁵⁷

17. The humanitarian situation of populations living **in conflict areas** is of particular concern. They remain without, or with severely limited access to basic services, food and other commodities and are largely inaccessible for international organizations on account of security, bureaucratic and political restrictions.⁵⁸ Several key supply routes have reportedly also been blocked and authorities are said to have restricted humanitarian access for administrative reasons or across conflict lines in a number of instances.⁵⁹ Information on the current situation in these areas is limited.⁶⁰ Armed groups have reportedly targeted basic services and utilities such as water networks and power grids.⁶¹ In many areas the **health** infrastructure and access to health services have been disrupted due to the conflict,⁶² a situation further compounded by the lack of supplies, electricity and water⁶³ and reported shortages in medical personnel as many have fled.⁶⁴
18. Across the country, the disruption of the Public Distribution System (PDS) for **food**, which remains the main source of food for the poorest Iraqis,⁶⁵ and the destruction and confiscation of agricultural produce, disruptions of markets, widespread insecurity and massive displacement have negatively impacted on the ability of civilians to access food. Throughout the country, food security is further threatened as the May/June cereal harvest was compromised in key cereal production areas affected by conflict, such as Ninewa and Salah Al-Din governorates.⁶⁶ Recent displacement in Al-Anbar threatens to disrupt the October/November wheat planting season.⁶⁷ According to Mohamed Diab, Director of WFP’s Regional Bureau for the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and Eastern Europe, “[T]he food security situation in Iraq is alarming – the worst that the country has witnessed since the sanctions in the early 1990s.”⁶⁸
19. **In areas of displacement**, local authorities and communities are overstretched and unable to provide all IDPs with basic services and public infrastructure, many of whom arrived with little more than the clothes on their backs and with limited financial resources to support themselves.⁶⁹ Adequate **shelter** is a key concern. The

⁵⁶ UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 13, 20 September – 26 September 2014*, 26 September 2014, p. 1, <http://shar.es/1moJUD>.

⁵⁷ UNAMI, *UN Declares a 'Level 3 Emergency' for Iraq to Ensure More Effective Humanitarian Response*, 19 August 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53f323334.html>.

⁵⁸ Humanitarian access is reported to be “extremely difficult” in the governorates of Ninewa, Al-Anbar, Kirkuk, Salah Al-Din and Diyala; UN OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview*, 26 September 2014, p. 25, <http://bit.ly/1xoOfCD>. See also UN OCHA, *Iraq - Flash Update No. 2*, 12 October 2014, pp. 1-2, <http://shar.es/1mGjKu>; UN News Service, *Iraq: UN refugee agency launches major humanitarian aid push for displaced people*, 19 August 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53f746944.html>; IRIN, *Iraq aid response "inadequate" despite funding boost*, 15 August 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53f322794.html>.

⁵⁹ UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 13, 20 September – 26 September 2014*, 26 September 2014, p. 2, <http://shar.es/1moJUD>.

⁶⁰ ACAPS, *Briefing Note: Humanitarian Implications of Violence in Northern and Central Iraq*, 7 August 2014, <http://shar.es/11YP14>.

⁶¹ UN OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview*, 26 September 2014, p. 26, <http://bit.ly/1xoOfCD>; UN OCHA/UNAMI, *Immediate, safe and unhindered humanitarian access is now needed*, 31 July 2014, <http://shar.es/11jpoZ>.

⁶² UN OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview*, 26 September 2014, pp. 13-14, <http://bit.ly/1xoOfCD>. For example, only two out of nine hospitals in Salah Al-Din governorate are currently fully functioning; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 12, 13 September – 19 September 2014*, 19 September 2014, p. 4, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Iraq.pdf>. In Sinjar district (Ninewa), the General Hospital and 16 of total 19 primary health care centres are non-functional, according to WHO; WHO, *Health Emergency Highlights*, Issue #17, 31 August 2014, <http://shar.es/1a0hdB>.

⁶³ UN OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview*, 26 September 2014, p. 14, <http://bit.ly/1xoOfCD>.

