Exiled At Home

Internal displacement resulted from the armed conflict in Iraq and its humanitarian consequences

Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor

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Summary

In June 2014, Iraq witnessed its highest record of internally displaced people due to the military operations that began after the Islamic State organization (ISIS) took control over large parts of Iraq, including the western and northern regions of the country. Thousands of families fled to escape death and violations to other Iraqi provinces ever since.

The number of displaced people during the past six years has reached more than 6 million. They had fled conflict regions for other Iraqi governorates such as Baghdad, Kirkuk, Anbar, Nineveh, Salah al-Din and Diyala, and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. About 4,867,050 displaced people have returned, while the number of those still
displaced reached around 1,198,940 as of writing this report.

Since this massive displacement movement began, Iraq has faced many challenges in meeting the humanitarian needs of the displaced and finding durable solutions.

A Euro-Med Monitor field team documented the extent of the suffering experienced by the displaced on a humanitarian level. In addition to many of them being unable to return to their original homes, IDPs suffer from an acute shortage of food, lack of sources of livelihood, lack of healthy water, scarcity of fuel for cooking and heating, power cuts and many other health and education problems.

Between the end of 2017 and 2019, the Iraqi authorities closed many displacement camps and merged others to return the displaced to their homes. This contributed to the return of more than 4 million to their areas. Despite this, more than a million displaced people are still displaced and suffer from extreme humanitarian conditions.

On the one hand, IDPs are unable to return to their homes due to destruction during the military operations amid a slow process of reconstruction. On the other hand, the Iraqi authorities did not provide an appropriate temporary alternative for them. This caused displacement again and prompted them to head towards random and unsafe areas or seek refuge in abandoned houses because their camps were closed.

In this report, Euro-Med Monitor sheds light on the conditions of displacement camps in Iraq, and the challenging humanitarian conditions experienced by the displaced. The report also features the reasons standing between the displaced and returning home while highlighting the legal aspect that addresses this type of violations.
Internal displacement is defined as the movement of one or a group of individuals from one place to another within state borders. Displacement ensues against the will of the displaced because of life-threatening external influences, such as famine, war, drought, desertification, or any other disasters that push them to leave their location and head to another area in the hopes of salvation.

Displaced persons are also defined as: “Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border”.

Iraqi families displaced due to the fighting - July 2014 (Anadolu Agency)
The issue of the displaced was not regulated by any agreement, as is the case for refugees whose status is monitored by the 1951 Convention. However, international law addressed the issue of obligation to protect the displaced by these laws:

- The international human rights law
- The international humanitarian law in armed conflict
- And the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (which are based on the two previous laws and provide useful guidance on specific aspects of displacement).

The International humanitarian law protects the population from and during the displacement of civilians since they do not participate directly in hostilities. Although international humanitarian law plays a significant role in preventing population displacement and recognizes its prohibition, it has made it permissible, if necessary, for imperative military purposes or to protect civilians themselves. Otherwise, if the displacement of civilians were used as a systematic policy without justification, it would constitute a crime against humanity.

When international humanitarian law established protection for the civilian population, it prohibited all forms of violations against it because they often constitute a cause of displacement. Attacks by parties in the conflict on civilians and civilian structures can affect the population.

If the parties to the conflict respected the rules of international law that aims to prevent the displacement of the population – such as prohibiting actions that threaten civilians’ chances of survival, or the destruction of crops, health facilities, water resources, energy supplies or housing without any valid military reason – it would provide the required protection for the population and prevent displacement.
Methodology

This report examines the causes of displacement in Iraq and conditions of displaced people inside the campsites scattered across the Iraqi governorates and Kurdistan. Some came before the closure of many camps in several governorates or still existed during this report.


Euro-Med Monitor’s field team conducted 20 interviews with displaced people, camp managers and eyewitnesses, and obtained detailed information about the situation in Iraq, whether concerning those in the formal displacement camps or those spread in informal sites.

The team also documented the challenging living and humanitarian conditions faced by the displaced, especially since the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic. In addition to the difficulties and reasons why so many of the displaced cannot return to their areas of origin.

This report presents informational and statistical details of the central governorates where the displacement camps were located but then closed, leaving their residents displaced again due to the security conditions and complex reasons preventing their return home.

The report sheds light on the displacement camps that still exist, such as those in
Anbar and Kurdistan and presents the risks of displacement and legal background to the issue in international law.

The report concludes with recommendations for the Iraqi government and international community to urgently address the phenomenon of displacement by providing protection for the displaced through the reconstruction of their areas of origin and facilitating their return without any risks.
Historically, Iraq has witnessed multiple waves of displacement due to wars, armed conflicts and ethnic and sectarian violence, which started during the Iran-Iraq war in 1980, then the 2003 US war on Iraq, ending with internal armed conflicts. The latest conflict with ISIS caused the highest wave of internal displacement, with more than 6 million people uprooted between 2014 to 2017.

