

# Baghdad Field Office

## Overview – December 2024

UNHCR's Baghdad Field Office covers 13 governorates located in Federal Iraq, including Anbar, Babylon, Baghdad, Diyala, Karbala, Najaf, Salah Al-Din and Wassit, located in the centre of the country, as well as Basrah, Diwaniya, Maysan, Al-Muthanna, and Thi Qar, located in the southern Iraq.

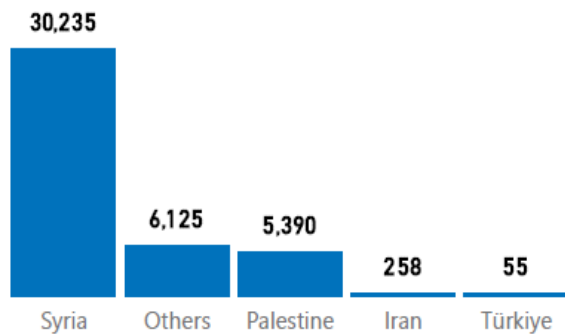
Some 10 per cent of refugees live in southern and central Iraq, mainly in urban areas, and primarily in Baghdad. In total, governorates covered by UNHCR's Baghdad Field Office host more than 44,000 refugees and asylum-seekers<sup>1</sup>, around 200,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs)<sup>2</sup> and 2.6 million IDP Returnees<sup>3</sup>.

UNHCR in Baghdad implements protection and durable solutions programmes directly and through its partners in accordance with the UNHCR Iraq's Multi-Year Strategy as well as in line with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) in Iraq and the Global Compact on Refugees. In Federal Iraq, UNHCR works in partnership with the Legal Clinics Network (LCN), the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and InterSOS.

### ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

**44,286 refugees and asylum-seekers** are registered with UNHCR who live in southern and central Iraq.

#### Countries of Origin



Over 30% are women and children

Almost 70% % reside in Baghdad district.

### INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS AND RETURNEES

**190,974 IDPs** residing in 13 governorates covered by UNHCR's BFO

**2,666,466 Returnees** in Anbar, Babylon, Baghdad and Salah Al-Din

Almost 23% of IDPs reside in Salah Al-Din governorate

Over 13,000 civil documents secured for displaced and vulnerable Iraqis



#### UNHCR STAFF

01 International Staff  
18 National Staff  
(including 5 UN volunteers)

<sup>1</sup>UNHCR figures as of end of November 2024

<sup>2</sup>IOM DTM IDPs figures as of end of August 2024

<sup>3</sup>IOM DTM Returnees figures as of end of August 2024

## Protection Activities

In central and southern governorates covered by the Baghdad Field Office, UNHCR provides refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs with protection services through **Community Support Centers (CSC)**.

Overall, UNHCR works through **four CSCs** in central and south Iraq. This includes CSCs in Baghdad and Najaf operated by UNHCR and its partner LCN, the CSC in Al-Qaim is operated by UNHCR's partner IRC, and the CSC in Anbar governorate run by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, where UNHCR carries out community-based protection activities through IRC.

### Registration and civil documentation

To strengthen the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers against arrest and deportation and ensure their access to basic services, in recent years UNHCR has increased its registration efforts in central and south Iraq. As of 30 November 2024, **UNHCR registered over 44,286 refugees and asylum-seekers in central and south Iraq, over 30% of whom are women and children**. This includes 16,966 refugees registered so far in 2024, among these more than 52% are new arrivals while 47% have been in Iraq for more than 12 months but registered later (in-situ).

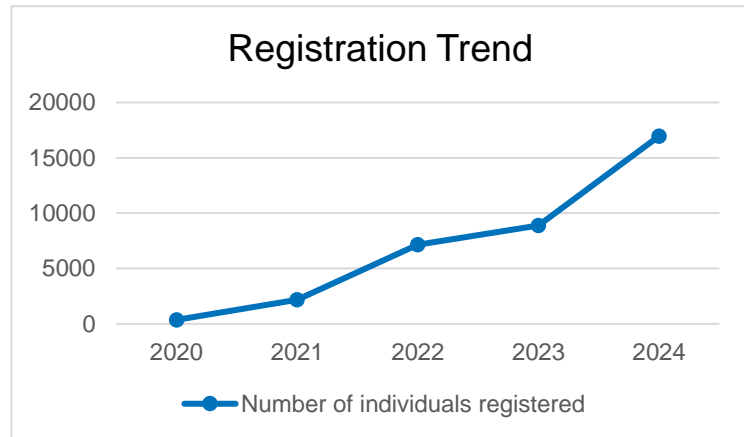


Figure 1. UNHCR registration trend in central and south Iraq from 2020 to end of November 2024.

UNHCR registers asylum-seekers in the CSC located in Baghdad and through mobile missions conducted in Federal Iraq governorates. Asylum-seekers can request registration appointments online through [UNHCR Help Page](#). On average, UNHCR registers 1,400 asylum-seekers per month through its 15 staff working in Central and South Iraq. In parallel, UNHCR works closely with authorities on [asylum capacity building and advocates for fair, efficient, and non-discriminatory processes and systems](#).

In Federal Iraq, refugees and asylum-seekers are issued documents, known as PC-MOI cards, by the Ministry of Interior which [facilitate their access to public services such as healthcare and education](#). UNHCR supports the Ministry of Interior's Permanent Committee for Refugees (PC-MOI) to conduct [registration including mobile missions](#) to ensure that refugees outside of Baghdad also have access to the national asylum system and government documentation. Asylum-seekers need to obtain UNHCR's asylum seeker certificate before being eligible for the PC-MOI cards. As of October, UNHCR has supported three PC-MOI mobile missions to Basra, Kirkuk and Ninewa, during which the PC-MOI issued 2,145 ID cards whereas in Baghdad the committee issued more than 2,700 ID card.