⁶⁴ According to Fabio Forgiione, MSF head of mission in Iraq “[W]e are receiving accounts from medical staff that more and more hospitals have been hit by bombs in recent weeks (...). Medical staff have fled, fearing attacks on the health facilities where they are working. We are extremely concerned that significant numbers of people are now deprived of the medical assistance they need”; Médecins Sans Frontières, *Iraq Hospitals Destroyed by Air Strikes*, 24 July 2014, <http://shar.es/11jrZ9>. See also WHO, *Health Emergency Highlights*, Issue #17, 31 August 2014, <http://shar.es/1a0hdB>; UNAMI / OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Non International Armed Conflict in Iraq: 5 June – 5 July 2014*, 18 July 2014, p. 21, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_POC_Report_FINAL_18July2014A.pdf; HRW, *Iraq: Government Attacking Fallujah Hospital*, 27 May 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/538d99144.html>.

⁶⁵ UN OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview*, 26 September 2014, p. 3, <http://bit.ly/1xoOfCD>.

⁶⁶ Ninewa and Salah Al-Din governorates account for close to a third of Iraq’s wheat production and about 38 percent of its barley; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 4, 19-26 July 2014*, 26 July 2014, p. 2, <http://shar.es/11jqct>; FAO, *Iraq: Serious food security concerns due to conflict*, 25 June 2014, <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/237162/icode/>. See also Reuters, *Special Report: Islamic State uses grain to tighten grip in Iraq*, 30 September 2014, <http://reut.rs/1DUWryZ>.

⁶⁷ UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 16, 11 - 17 October 2014*, 17 October 2014, p. 2, <http://shar.es/1mQFiG>.

⁶⁸ WFP, *Saudi Arabia Contribution Saves Lives, Allows WFP To Rapidly Respond To Food Crisis In Iraq*, 19 August 2014, <http://bit.ly/1pD5vxJ>.

⁶⁹ “Although the United Nations and its humanitarian partners have been responding with all its humanitarian aid tools to the crisis, in coordination with the Iraqi government, the crisis continues to exceed the capacity of the national authorities and the international community to respond”; UN OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview*, 26 September 2014, p. 1, <http://bit.ly/1xoOfCD>. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) said: “The basic needs of these families are beyond the capacity of the governorate authorities, who cannot tackle this crisis alone”; KRG, *Duhok governorate*

primary shelter arrangement for displaced populations is to stay with host communities. However, as the availability of housing to host displaced populations has become drastically limited due to the massive displacement crisis, and the cost of accommodation has significantly increased, many newly displaced populations had to occupy unfinished or abandoned buildings, schools, mosques and churches. Others are living in the open in substandard living conditions,⁷⁰ exposing them to significant health risks during the forthcoming winter season.⁷¹ Inadequate housing has reportedly resulted in secondary displacement.⁷² There are concerns that IDPs in Kerbala and Najef, who are currently sheltering in mosques and pilgrim guesthouses, may be at risk of eviction ahead of forthcoming religious festivals.⁷³ Living in extremely overcrowded conditions and with limited or no privacy gives rise to protection concerns, including harassment and all forms of exploitation, especially for women and children.⁷⁴ A number of camps are in use or are under rehabilitation or construction, although not all meet minimum standards or lack funding or camp management.⁷⁵ The establishment of additional camps is under consideration.⁷⁶ Significant numbers of schools continue to accommodate IDPs, are occupied by armed groups or have been damaged or destroyed as a result of the conflict.⁷⁷

20. In areas hosting IDPs, the conflict has considerably delayed the start of the academic school year, especially in central Iraq and in Dahuk governorate.⁷⁸ Prolonged delays potentially create resentment among the host communities towards the presence of IDPs.⁷⁹ Overcrowding, language barriers and differences in curriculum (in the Kurdistan Region) as well as registration complexities further hamper displaced children's access to education.⁸⁰ Another challenge affecting the **education** system is the fact that over half of Iraq's 95,000 teachers have reportedly been displaced.⁸¹ Large numbers of IDPs are in critical need of **food** assistance.⁸² Humanitarian actors have expressed concern that IDPs sheltering in open areas, unfinished buildings,

continues to provide aid to displaced families, 12 September 2014, <http://shar.es/1a0Gwp>. "In most places, their [the IDPs'] presence has put an additional strain on host communities and has outstripped the capacity of those communities to support them"; ICRC, *Iraq: More than a million victims of fighting receive ICRC help*, 4 September 2014, <http://bit.ly/1wd4eTV>.