Although the displacement started at the beginning of 2014, it peaked in the second half of 2014, after ISIS seized large parts of Iraq. The Iraqi government launched military operations against the organization, intending to restore the areas it lost.
They were supported by Kurdish armed forces, the Joint Task Force, the Popular Mobilization Forces, other tribal and local fighters and air cover from the international coalition led by the US. The military operations left large numbers of people displaced. The Iraqi government announced, the end of its military operations against ISIS and its presence in all controlled areas on December 1, 2017.

When looking at the escape paths of the displaced, we find that most of them used to flee to urban areas, while a minority sought refuge in the camps. Later, the governorates adopted more stringent policies with the displaced, establishing camps inside each governorate and directing them to move there. This made the displaced unable to go to urban areas like before and led to higher numbers of displaced people inside the widespread displacement camps in the central provinces.

Between December 2017 and December 2019, the Iraqi authorities returned a large group of the displaced people to their original areas to encourage the displaced to home. During that period, about 4.8 million displaced people returned to their homes. However, not all the returns were voluntary. Early, forced returns were reported. Upon their arrival, many IDPs were unable to live in their homes due to the destruction caused by war. This was because the government had not undertaken reconstruction, or the slow-paced process.

Since December 2019, the Iraqi authorities have closed many camps in several governorates. Other campsites, containing thousands of families have not shut yet. There are more than 1.2 million internally displaced now. Many of them have moved to various locations or have been displaced again due to a failed return attempt leaving them to seek refuge in informal sites. The displaced also face challenging
humanitarian conditions inside and outside the camps due to the lack of security, harsh living conditions, and their inability to meet the humanitarian needs necessary for survival.

The displaced population suffered horrific violations at the hands of ISIS during its control over some areas in Iraq, where they were subjected to killing, torture, abuse, rape, enslavement, recruitment of children and deliberate targeting as a form of punishment.
Statistics:

Displacement in Iraq
(2021-2014)

6,057,583

The total number of displaced

The number of people who are still displaced: 1,198,940

The number of people who have returned: 4,867,050

Existing displacement areas:
- Anbar Province
- Kurdistan Region

Informal displacement sites:
- Baghdad
- Nineveh
- Kirkuk
- Salahaddin
- Diyala
The Conditions of displacement camps in Iraq’s central governorates between 2020 and 2021

Euro-Med Monitor’s field team documented the conditions of the displaced and the camps in the central governorates such as Baghdad, Kirkuk, Nineveh, Salah al-Din, Diyala, Anbar, and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The documentation dealt with the conditions of closed camps, merged camps, and remaining campsites.

The governorates where camps closed were Diyala, Salah al-Din, Kirkuk, Nineveh, and Baghdad. Despite all displacement camps closing in these governorates, dozens of families were unable to return to their original homes and remained displaced in random areas suffering from difficult humanitarian conditions.

This section deals with the reasons for closing the camps in these governorates and the details of the families that remained in a state of random displacement, as follows:
1. **Nineveh Governorate**

In 2020, the Iraqi authorities closed all displacement camps in Nineveh Governorate, which contained five campsites: Al-Jada camp 1, Al-Jada camp 5, Hammam Al-Alil camp, Mount Sinjar camp, and Al-Salamiya camp 2.

- **Al-Jada 1 and Al-Jada 5 camps:** According to the testimony of many displaced people present in the two camps, the IDPs were informed by the Iraqi Immigration Department of the necessary evacuation of the camp within ten days, or they will be expelled by force. The displaced refused to leave the two camps until there were security services in their areas before returning to them, especially in the Hatra, Sinjar and Al-Baaj districts, which have not been reconstructed and the process is slow.

Through monitoring and documentation, Euro-Med discovered that the Immigration Department closed Al-Jada camp 1 by transferring about 900 families to their original areas, and about 300 other families to Al-Jada camp 5.

The Immigration Department also transferred about 122 families from Hammam Al-Alil 2 camp to Al-Jada camp 5, then closed the later after relocating about 4,420 families to their areas.

Despite closing the two camps completely, some families have been prevented from returning to their original areas, especially in neighborhoods such as southern Mosul, Sinjar, and Saladin. This is because members of these families belonged to ISIS. The number of families prevented from returning reached about 300, and were forced to migrate again to random areas.

- **Al Salamiyah camp 2:** The Immigration Department, through the camp
administration, informed the displaced people in Al Salamiyah camp 2 of the need to evacuate it as soon as possible, as the number of families in this camp reached about 11,447. The Iraqi authorities managed to return some families of this camp to their areas of origin. Other families – from Sinjar district – still cannot return to their homes due to clans and security problems.

- **Mount Sinjar camp:** The Iraqi authorities have returned all the families in this camp to their original areas.

- **Hammam Al-Alil camp:** At the end of 2020, the Iraqi Immigration Department returned most families in this camp to their original areas, leaving only seven families. Later, two of these families were transferred to their areas in the Zummar district. Three families were relocated to Al-Jada camp 5 before it closed. Syrian and Sudanese families were transferred to Al-Salamiah camp 2, then it closed permanently.

