

UNHCR Iraq Syria situation update nber 2: 31st March 2011

1. (Syrian Persons of Concern) to Dohuk and Erbil Governorates:

1.1.INTRODUCTION

The political unrest in Syria has led to an increase in the number of arrivals of Syrian Kurds to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR) in February and March 2012. As of the 31st OF March , UNHCR had registered a total of 638 cases in 792 individual Syrian nationals who are temporarily accommodated in various locations in Dohuk as well as scattered in Erbil and Sulymaniya. In addition, it is estimated that in Dohuk there are about 400 new arrivals not registered yet, waiting in the mosque.

According to a representative from the Department of Displacement and Migration (DDM) in Dohuk, a total of 1700 Syrian individuals have entered Kurdistan since the demonstrations started in Syria. This number is obtained from Asayish, the General Security Department in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR), which registers all the arrivals entering KR.

In overall the number of new arrivals estimated during the last ten days is the same as the number who arrived in the last 2 months.

When Syrian new arrivals started entering Kurdistan region through Dohuk Governorate, UNHCR jointly with DDM started a basic registration to record the basic bio data of the new arrivals and to have estimate figures and a clear picture on the scale of the influx. However families and individuals started moving irregularly between locations in Dohuk, in addition the local authorities decided to halt on any registration until the new site in Domiz is in place and the new arrivals are moved to the site in order to resume the registration. Based on that, the registration in Dohuk was put on hold on 20 March 2012 in anticipation of the move of all the new arrivals to the new Domiz camp where proper registration procedures will be implemented in coordination with the Government.

In Erbil, a total of 326 newly arrived Syrian nationals have been registered by UNHCR, and in Sulymaniya 34 Syrian individuals have registered with UNHCR following the demonstrations in Syria.

1.2 PROFILE OF THE NEW ARRIVALS

The majority of the registered single males are between 18 and 21 years. During the last week, 6 unaccompanied minors (aged 15-17 years) were also registered in Erbil. UNHCR has registered one family headed by a single female. It is further

reported that the majority of the children who have arrived have not been able to enrol in school in KR, their families think that the school year has already passed. The majority of the registered Syrian new arrivals reported that they fled following the prolonged unrest, insecurity and continued retaliation against demonstrators in Syria some claimed to have deserted the army while others were called to serve in the army but are unwilling to do so.

UNHCR staffs in Dohuk and Erbil have conducted group and individual interviews with a representative sample of the new arrivals to get a better understanding and do a preliminary assessment of their reason to flee, their protection needs and their intentions. UNHCR Dohuk staff interviewed 20 families of newly arrived Syrian families and 20 singles in Domiz site, while UNHCR Erbil did individual interviews with 7 Syrian deserters. The majority of the individuals in all these groups expressed their wish to return to Syria if the security situation there would improve and/or the current Syrian regime would fall. Some of the families and singles also expressed their wish to find work in KR and try to establish new lives here.

The families and the singles in Dohuk expressed that their current living conditions were difficult as they had to share limited living space with others and they all stated that they wanted to move to the new Domiz camp as soon as possible. In Erbil, most of the registered new arrivals also live under challenging conditions; in many cases several singles share one rented room.

1.3 PROTECTION

As reported last week, after crossing the border to Iraq, the new Syrian arrivals are registered with Asayish in the villages along the border in the part of Ninewa Governorate which is under *de facto* Kurdish control. However, it is now reported that the Asayish no longer is issuing the new arrivals with an official letter stating that they are free to move within KR. They are, however, provided with a number on a piece of paper. This number is shown at the checkpoint to KR which allows them access to the region. When the new arrivals have reached the location in KR where they are temporarily settling, they again report to Asayish. However, they are not provided with any documentation at this point and as such the majority of the new Syrian arrivals do not have any documentation legalizing their stay in KR. It has been reported that this has hindered some of the new arrivals to move freely within KR and created obstacles to accessing services and jobs. Nevertheless, in general, the local authorities have proven to be generous in the reception and assistance of Syrians, no individuals have reported any fears in KR and no case of refoulement was recorded to date.

The new arrivals are also requested by Asayish in the border area to provide a sponsor in Iraq. They have been allowed to appoint Syrian asylum seekers already residing in the country as their sponsors and no reports of denial of access due to lack of sponsor have been reported.

When the new arrivals have reached their location inside KR, they can register with UNHCR. In Erbil and Sulymaniya, they are registered by UNHCR in the Protection, Assistance and Returnee Centres (PARCs). In Dohuk, the registration which was conducted jointly by DDM and UNHCR was put on hold as of 20 March 2012 in anticipation of the final establishment of the new Domiz camp. Once the camp is ready to receive and register new arrivals, DDM and UNHCR Dohuk will initiate a structured and thorough registration of the arrivals moving to the camp.

1.4 COORDINATION

A coordinated response with the local authorities has been put in place in preparation for an influx of Syrian new arrivals. The UNHCR team, led by the Head of Office, is in continuous discussions with the Ministry of Interior in Erbil and the Governor of Dohuk to respond to the needs for assistance and protection to the new arrivals. UNHCR has also coordinated with UNESCO to look into the education needs of the new Syrian Arrivals in Iraq; UNICEF committed itself to assess the water, sanitation infrastructure and education needs of children out of school..

1.5. NEW DOMIZ CAMP

The KRG has decided to arrange for a site where the new Syrian arrivals will be accommodated.

At this stage a total of 60 tents: 46 for families (accommodating 1-6 family members each) and 14 for civilian singles (accommodating up to 4 each) have been installed, and more will be added to accommodate the singles currently sheltered in the mosque.

UNHCR provided support to the authorities to reinstall the tents leaving space in between according to UNHCR standards. 6 Syrian New Arrivals have also been hired by DDM as workers to re-arrange tents. Through the implementing partner Qandil, UNHCR has also purchased some furniture and equipment for the administration and reception areas of the camp. The local authorities had installed electricity networks and UNHCR provided water tanks through Qandil NGO. The site will be ready to host the families in the next two days.

1.6 ASSISTANCE

During the last week, the Federation of Civil society organization has collected funds from rich persons and philanthropists in Dohuk for distribution to new Syrian arrivals in Domiz and Moquble; 12500 USD were given to 300 Syrian

singles and 4750 USD were distributed to 57 families. Iraqi Red Crescent Society and ICRC have also provided food assistance to new Syrian arrivals in Domiz and Moquble. After the new Domiz camp is established and new arrivals have moved there, UNHCR and IOM will provide the residents with non-food assistance.

2. Iraqi Refugee Returnees from Syria to Iraq

UNHCR Iraq Returnee monitoring at Government of Iraq Returnee Centres or at the main taxi and bus stations did not occur during the reporting period due to very strict security measures being taken prior to the Arab League Summit on 29 March which meant most of central Baghdad was in 'lock down' and national staff were advised to remain at home. Daily monitoring did however continue at all three Iraq – Syria border locations.

The total number of Iraqi national departing to Syria from Iraq and departing to Syria of all types (including commercial traffic) from all three Border Crossing was slightly higher in the weekly reporting period. The total volume of recorded cross border traffic continues to remain at comparatively lower compared to October and November 2011 for all three Border locations (Al Waleed, Al Rabiya and Al Qa'im).

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