⁷⁰ Across Iraq, the majority of IDPs continue to stay with host families or in rented accommodation; however, a significant proportion of the overall IDP caseload have sought refuge in alternative shelter arrangements such as school buildings, religious buildings and unfinished buildings. Of the displaced populations in the South, 62 percent are accommodated in religious buildings while in the Kurdistan Region, 15 percent live in unfinished buildings and 12 percent in schools; IOM, *Displacement Tracking Matrix*, Report I of Round VII, 20 October 2014, p. 5, <http://shar.es/1mQDKL>. According to the "Immediate Response Plan for the IDP crisis in the KR-I", 45 percent of IDPs are currently living in "vulnerable shelter arrangements" such as unfinished buildings, informal settlements, and collective centers; Ministry of Planning - KRG / UN, *Immediate Response Plan (IRP) for the IDPs crisis in the KR-I: 15 Sept - 15 Nov 2014*, 28 September 2014, p. 4, <http://shar.es/1molzo>. See also IRIN, *Heavy toll in Iraq's "forgotten" Anbar*, 6 October 2014, <http://shar.es/1moWK6>; IOM/CCCM Cluster/REACH, *Iraq Internal Displacement Crisis Assessment Report*, 10 September 2014, <http://shar.es/1a0oWt>.

⁷¹ IOM estimates that 1.26 million IDPs throughout Iraq at risk from the upcoming winter weather, with those living in camps, informal settlements, and sub-optimal shelters being most at risk; UN OCHA, *Iraq Crisis Situation Report No. 15*, 4 October – 10 October 2014, p. 2, <http://shar.es/1mGj5P>. See also NPR, *Iraqis Displaced By ISIS Face Another Threat: Winter*, 12 October 2014, <http://shar.es/1mGhAN>; Ministry of Planning - KRG / UN, *Immediate Response Plan (IRP) for the IDPs crisis in the KR-I: 15 Sept - 15 Nov 2014*, 28 September 2014, p. 4, <http://shar.es/1molzo>; UN OCHA, *UN Humanitarian Chief calls for more shelter and protection for displaced Iraqis ahead of winter*, 14 September 2014, <http://shar.es/1a0adf>; AI, *"Don't they know that winter is coming?" Frustration and fear among Iraq's displaced*, 8 September 2014, <http://ow.li/BeH8y>.

⁷² For example in Kirkuk, new displacement was reported in September 2014 as many IDP families were subject to difficult living conditions after seeking shelter in unfinished buildings within Kirkuk City; IOM, *Displacement Tracking Matrix*, Report III of Round VI, October 2014, p. 5, <http://iomiraq.net/file/1270/download?token=aH5gsss0>.

⁷³ UN OCHA, *Iraq Crisis Situation Report No. 15*, 4 October – 10 October 2014, 10 October 2014, p. 1, <http://shar.es/1mGj5P>.

⁷⁴ UN OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview*, 26 September 2014, p. 15, <http://bit.ly/1xoOfCD>; UNAMI / OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Non International Armed Conflict in Iraq: 5 June – 5 July 2014*, 18 July 2014, p. 21, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53ce0f0d4.htm>.

⁷⁵ UN OCHA, *Iraq Crisis Situation Report No. 15*, 4 October – 10 October 2014, 10 October 2014 p. 4, <http://shar.es/1mGj5P>; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 13*, 20 September – 26 September 2014, 26 September 2014, p. 4, <http://shar.es/1moJUD>.

⁷⁶ IOM, *Overview of existing or potential locations for displacement sites in Northern Iraq (as of 13 Sep 2014)*, 14 September 2014, <http://shar.es/1a0GBr>; UNHCR, *Shelter needs acute in northern Iraq as UNHCR steps up aid operation*, 5 September 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/5409834b9.html>; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 9*, 23 - 29 August 2014, <http://shar.es/114qmqz>. The KRG has identified 26 sites for camps in Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Dahuk Governorates, which will have the capacity to host an estimated 240,000 IDPs. However, according to UN OCHA, available resources are insufficient; UNICEF, *Iraq Weekly Humanitarian Situation Report*, 26th August – 1st September 2014, 1 September 2014, <http://shar.es/11jSop>.

⁷⁷ As of 30 September 2014, IDPs were occupying 435 schools in Al-Anbar governorate and 69 schools in Diyala governorate with a further 137 schools currently occupied by armed groups. In Baghdad, 29 schools are occupied or damaged due to military operations. In Dahuk governorate, 501 schools are occupied by IDP families while 125 schools have been vacated recently, at times without alternate accommodation being secured; UN OCHA, *Iraq Crisis Situation Report No. 15*, 4 October – 10 October 2014, 10 October 2014, p. 6, <http://shar.es/1mGj5P>.