Euro-Med Monitor interviewed A.H, a woman in her fifties from Mosul who has been living in Hammam al-Alil camp since 2017 and obtained her testimony after closure was issued. She said:

“I have been living with my two children in this camp since 2017, and I feel this is my home. I have no other shelter. I have no relative to take care of me, and I do not have a monthly income. Closing this camp will break me, and I must fight once I get out of the camp. Winter is coming, and I do not know how to protect my children, and myself as my house is destroyed and has not been reconstructed. If they remove me from the camp, I will remain without shelter.”
The number of displaced people in the Nineveh governorate in informal sites and in the outskirts and borders, amounted to around 136,464.

2. Kirkuk Province

There are two camps in the Kirkuk governorate, Laylan camp and Yahyawa camp. The number of families in the Laylan camp is about 1,320 and 800 in Yahyawa. On November 13, the Iraqi authorities closed the Yahya camp and said that all the families have voluntarily returned to their original areas in Tal Afar district and the Al-Ayyadiyah sub-district. However, the families are now living in random neighborhoods due to their inability to return homes because of the dangers.

A.O, a displaced woman residing in a random camp in Kirkuk governorate after the closure of Laylan camp where she lived, told Euro-Med Monitor that:

“We left the camp a while ago, hoping to return to our normal lives, but we stayed in a random campsite due to the security risks in our original area in Tikrit. My husband died a long time ago, and my 17-year-old son and I tried to secure any opportunity to work but failed. We resorted to a random camp until we at least got a tent to shelter us in. I am an old woman who suffers from a chest disease and have breathing problems. So far I have not received proper treatment, and there are many days when we are not even able to provide food”.
In December 2020, the Iraqi authorities closed the Laylan camp, but about 1,200 families are still in a state of random displacement and unable to return to their areas. The number of displaced people in the Kirkuk governorate in the slums and on the outskirts and borders of the city reached about 18,607.

3. Saladin Governorate

On 12 November, the Iraqi authorities closed the Al-Ishaqi camp located in the Al-Ishaqi sub-district of Balad, south of the Saladin Governorate. The authorities then closed the Balad Station camp nearby. However, the expelled families from the camp have not returned to their original areas yet.

Euro-Med Monitor interviewed M.H, a displaced person in the informal camps in Saladin Governorate, who said:

“We are suffering immensely. We do not receive any support or health services. I am originally a farmer, but now I am unemployed. We want to go back to our homes and our land and go back to our normal lives. They told us many times that they would take us back to our homes, but they did nothing. [Our] children suffer from multiple diseases. We live on building ruins where snakes and insects abound, and we suffer from bugs that feed on our blood. We know nothing about the future of our children who receive no education or any care”.

There are about 60 families who are unable to return to their homes so far because they are in unsafe areas. Euro-Med Monitor’s team monitored some families who resorted to renting houses in the Al-Ishaqi district. Others set up tents in areas close
to their original homes – on the road between Baghdad and Saladin – and they are still there until now.

Euro-Med Monitor obtained the testimony of the displaced S.M, who is relocated in random camps in the Balad District, Saladin Governorate, where he said:

“We were displaced from our areas three and half years ago and settled in the Al-Takiya camp in Baghdad. We were then forcibly expelled from the campsite even though we cannot return to our areas. We are now living in the open 2 km away from our homes, and we want the government agencies to find a solution for us. Our number is nearly 3,000 families, and no one cares for us. We do not want any aid. We want to go back to our homes, which are near where we live now. The biggest crime against us is that we can see our homes with our own eyes, but we cannot go back to them.”

The number of displaced people in the Saladin governorate slum areas and the outskirts and borders of the governorate, amounted to about 63,548.

4. Diyala Governorate

There are three camps in the Diyala governorate. They are the Saad camp, Al-Wand camp 1 and Al-Wand camp 2. The Iraqi authorities have closed the campsites and evacuated the displaced from them. On 26 October 2020, the authorities closed the Saad camp, which included about 611 families. Forty families returned to their original areas, and 50 families resided outside the camp, while the rest remained in a state of random displacement.
On 11 November 2020, the authorities closed the Al-Wand camps, which contained about 874 families. Around 154 families have returned to their areas, the others remained in random displacement, with the latter rising to more than 1,200 in the governorate.

The Iraqi authorities closed the camps in the Diyala governorate, despite the displaced’s neighborhoods still witnessing security threats, especially in the Jalawla and Khanaqin outskirts, and Al-Khailaniya and Abu Saida areas in the Muqdadiya district. This affected the return of the displaced and made many of them resort to random places.

Before closing the Saad camp, its residents appealed to the Iraqi authorities to wait before implementing the decision and not rush to put residents of Saad camp into the Al-wand camp 2 located in the Khanaqin district. The reasons for this call were that the Saad camp residents feared clashes might occur with the Kurds, who are in Khanaqin and were previously deported due to land ownership problems.

The number of displaced people in the Diyala governorate in slum areas and on the outskirts and borders of the governorate amounted to about 32,740.