### Legal assistance

Through the CSC, UNHCR and partners provide [legal assistance](#) to refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs. This includes legal counselling and representation, assistance with administrative and legal procedures, and legal awareness sessions. As of October, UNHCR and partners provided [some 5,000 refugees with legal aid services](#), including counselling and representation before legal and administrative bodies, supporting them to resolve legal issues. In addition, [more than 3,000 refugees and asylum-seekers participated in legal awareness sessions](#).

For refugees and asylum seekers in detention, UNHCR and partners also provide targeted legal assistance. So far in 2024, [over 980 asylum-seekers in detention in southern and central Iraq, who had been arrested on migration-related charges, have been supported to be released.](#)

In governorates where UNHCR does not operate CSCs, legal assistance is delivered through UNHCR's network of legal partners, including lawyers and mobile legal teams, ensuring that help reaches those in need regardless of their location.

### Community-based protection

Through the CSC, UNHCR and partners provide [child protection](#) services, including counselling, recreational and educational activities for children at risk. They also provide comprehensive support for survivors and those at risk of [gender-based violence](#), encompassing [response, mitigation, and support services](#) such as counselling, psychological support, and legal assistance.

At the CSC, partners also carry out [protection assessments and referrals](#), identifying protection needs of refugees to refer them to relevant services and help guide targeted interventions. Additionally, the centres also organize [awareness raising sessions](#) on various protection topics, including child protection, gender-based violence and feedback mechanisms among others. As of October, over 13,000 individuals participated in awareness raising sessions organized by UNHCR partners at the CSC.<sup>4</sup>

### Cash-based assistance

In Central and South Iraq, UNHCR provides [multipurpose cash assistance \(MPCA\)](#) to enable socio-economically vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers to cover their basic needs, preventing them from falling into dire poverty and decreasing risks of harmful coping mechanisms such as reducing food intake and accumulating debt. As of October 2024, [UNHCR has provided over 5,200 refugees and asylum-seekers \(more than 1,600 households\) who live in central and southern Iraq with MPCA.](#)<sup>5</sup>

In addition, UNHCR also provides one-time [Emergency Cash Assistance \(ECA\)](#) to the most vulnerable refugees. As of October 2024, [four families \(a total of 13 individuals\) received ECA in central and south Iraq.](#)

## Towards the inclusion of refugees in national systems

In Federal Iraq, the protection environment is relatively favourable for refugees and asylum-seekers who can access national services with their PC-MOI card. UNHCR and its legal partners also assist refugees and asylum-seekers with counselling and assistance if they are denied access or face discrimination due to their legal status.

As a result of UNHCR's advocacy, since January 2024, [refugee children can enroll in primary and secondary education without needing to provide their parents' residency permits as schools accept the UNHCR certificate instead.](#) UNHCR has also contributed to strengthening the education services for both refugee and host communities through the rehabilitation of a primary school in Haditha, Anbar governorate.

Furthermore, refugees and asylum-seekers with a UNHCR certificate have access to primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare services, although some surgical interventions, chronic medicines, and cancer treatment, require a residency permit.

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<sup>4</sup> UNHCR data as of end of October 2024

<sup>5</sup> Figures as of October 2024

## Partnerships

In central and southern Iraq, legal assistance, access to documentation, prevention and response to detention and deportation, child protection, gender-based violence services and support to meet basic needs are implemented through UNHCR's partners **Intersos** in Salah Al-Din, **IRC** in Anbar and **LCN** in all other governorates.

Through its partner **Sorouh for Sustainable Development Foundation (SSDF)**, UNHCR supports the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) scholarships programme. To date, 17 refugee students are currently enrolled in the DAFI programme in central and southern Iraq.<sup>6</sup>

At institutional level, UNHCR supports the **Ministry of Interior** through its partnership with the PC-MOI on registration and documentation of refugees and asylum-seekers, protecting them from the risk of arbitrary arrest and deportation. Also, UNHCR collaborates with **the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD)**, and the **Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR)**, the **Ministry of Planning**, and the **Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs**. Furthermore, UNHCR works closely with other **UN/humanitarian organizations** to support the government's responses to refugees and IDPs, exchange information and coordinate advocacy.

## Advocacy Priorities

1. **Iraq continues to lack a comprehensive legal framework governing the status and protection of refugees in line with international standards and good practices.** UNHCR continues to support the Government with finalizing and enacting the new refugee law to make Iraq aligned with international standards and good practices.
2. UNHCR supports the Government to ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers enjoy **non-discriminatory access to territory including through quality registration and timely issuance of documentation.**
3. Following the transition from a humanitarian approach to one rooted in development, **UNHCR and partners advocate with authorities in Federal Iraq for broadening the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in national systems**, including education, healthcare as well as protection services.

**UNHCR thanks its major donors of unearmarked funds, as well as those who contribute to directly to the Iraq operation and to the regional response for Syrian refugees:**

Belgium | Canada | Denmark | European Union | Finland | France | Germany | Iceland | Ireland | Japan | Grand Duchy of Luxembourg | Netherlands | Norway | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | United States of America | Private Donors

<sup>6</sup> Figures as of beginning of November 2024



*"The UID is everything to us. Through this document, we access medical care, education and other services."*

*Hamed and his family were displaced from their neighbourhood in Baghdad due to the conflict in 2014. Thanks to UNHCR they were able to obtain their UID cards and access basic services. Recently, Younis, his 10-year-old child, got a certificate of appreciation from the school for his excellence in the mid-year exams. He loves studying English and dreams to become a pilot.*