⁷⁸ For an overview of schools occupied or damaged/destroyed, see UNAMI, *Iraq Crisis Situation Analysis - Schools*, 19 October 2014, <http://shar.es/1mQvAk>. See also UNICEF/Education Cluster, *Education Cannot Wait: Education on the Brink in Iraq*, 16 August 2014, <http://shar.es/11YQq9>.

⁷⁹ UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 11*, 6 September – 12 September 2014, 12 September 2014, p. 1, <http://shar.es/1a000z>. See also Foreign Policy In Focus, *From Schools to Shelters in Iraq*, 9 September 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/09/09/schools-shelters-iraq>.

⁸⁰ UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 14*, 26 September – 3 October 2014, 3 October 2014, p. 7, <http://shar.es/1mowRL>; Ministry of Planning - KRG / UN, *Immediate Response Plan (IRP) for the IDPs crisis in the KR-I: 15 Sept - 15 Nov 2014*, 28 September 2014, p. 17, <http://shar.es/1molzo>.

⁸¹ UNICEF, *Iraq Weekly Humanitarian Situation Report*, 12 – 18 August 2014, 18 August 2014, <http://bit.ly/1oTsn6c>.

⁸² UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 14*, 26 September – 3 October 2014, 3 October 2014, p. 4, <http://shar.es/1mowRL>.

schools, and other temporary accommodations are in urgent need of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) assistance.⁸³

21. Local **health** services are reported to be overstretched due to high numbers of IDP arrivals and primary healthcare clinics often lack sufficient amounts of essential and chronic illness drugs.⁸⁴ IDPs living in unfinished buildings and the open are particularly hard to reach with health services.⁸⁵ It was noted that the need for medical and psychosocial support among IDPs was significant as many had witnessed traumatic events.⁸⁶
22. Lacking an income and running out of savings, if any, IDPs are at risk of renewed displacement.⁸⁷ Reports indicate that IDPs had to return to their governorate of origin or were secondarily displaced to other parts of Iraq as they were unable to afford the high cost of living in the Kurdistan Region.⁸⁸
23. IDPs face growing challenges to obtain or renew civil identification documentation such as passports, PDS ration cards and nationality certificates, as this would usually require them to return to their place of origin where the original records are maintained – a prospect that is not feasible for many at this current time.⁸⁹ Special offices have been established in Baghdad and Najaf to provide document replacement services; however, IDPs in other parts of the country, especially the Kurdistan Region, face challenges to access these services, including high travel costs. IDPs without valid civil documentation may be unable to register with local authorities (in the Kurdistan Region) or the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM, in areas under control of the central government), thereby preventing them from regularizing their stay and thus limiting access to assistance and public services.⁹⁰ There are reports of IDP identity documents being confiscated by authorities in order to control their movement.⁹¹
24. Despite the generous reception of hundreds of thousands of displaced Iraqis, in particular in the Kurdistan Region, there are consistent reports that populations face challenges to access safety, including as a result of ongoing fighting and access restrictions at governorate borders.⁹² Access restrictions appear to be largely linked to security considerations⁹³ and a lack of absorption capacity,⁹⁴ and are said to be increasing.⁹⁵ Access

⁸³ For example, large IDP populations currently hosted in schools and informal settlements in Zahko and Dahuk towns in the Kurdistan Region are critically in need of access to hygienic sanitation facilities. Humanitarian actors reported that identification of locations, needs assessments and response are difficult mainly due to the large number of locations and shifting populations; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 11, 6 September – 12 September 2014*, 12 September 2014, p. 2, <http://shar.es/1a000z>.

⁸⁴ “Where [health] facilities exist and are functioning, most have been inundated with the influx of the displaced”; WHO, *Health Emergency Highlights*, Issue #17, 31 August 2014, <http://shar.es/1a0hdB>. In the Kurdistan Region, there is a reported shortage of medicine for chronic illnesses and insufficient medical staff in health facilities in areas that have received large number of IDPs over the past few months. Humanitarian actors reported it being a challenge to extend health services to IDPs who live scattered in unfinished buildings and in open areas; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 10, 30 August - 5 September 2014*, 5 September 2014, p. 4, <http://shar.es/11ARZD>. “The displacement of over 80,000 IDPs towards the South of Iraq (Najaf, Kerbala, Babylon and Qadisayah) is placing a huge burden on health care facilities, especially since the new arrivals are suffering from higher rates of communicable diseases (chicken pox, diarrhea and measles) and non-communicable diseases (hypertension and diabetes)”; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 8, 16 August – 22 August 2014*, 22 August 2014, p. 4, <http://shar.es/11YROL>. See also UN OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview*, 26 September 2014, p. 13, <http://bit.ly/1xoOfCD>.