5. Baghdad Province

There are three camps in the Baghdad governorate that have been completely closed. Most of the displaced have returned to their areas of origin, while some remained in Baghdad with a desire to integrate and settle in the city.

The authorities closed Al-Ahl and the Al-Shams camp in the Abu Ghraib district on 18 October 2020. The campsite sheltered about 172 families, who then returned to
their original areas located in Ramadi and Al-Qaim.

As for the Nabi Allah Yunus camp in the Nahrawan region, it closed on 21 October 2020. It contained about 60 families, all of whom returned to their original areas located in Nineveh Plain and Tal Afar.

The authorities also closed the Virgin Mary complex in Zayouna on 30 October 2020. The camp contained about 80 families who refused to return to their original areas and remained in Baghdad with a desire to integrate and settle in the city, except for two families.

The complete closure of the camps in Baghdad did not prevent the presence of IDPs who sought refuge in random areas, due to their inability to return home.

The number of displaced people in Baghdad in slum areas and on the outskirts and borders of the governorate, reached about 13,477.
The conditions of the existing displacement camps

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq and Anbar Governorate are the only two regions where displacement camps still exist, despite closure plans including most Iraqi cities.

1. Kurdistan

Iraqi Kurdistan is one area where no displacement camps were closed, and there are no plans to close them. The displacement camps are in several governorates, including Erbil, Zakho and Sulaymaniyah, where these camps are distributed as shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Governorate</th>
<th>Name of the camp</th>
<th>Number of the displaced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Erbil</td>
<td>Khazir camp 1</td>
<td>1,300 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Khazir camp 2</td>
<td>1,200 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Khazir camp 3</td>
<td>1,400 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Debaga camp</td>
<td>1,700 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harsha camp</td>
<td>500 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harka camp</td>
<td>1,400 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zakho</td>
<td>Jamshko camp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulaymaniyah</td>
<td>Surdash camp</td>
<td>600 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arbad camp 1</td>
<td>800 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arbad camp 2</td>
<td>200 families</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regarding the Khazir camp 2, located east of Mosul, the displaced families there came from destroyed areas, or armed militias prevent the return of their people, and from all locations where displacement camps were closed, and their residents forcibly expelled.

Euro-Med Monitor interviewed Kh.S, a displaced person from the Mosul Governorate, residing in Khazer camp, where he said:

“I am a resident of the city of Mosul, the left coast. After the security forces advanced to expel ISIS, and after the battles took place, we had no homes or source of livelihood, so we came to the camp to at least find shelter. Now we do not have any source of income, and we depend on humanitarian provided to us by the Ministry of Immigration or by relief organizations. When the Coronavirus pandemic spread, we feared a lot for our lives and the lives of our children. Fortunately, no cases of Coronavirus were recorded in the camp, and the health situation is good”.

As for the Debeka camp, located southwest of Erbil – about 50 km outside Erbil governorate – the displaced families are among those forcibly expelled from closed camps in the governorates: Mosul, Salah al-Din, Kirkuk and Diyala.

M.Kh, a displaced person from Nineveh Governorate, residing in the Debeka camp, said to the Euro-Med Monitor:
“We uprooted from Nineveh due to the criminal acts of ISIS, and our conditions are challenging as our homes are destroyed, and until now, we cannot return. Charitable organizations helped us by setting up tents, and we still receive relief aid from them. We also receive food baskets from the Ministry of Immigration, but, recently, we have been suffering from their delay. We have not received any significant aid for 60 days, and they often promise us to provide support, but we have not received anything for a while. I feel that the government does not care about our situation and our poor living conditions”

Harsha camp contained 500 displaced families from Mosul and prevented from returning to their areas of origin.

Many of the displaced who returned to their areas moved to displacement camps in Kurdistan again due to the living situation and inability to rent housing because of the destruction of their homes during the armed conflict in their areas.

The Euro-Med Monitor interviewed F.K, a displaced person from Tal Afar, who lives in Harsha camp in the Kurdistan region. She said:

“We left about four years ago from Tal Afar and walked on our feet for four days until my husband and one of my sons died of thirst, and another went missing on the way. I cannot go back to my area. I have no home or breadwinner. Even the security situation does not allow me to return. I came to this camp in Kurdistan and am afraid it will close, and we will be isolated.”

The number of displaced people in Kurdistan in camps reached about 9,100.
2. Anbar Governorate

The Al-Anbar Governorate is the only governorate where displacement camps are still located. They are still operating, and the Iraqi authorities have not closed them nor plan to do so. There are three camps in the Anbar Governorate: Ameriyat al-Fallujah camp, Habbaniyah camp and Kilo 18 camp. The Bzeibiz camp is informal. In the following table, the latest data on the displaced in the Anbar Governorate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The name of the camp</th>
<th>The number of families in each</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ameriyat al-Fallujah camp</td>
<td>1,000 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habbaniyah camp</td>
<td>400 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilo 18 camp</td>
<td>400 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bzeibiz camp</td>
<td>1,200 families</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Euro-Med Monitor interviewed A.N, a displaced person from Jurf al-Sakhar, who lives in Bzeibiz informal camp. He said:

“We were uprooted from Jurf al-Sakhar seven years ago, and we have no health or educational services. Our conditions are terrible. Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Ministry of Immigration and relief organizations no longer provide us with aid like before.”