⁸⁵ UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 12, 13 September – 19 September 2014*, 19 September 2014, p. 5, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Iraq.pdf>.

⁸⁶ UN OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview*, 26 September 2014, p. 15, <http://bit.ly/1xoOfCD>; EU Reporter, *More than 1.6 million internally displaced by Iraq conflict says IOM*, 29 August 2014, <http://www.eureporter.co/world/2014/08/29/more-than-1-6-million-internally-displaced-by-iraq-conflict-says-iom/>; ACTED, *Child protection needs of children displaced in Ainkawa, Kurdistan Region of Iraq*, 18 August 2014, <http://www.acted.org/en/child-protection-needs-children-displaced-ainkawa-kurdistan-region-iraq>; Médecins Sans Frontières, *Iraq/Syria: A dramatic increase of displaced people fleeing violence in Sinjar*, 13 August 2014, <http://www.msf.ca/en/article/iraqsyria-dramatic-increase-displaced-people-fleeing-violence-sinjar>.

⁸⁷ REACH, *Vulnerability, Needs and Intentions of Internally Displaced Persons in Northern Iraq, Rapid Assessment Report*, August 2014, <http://shar.es/1mow8i>.

⁸⁸ IOM, *Displacement Tracking Matrix*, Report III of Round VI, October 2014, p. 4, <http://iomiraq.net/file/1270/download?token=aH5gss0>; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP CRISIS - Situation Report No. 5, 27 July – 1 August 2014*, 1 August 2014, p. 1, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA%20Iraq%20Situation%20Report%20no5.pdf>; Al Jazeera, *Seeking shelter in Iraqi Kurdistan*, 30 March 2014, <http://aje.me/1h8A36d>.

⁸⁹ UN OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview*, 26 September 2014, p. 15, <http://bit.ly/1xoOfCD>.

⁹⁰ UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 15, 4 October – 10 October 2014*, 10 October 2014, p. 5, <http://shar.es/1mGj5P>.

⁹¹ The Kurdish Asayish reportedly frequently confiscates IDPs’ documents, severely restricting their freedom of movement; UNHCR, October 2014. See also UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 14, 26 September – 3 October 2014*, 3 October 2014, p. 6, <http://shar.es/1mowRL>.

⁹² “Many IDPs have fled without proper identification, and the numerous Peshmerga checkpoints at KR-I borders and in the disputed areas of neighbouring governorates significantly limit their freedom of movement”; ACAPS, *Briefing Note: Humanitarian Implications of Violence in Northern and Central Iraq*, 4 September 2014, <http://shar.es/11j9od>.

⁹³ For example, entry into the Kurdistan Region has become increasingly difficult for some groups, as movement restrictions are placed on IDPs by bureaucratic and security procedures; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 13, 20 September – 26 September 2014*, 26 September 2014, p. 2, <http://shar.es/1moJUD>.

restrictions appear to be linked to certain criteria, such as the family composition,⁹⁶ religious/ethnic background,⁹⁷ place of origin,⁹⁸ or the requirement to have a sponsor in the concerned governorate.⁹⁹ Criteria applied at entry checkpoints may not always be clearly defined and/or implementation can vary or be subject to sudden changes. In some areas, persons seeking to relocate from other governorates are reportedly barred entry.¹⁰⁰ If access is granted, there may be additional requirements for IDPs to be able to register with local authorities.¹⁰¹ In the south of Iraq, IDPs have been reported to move between governorates searching for local authorities willing to register them so that they would be allowed to access services such as healthcare, education and cash assistance.¹⁰² Furthermore, the arrival of IDPs has also reportedly resulted in community tensions along ethno-sectarian lines¹⁰³ and reported feelings of insecurity and discrimination expressed by IDPs.¹⁰⁴

25. IDPs' freedom of movement is further said to be restricted by insecurity and ongoing military operations.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, armed groups are said to be largely controlling access routes between the central/northern parts of the country and Baghdad and the South.¹⁰⁶ IDPs without valid documentation may face difficulties to pass checkpoints.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁴ For example, in Kerbala, IDPs without sponsors are reportedly sent to other governorates as local authorities indicate that they can no longer absorb ever greater numbers; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 8, 16 August – 22 August 2014*, 22 August 2014, p. 4, <http://shar.es/11YRQL>. Persons newly displaced from Heet (Al-Anbar) in mid-October 2014 have reportedly been prevented from entering the neighbouring governorate of Kerbala; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 16, 11 - 17 October 2014*, 17 October 2014, p. 2, <http://shar.es/1mQFiG>.

⁹⁵ UNHCR, October 2014.

⁹⁶ For example, UNAMI reported access restrictions for women and girls to the Kurdistan Region if they are not accompanied by a male relative; UNAMI / OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Non International Armed Conflict in Iraq: 5 June – 5 July 2014*, 18 July 2014, p. 21, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53ce0f0d4.htm>. At checkpoints at the internal borders of Basra governorate single men have reportedly been prevented from entering; ACAPS, *Briefing Note: Humanitarian Implications of Violence in Northern and Central Iraq - 24 July 2014*, 24 July 2014, p. 4, <http://shar.es/11jsZa>.

⁹⁷ Members of minority groups appear to generally be admitted to the Kurdistan Region, while Sunni and Shi'a Arabs and Turkmen are said to be prevented from entering. For example, Sunni Arab IDPs fleeing Jalawla and Sa'adiya in Diyala are reportedly prevented from entering the Kurdistan Region over suspicion that they may be sympathetic to IS and are therefore considered a security threat. They are reportedly staying in camps in disputed, Kurdish-controlled parts of Diyala, close to the border with the Kurdistan Region, with restrictions on their freedom of movement; Christian Science Monitor, *Aid to Sunni Arabs in Kurdistan comes with a side of suspicion*, 28 August 2014, <http://bit.ly/WsKSx7>. See also New York Times, *Back and Forth, Wearily, Across the ISIS Border*, 20 September 2014, <http://nyti.ms/1rakK5i>; Public Radio International, *Kurds in northern Iraq now suspect their Arab neighbors of siding with ISIS*, 1 September 2014, <http://bit.ly/ZQYzbH>; Associated Press, *Displaced Iraqis trade war for hardship in a Shiite holy city far from home*, 14 August 2014, <http://fxn.ws/1sZCwKb>; ACAPS, *Briefing Note: Humanitarian Implications of Violence in Northern and Central Iraq - 24 July 2014*, p. 1, <http://shar.es/11jsZa>; IRIN, *Selective treatment for IDPs in Kurdistan*, 16 July 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53ce19aa4.html>

⁹⁸ Access is reportedly restricted for persons seeking to enter Erbil governorate coming from Kirkuk; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 11, 6 September – 12 September 2014*, 12 September 2014, p. 1, <http://shar.es/1a000z>.

⁹⁹ For example, IDPs seeking to relocate to Qadissiya governorate have reportedly only been allowed through checkpoints once sponsorship of relatives was confirmed; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 10, 30 August - 5 September 2014*, 5 September 2014, p. 4, <http://shar.es/11ARZD>. Sunni and Shi'ite Arabs and Turkmen as well as Shabak seeking to relocate to the Kurdistan Region require a sponsor, who needs to be a Kurdish person resident in the Kurdistan Region. Without a sponsor, IDPs from these communities are refused entry at entry checkpoints; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 13, 20 September – 26 September 2014*, 26 September 2014, p. 5, <http://shar.es/1moJUD>. According to UNHCR information, Kurdish sponsors may be increasingly unwilling to guarantee for Arab Sunnis in particular as a result of compassion fatigue and growing resentment towards Arab Sunnis, who are at times associated with IS and other armed groups; UNHCR, October 2014.

¹⁰⁰ For example, in Kirkuk, no new IDP arrivals have been reported in early/mid-September, reportedly owing to the closure of access points for people without a Kirkuk-specific ID card. The entry of IDPs to Khanaqeen (Diyala, under control of Kurdish forces) has reportedly been restricted by local authorities citing lack of accommodation and security concerns; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 10, 30 August - 5 September 2014*, 5 September 2014, p. 4, <http://shar.es/11ARZD>. See also IOM, *Displacement Tracking Matrix, Report III of Round VI, October 2014*, p. 5, <http://iomiraq.net/file/1270/download?token=aH5gsss0>.