In another interview with A.S, a displaced person from the Al-Owaisat area, residing in Al-Amiriya camp, he said:
The number of displaced people in the Anbar governorate in camps, slum areas and on the outskirts and borders of the governorate, reached about 45,352.

Z.A, a displaced person from the Anbar Governorate, who was forcibly removed from the tourist city camp in the Habbaniyah city after it closed, says:

“They closed our camp and took us out suddenly. I have six children and do not know where to go. My clan in the Anbar province accuses me and my family of belonging to ISIS. I fear for my children and husband. We cannot go back to our area. We are afraid that we will be hidden or liquidated”.

“We were displaced from the Al-Owaisat area as a result of the hostilities. We don’t know what will happen to us now. We can’t go back to our homes. We tried to appeal to the United Nations and successive governments but in vain. Our humanitarian situation and living conditions are appalling. There is a lack of food and medicines, and on an economic level, we have no jobs or sources of income.”
Number of families still displaced in each governorate

1. Baghdad 13,477
2. Nineveh 136,464
3. Salahaddin 63,548
4. Diyala 32,740
5. Kirkuk 18,607
6. Anbar 45,352
7. Kurdistan Region 9,100
Humanitarian conditions of the displaced families in camps and slums

Euro-Med Monitor’s field team visited many displacement camps and slums where the displaced are located and examined their humanitarian conditions. The field team found that the humanitarian conditions of the displaced are exceedingly difficult, in terms of health, education, electric power, fuel, food security, water, or waste removal.

First: health

IDPs inside the camps and in random areas suffer major health problems, including a lack of medicines for chronic and common diseases. There is also a severe shortage of medicines for skin diseases amid a spread of lice and scabies among displaced families. The camps also suffer from a scarcity of medical devices such as laboratory
and dental equipment, and supplies for people with disabilities. 

Euro-Med Monitor interviewed I.M, a displaced person in Baghdad, who said:

“My 12-year-old son has asthma after being displaced from the Anbar Governorate. We moved from one place to another until we arrived in the unregistered camps in Baghdad. I want to treat my son because he is chronically ill, but we do not have enough money to take him to the doctor.”

Although health services are provided equally to all camps and displaced people, they are insufficient, and do not meet the minimum level of necessary health care. The Euro-Med team interviewed “O.S, a displaced person in Baghdad, who said:

“Usually, I go to our camp clinic which only provides drink medicine. Most of the medicines are expired. I must go to a private doctor because my daughter is sick and has fever and diarrhea, and she has been vomiting for seven days, but I cannot go to the doctor because there is no money. I don’t know what to do or where to go.”

Second: Education

Those displacement camps suffer from a difficult educational reality, as the camps lack in educational staff and depend on volunteer lecturers who work without pay. In addition, the classes are overcrowded, there is no running water in the toilets, and a lack of drinking water and educational supplies like stationery and others.
Moreover, the pandemic has worsened the educational situation, as the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education decided to close schools and rely on e-learning, which the displaced cannot engage in. Euro-Med Monitor team also monitored many displaced students’ dropout due to poor financial conditions, and lack of resources available for their educational process.

Euro-Med Monitor team interviewed Z.H, a displaced woman in the Anbar Governorate, who said:

“I have two children in primary school, and I am unable to send my third child to study like her siblings because we have no money. She should be in first grade now. When I teach my two children, I teach my third child with them, but not being able to send her to school makes me upset and afraid for her future”.

Third: Electricity

Looking at the camps in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, we find that the electricity is well equipped in some provinces, but not others. In Sulaymaniyah, the regional government provides six amps of electricity for each caravan. This means there is electricity around the clock. As for the rest of the regional camps, they receive less electricity hours.

Many camps are supplied with electrical power through generators, with one for each campsite, which is not enough due to the lack of capacity for families. In
addition, some camps do not enjoy these services. As for the Anbar governorate and other areas of random displacement, they also suffer from a lack of electricity. The Anbar governorate, for example, is connected to the national electricity network, and is therefore, subject to a cut-off system programmed for the governorate. This negatively affects the displaced people, especially those living in poor conditions.

Fourth: Fuel

The High Commission for Human Rights in Iraq announced earlier that it is scheduled to distribute kerosene for cooking and heating to all camps, but it was delayed, then distributed in small quantities. These were not enough to meet the families’ needs. In the Anbar Governorate, only 20 liters per month were allocated to each family, which is an exceedingly small and insufficient quantity due to the families’ constant need for cooking and heating. In Kurdistan, the kerosene was distributed regularly monthly.