¹⁰¹ Once admitted, persons not originating from the Kurdistan Region receive a 15 days "permission to stay" to remain in the Kurdistan Region. Within this period, they are requested to apply for a temporary residency, for which a sponsor, clearance by the local security (*Asayish*), and a medical test are required. UNHCR has observed a strict implementation of these regulations as well as rejections on the basis of security grounds. Residency permits need to be renewed on a regular basis, usually every 7-10 days.

¹⁰² REACH, *Displacement of Shabak & Turkmen Shi'a Minorities from Tal Afar & Ninewa Plains, June - 18 August 2014*, 18 August 2014, p. 3, <http://shar.es/11jici>.

¹⁰³ "Ethno-sectarian divisions are significant and risk compounding social tensions among different population groups. Initial displacement as a result of ISIL and their affiliates may well proceed to secondary displacement (or third, or fourth) as a result of possible violent confrontations with host communities at worst, or an unwelcoming attitude at best. Historical tensions between different ethnic groups in Iraq has not been addressed and is arguably the most significant underlying factor escalating tensions between communities, particularly between the newly displaced and host communities. Several protests have been held against the arrival of IDPs from south and central Iraq in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's Erbil and Sulaymaniyah governorates. There have also been statements from authorities that IDPs will be forcibly 'moved on' if concerns of the host population are not addressed"; UN OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview*, 26 September 2014, pp. 13-14, <http://bit.ly/1xoOfCD>.

¹⁰⁴ For example, IDPs from Al-Anbar reported feeling unsafe in Baghdad for reason of "anti-Anbar hostility", with an unidentified number of them reportedly having chosen not to register with the authorities for fear of being labelled as "terrorists" and risking arrest and harassment; UNHCR information, October 2014. See also IRIN, *Anbar IDPs in Baghdad fear for their safety*, 13 May 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5379d6464.html>. See also Associated Press, *Iraqi Arabs claim persecution by Kurds*, 30 September 2014, <http://yhoo.it/1vTKmUP>.

¹⁰⁵ UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 14, 26 September – 3 October 2014*, 3 October 2014, p. 2, <http://shar.es/1mowRL>.

¹⁰⁶ IRIN, *Selective treatment for IDPs in Kurdistan*, 16 July 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53ce19aa4.html>.

¹⁰⁷ ACAPS, *Briefing Note: Humanitarian Implications of Violence in Northern and Central Iraq*, 4 September 2014, p. 4, <http://shar.es/11zUYn>.

26. Although large-scale returns are not anticipated in the foreseeable future, reports indicate that very small numbers of IDPs have begun to return to their areas of origin once these were recaptured from IS by Kurdish forces and/or the ISF. Returns are reportedly hampered by continued insecurity and the lack of services and dysfunctional infrastructure in these areas.¹⁰⁸ IS has also reportedly mined and booby-trapped both urban and open areas from which it has retreated, putting returnees at risk.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, reports provide evidence that Sunni Arabs may be prevented from returning to ethnically or religiously mixed areas or be at risk of reprisal acts for their real or perceived support to the advances of IS.¹¹⁰

UNHCR Position on Returns

27. As the situation in Iraq remains highly fluid and volatile, and since all parts of the country are reported to have been affected, directly or indirectly,¹¹¹ by the ongoing crisis, UNHCR urges States not to forcibly return persons originating from Iraq¹¹² until tangible improvements in the security and human rights situation have occurred. In the current circumstances, many persons fleeing Iraq are likely to meet the 1951 Convention criteria for refugee status.¹¹³ When, in the context of the adjudication of an individual case of a person originating from Iraq, 1951 Convention criteria are found not to apply, broader refugee criteria as contained in relevant regional instruments¹¹⁴ or complementary forms of protection¹¹⁵ are likely to apply. In the current circumstances, with massive new internal displacement coupled with a large-scale humanitarian crisis, mounting sectarian tensions and reported access restrictions, particularly into the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, UNHCR does in principle not consider it appropriate for States to deny persons from Iraq international protection on the basis of the applicability of an internal flight or relocation alternative.¹¹⁶ Depending on the profile of the individual case, exclusion considerations may need to be examined.¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁸ Shelter Cluster, *Rapid Assessment: Area of Origin Assessment Report*, October 2014, p. 4, <http://shar.es/1moZLP>; UN OCHA, *Iraq IDP Crisis Situation Report No. 13, 20 September – 26 September 2014*, 26 September 2014, p. 5, <http://shar.es/1moJUD>; Associated Press, *ISIS battles force Iraq residents to choose displacement*, 13 September 2014, <http://fxn.ws/1quXVLY>; ACAPS, *Briefing Note: Humanitarian Implications of Violence in Northern and Central Iraq*, 4 September 2014, pp. 1, 4, <http://shar.es/11zUYn>.