Fifth: Food security

Families in displacement camps are still suffering from severe food shortages due to unemployment. Families are still dependent on humanitarian aid, food baskets and money allowances provided by the World Food Program and International Health through the Iraqi Ministry of Migration.

Euro-Med Monitor team interviewed A.A, a displaced person in Kurdistan, who said:
Although the food aid that the displaced receive is their main food source, they do not receive it on a regular basis like when it was distributed by the United Nations office in cooperation and coordination with the Office of the Migration Department every two months. Now, the distribution of aid is sporadic and random and the displaced receive it every three months, or not at all sometimes.

**Sixth: Water and waste removal**

Euro-Med Monitor team monitored the water availability in displacement camps across many governorates and found that some depend on large tanks filled with water using external pipes. Others rely on purification plants for drinking water. Overall, the monitoring team found that the camps received enough water. At the level of waste removal, the team monitored the accumulation of waste near camps for long periods as the waste is not regularly removed by competent government agencies. This generates immense fears of disease outbreaks among displaced families, especially children.

“I am a daily-paid worker. I do not have a stable job. Last week, I only worked one day, and did not work at all this week. In this case, my income is not enough to secure daily food to support my family, besides, food aid has come sporadically and with intervals”.
Impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the displaced

The Coronavirus pandemic has severely affected the conditions of the displaced and worsened the humanitarian situation, especially at health and economic levels. The pandemic spread across all Iraqi governorates and directly affected the displaced who lack the most basic health safety conditions. Damage caused by the curfew contributed to preventing the arrival of food aid and severely affected the economic situation of the displaced families.
First: The health aspect

In general, the health and preventive services provided to displaced families in the camps declined during the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic, whether by health centers or by roving medical teams.

In the Anbar Governorate, there was only one health centre operating to provide health care to displaced families belonging to the Dary Human Organization. It lacked specialized medical staff, medical and preventive supplies needed to confront the pandemic. In the Nineveh Governorate, a group of caravans has been allocated to examine those suspected coronavirus infections. Several sites have been prepared for sanitary isolation and are managed by international organizations, such as the Première Urgence Internationale and the International Medical Corps.

In the displacement camps in the Salah al-Din Governorate, civil defense teams worked in cooperation with international and local organizations to sterilize the campsites and distribute masks and sterilizers to displaced families.

In the Diyala Governorate, great attention was given to health, especially after discovering five Coronavirus cases in the Al-Wand camp. The cases were isolated and treated before recovery. Then, government institutions and international organizations distributed masks and sterilization materials and carried out awareness and education campaigns.

Additional sterilization campaigns were carried out by the Civil Defense Directorate in cooperation with the Red Crescent Society. The health situation in Baghdad was terrible as there are no health centers inside most of the camps and a lack of medical supplies.
teams and ambulances to transport emergency cases to hospitals. There were no campaigns to sterilize the campsites, whether by international or local organizations. In Kurdistan, the health situation was relatively better. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Migration and Displacement continuously sterilized the camps, distributed preventive supplies without interruption, and allocated quarantine places for the injured.

**Second: The economic aspect**

The government’s decisions to combat the Coronavirus pandemic negatively affected the economic and living conditions of displaced families. These decisions included imposing curfews, closing camps for the displaced and preventing families from leaving them. These measures extended over five months, which exhausted the displaced financially, especially those who live on their daily income through chores.

These measures exacerbated the unemployment rates among displaced workers, automatically leading to food insecurity, as families could not collect their daily income. In addition, they often did not receive the food baskets provided by international and local organizations, which has recently witnessed delays and interruptions for several months.
Why IDPs cannot return to their areas

There are many reasons why IDPs are unable to return to their homes:

- The destruction of their houses, lands, and properties
- The security risks in their areas
- The dangers of explosives and mines planted in the original areas left from armed conflicts.
- The weak provision of basic services and infrastructure.
- The lack of job opportunities for the displaced in their areas, especially since they have become dependent on jobs in the areas of displacement.
- The families whose homes were destroyed and did not receive compensation, which made them unable to leave the displacement camps.
- Not allowing the displaced families whose members fought with ISIS to return to their areas of origin, which happened in the Anbar Governorate, where security authorities prevented these families from returning home.
- The displaced families, which have members belonging to ISIS, fear to return to their areas, such as the IDPs of the Karama camp in the Salah al-Din governorate, and Qayyarah district in Nineveh.
- Not giving the displaced a sufficient period to arrange their return to their original areas through the sudden closure of the camps.
This report addresses two imminent risks of displacement, which are related to internally displaced children because of poor living conditions, and sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls. Both were addressed in the United Nations report issued in June 2020.

**Internally displaced children:**

The situation of displaced children inside Iraq indicates that they are still traumatized by exposure to violence. Children are also deprived of education and opportunities, which are among the most tragic legacies of armed conflicts in Iraq. Internally displaced children living in areas previously controlled by ISIS have been exposed
to extreme forms of violence, exploitation, and abuse. They currently face additional psychosocial challenges due to their displacement. These children need mental health and psychosocial services and safe spaces to recover and resume their normal lives. Many displaced children have lost family members and caregivers in the conflict. As a result of this social marginalization, children are at high risk of exploitation and abuse.