¹⁰⁹ UN OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview*, 26 September 2014, pp. 15, 25, 26, <http://bit.ly/1xoOfCD>; ACAPS, *Briefing Note: Humanitarian Implications of Violence in Northern and Central Iraq*, 4 September 2014, pp. 1, 4, <http://shar.es/11zUYn>.

¹¹⁰ Reuters, *Iraq's Shi'ite militia, Kurds use U.S. air strikes to further own agendas*, 9 September 2014, <http://reut.rs/1xBwTXQ>; Los Angeles Times, *In Iraq, some Kurds accuse Arab neighbors of turning against them*, 8 September 2014, <http://fw.to/StKTPBQ>; Washington Post, *Alliance that captured besieged Iraqi town falls apart*, 5 September 2014, <http://wapo.st/1rJv5q7>; Niqash, *Mistrust Thy Neighbour? Extremists Split Social Fabric In Northern Iraq*, 4 September 2014, <http://www.niqash.org/articles/?id=3529>; ACAPS, *Briefing Note: Humanitarian Implications of Violence in Northern and Central Iraq*, 4 September 2014, pp. 1, 4, <http://shar.es/11zUYn>; Los Angeles Times, *Iraqi Kurds, buoyed by U.S. airstrikes, eye more Sunni Arab towns*, 3 September 2014, <http://fw.to/aBwZlpY>; Washington Post, *Fighting continues in Iraq after Shiite town liberated*, 1 September 2014, <http://wapo.st/1w10iW0>; Washington Post, *Ethnic tensions feed battles in northern Iraq*, 28 August 2014, <http://wapo.st/1pMPc6l>; Time, *The Rise of ISIS Sows Mistrust Between Kurds and Sunni Arabs*, 26 August 2014, <http://ti.me/XPS4F8>; Wall Street Journal, *Insurgency deepens Iraqi ethnic, sectarian divides*, 25 August 2014, <http://on.wsj.com/lqjZYAO>; Azzaman, *Kurdish forces torch Arab homes and refuse return of those displaced to their areas*, 18 August 2014, <http://www.azzaman.com/english/?p=1482>.

¹¹¹ Violent attacks are taking place all over the country (see e.g. reports of UNAMI, Iraq Body Count). Governorates not directly affected by the recent escalation of the conflict are indirectly affected, by the arrival of large numbers of IDPs and related pressures on public services and infrastructure. See above paras 15 and 19-21.

¹¹² The phrase “persons originating from Iraq” refers to both Iraqi nationals and habitual residents of Iraq, including Palestinians from Iraq.

¹¹³ The profile of persons fleeing or having fled Iraq is likely to bring them within the framework of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees [*Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* (“1951 Convention”), 28 July 1951, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, p. 137, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3be01b964.html>] and its 1967 Protocol [*Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 31 January 1967, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 606, p. 267, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3ae4.html>].

¹¹⁴ Depending on where persons originating from Iraq seek international protection, regional refugee protection frameworks apply; see *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa* (“OAU Convention”), 10 September 1969, 1001 U.N.T.S. 45, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b36018.html>, *Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America, Mexico and Panama*, 22 November 1984, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b36ec.html>. Unlike the OAU Convention, the Cartagena Declaration is not a binding legal instrument; its provisions acquire the force of law only through incorporation in national legislation].

¹¹⁵ Asylum-seekers from Iraq seeking protection in European Union Member States who have been found not to be refugees are likely to fall within the scope of the EU Qualification Directive persons in need of subsidiary protection [European Union, *Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted* (recast) (“Qualification Directive”), 13 December 2011, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4f06fa5e2.html>].

¹¹⁶ For detailed guidance on the application of an internal flight or relocation alternative and the relevance and reasonableness criteria, see UNHCR, *Guidelines on International Protection No. 4: “Internal Flight or Relocation Alternative” Within the Context of Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 23 July 2003, HCR/GIP/03/04, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3f2791a44.html>.

¹¹⁷ UNHCR, *Guidelines on International Protection No. 5: Application of the Exclusion Clauses: Article 1F of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, 4 September 2003, HCR/GIP/03/05, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3f5857684.html>.