Other children bear the burden of work and support for themselves and their families. Children of female-headed households and unaccompanied children are particularly affected. Many displaced children lack access to basic services and education, with hardly any access to education and future livelihoods.

The extent to which displaced children inside and outside camps deprived of education is of great concern. They cannot enroll in the formal education system due to a lack of civil documentation and restrictions on movement. Many displaced children missed out on years of school and face difficulties in resuming them. Since children enrolled in school depend on their age rather than educational level, those who have missed out on school are at risk of not continuing with their education. In many cases, these children cannot qualify in their classes and continue their education. Many other children are considered too old to be accepted back into the formal school system. Displaced girls face additional challenges in receiving education due to existing social norms and gender stereotypes, and early marriage. Children who lived in ISIS-controlled areas face further barriers to attending school due to discrimination and their inability to obtain civil documents. In the camps, teachers usually volunteer from the community who lack the required qualifications,
depriving children of the opportunity to develop their cognitive potential. Meanwhile, out-of-school children are more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Discriminatory barriers impede many internally displaced and returnee children’s accesses to birth certificates and other civil documents. Since the presence of the child’s father in court or presentation of his death certificate is required to issue birth certificates, homeless children who have lost or separated from their parents, or born because of sexual violence, cannot obtain birth certificates and other documents. Without civil documentation, children who cannot enroll in formal education, access health care and basic services, apply for security clearances to move around the country or exercise their rights as children. Most of the time, children who remain in ISIS-controlled areas have no birth certificates or hold certificates not recognized by the Iraqi government.

Internally displaced children and adolescents whose family members are perceived to be associated with ISIS, or perceive themselves to be associated with ISIS, are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse and at risk of arbitrary detention. The requirements for obtaining security permits have deprived children of families supposedly linked to ISIS from civil documents and basic services. Many of these children are unaccompanied or separated from their families and face additional obstacles to reunite due to stigmas attached to affiliation with ISIS. Although several programs, including civil society programs, currently provide invaluable education and psychological support to children, the scale of the problem requires a more comprehensive mechanism across the country.
• **Sexual and gender-based violence:**

According to the UN report, there have been alarming reports of sexual and gender-based violence against internally displaced women and girls, and to a lesser extent against men and boys. Those in the camps are particularly vulnerable due to the lack or limited access to basic services, livelihood opportunities, and limited mobility. Domestic violence is widespread among the internally displaced. There have been calls for a law to combat domestic violence, particularly in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. There are records of “survival sex”, where women trade sex for food or protection. Forced child marriages have been used as passive coping mechanisms for displaced families with disadvantaged livelihoods living in poverty.

There were also reports of sexual harassment and sexual violence against women whose families were perceived to be associated with ISIS, such as the widows of alleged ISIS members, at checkpoints or perpetrated by security agencies inside the camps.

In camps and areas hosting IDPs, fear of sexual and gender-based violence causes women and girls to feel unsafe, and they may avoid going to markets, schools, service delivery points or checkpoints. This increases their economic hardship and consequent vulnerability.

Cases of sexual and gender-based violence remain largely unreported, likely due to the lack of access to judicial or administrative mechanisms, fear of stigmatization or reprisals, and lack of criminal accountability for perpetrators and survivor protection mechanisms.
The Ministry of Interior stated that it had established mechanisms to receive complaints about sexual violence within the camps, such as mobile units deployed in the campsites and open hotlines to report domestic violence. While these efforts are most welcome, they must be accompanied by greater criminal accountability for perpetrators, life-saving measures for survivors, and awareness-raising efforts to combat stigmatization. Protection and legal, medical, and psychosocial support services should be strengthened, particularly within camps, for women and girls who have survived sexual and gender-based violence.

Some internally displaced or returnee women and girls have already experienced conflict-related sexual violence and need health care and psychosocial support. Women and girls from Yazidi communities and other minorities who escaped ISIS captivity, sexual exploitation and abuse need more tailored support for trauma, recovery and rehabilitation. The situation of women whose children were born because of sexual violence must also be addressed.
legal background

The suffering of the displaced is not limited to existing conditions in the main displacement camps; pain doubles in unregistered random camps. This suffering is represented by random displacement in places not prepared for housing and the lack of basic needs indispensable for survival, such as health care, food, education, and protection from violence.

This part of the report examines the legal situation of IDPs in unregistered camps and the basic rights that they should enjoy that may not be infringed or denied.

**First: The unregistered camps**

The process of resettling the displaced is an inherent part of their rights, emphasized by Principle 28 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement issued by the United Nations, which states:

“1. Competent authorities have the primary duty and responsibility to establish conditions, as well as provide the means, which allow internally displaced persons to return voluntarily, in safety and with dignity, to their homes or places of habitual residence, or to resettle voluntarily in another part of the country. Such authorities shall endeavor to facilitate the reintegration of returned or resettled internally displaced persons. 2. Special efforts should be made to ensure the full participation of internally displaced persons in the planning and management of their return or resettlement and reintegration.”
Securing adequate housing and a decent life is a fundamental duty of the Iraqi state, stipulated in Article 30 of the Iraqi Constitution, which states:

“The State shall guarantee to the individual and the family - especially children and women – social and health security, the basic requirements for living a free and decent life, and shall secure for them suitable income and appropriate housing.”

Principle 9 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement issued by the United Nations also emphasized that states are obligated to prevent the displacement of minorities and peasants, saying:

“States are under a particular obligation to protect against the displacement of indigenous peoples, minorities, peasants, pastoralists and other groups with a special dependency on and attachment to their lands.”

• **Second: health care**

Article 31 of the Iraqi constitution guarantees that all citizens have access to satisfactory health care, as it stipulates the following:

“Every citizen has the right to health care. The State shall maintain public health and provide the means of prevention and treatment by building different types of hospitals and health institutions.”

Principle 19 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement issued by the United Nations stressed the need for internally displaced persons to receive necessary health care, as it states:

“1. All wounded and sick internally displaced persons as well as those
with disabilities shall receive to the fullest extent practicable and with the least possible delay, the medical care and attention they require, without distinction on any grounds other than medical ones. When necessary, internally displaced persons shall have access to psychological and social services. 2. Special attention should be paid to the health needs of women, including access to female health care providers and services, such as reproductive health care, as well as appropriate counseling for victims of sexual and other abuses. 3. Special attention should also be given to the prevention of contagious and infectious diseases, including AIDS, among internally displaced persons.”

Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child stressed that all means should be taken to protect children from the dangers of disease, as it stipulated:

“1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services. [...] 2. (c) To combat disease and malnutrition, including within the framework of primary health care, through, inter alia, the application of readily available technology and through the provision of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking-water, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution;”
• **Third: Protection from violence**

The exposure of displaced persons to various forms of violence, whether in registered or unregistered camps, especially vulnerable groups such as children, requires additional protection, emphasized by principle 11 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement issued by the United Nations:

“2. Internally displaced persons, whether or not their liberty has been restricted, shall be protected in particular against: (a) Rape, mutilation, torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and other outrages upon personal dignity, such as acts of gender-specific violence, forced prostitution and any form of indecent assault; (b) Slavery or any contemporary form of slavery, such as sale into marriage, sexual exploitation, or forced labor of children; and (c) Acts of violence intended to spread terror among internally displaced persons.”

• **Fourth: Access to food and protection from hunger**

People's access to a standard of food and protection from hunger are among important human rights, which is emphasized in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, where it states:

“Recognizing the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, shall take, individually and through international co-operation, the measures, including specific programs, which are needed:
(a) To improve methods of production, conservation and distribution of food by making full use of technical and scientific knowledge, by disseminating knowledge of the principles of nutrition and by developing or reforming agrarian systems in such a way as to achieve the most efficient development and utilization of natural resources;
(b) Taking into account the problems of both food-importing and food-exporting countries, to ensure an equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need.”

This is also emphasized by Principle 18 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement issued by the United Nations, which states:

“1. All internally displaced persons have the right to an adequate standard of living. 2. At the minimum, regardless of the circumstances, and without discrimination, competent authorities shall provide internally displaced persons with and ensure safe access to: (a) Essential food and potable water; (b) Basic shelter and housing; (c) Appropriate clothing; and (d) Essential medical services and sanitation.”

• **Fifthly: Education**

The Iraqi constitution affirms in article 34 the citizens right to education, especially children in the primary stage, as it stipulates the following:

“Education is a fundamental factor for the progress of society and is a right guaranteed by the state. Primary education is mandatory and the state guarantees that it shall combat illiteracy.”
This is the same as Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states:

1. “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.”
Recommendations

Based on what is mentioned in this report, Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor recommends:

the Iraqi government

• to compensate the displaced who lost their homes so that they can rebuild them and return;
• to provide health care to the displaced in unregistered camps, especially since the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic in various Iraqi governorates;
• to protect IDPs returning to their areas from armed attacks that threaten their lives and cause repeated suffering to their displacement;
• to create appropriate conditions for the displaced after closing their camps and stop the policy of forcible return and sudden closures that leave the displaced to face the unknown;
• to provide existing camps with specialized educational cadres and appropriate capabilities to improve the educational level of children;
• to improve the living conditions of the displaced, especially as they are fundamental rights that cannot be dispensed with or deprived of.
• to provide the displaced with rations monthly and ensure the quality and suitability of the food provided.
the international community

- to ensure the return of the displaced to their areas and homes, where military operations have ended in compliance with the guidelines, especially in areas where the homes have not sustained significant damage;
- to support the existing camps, especially regarding food security and health care; and
- to carry out its duties to activate reconstruction efforts, and stimulate efforts aimed at activating the values of social cohesion and the rule of law.
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