

Update 4
Iraqi Refugee Returns/Syrian Refugees

25 July 2012

1. Overview:

Syrian refugees have been arriving at the Iraqi border, mainly Al-Qa'im border crossing, a day after the Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki announced his Government's decision to allow them into the country. A total of 886 Syrians have so far entered into Iraq. Among them, five were reported to be suffering from injuries; they have now been taken care of by the Iraqi Red Crescent Society. As reported by UNHCR team at the border, many of the Syrian new arrivals were heading towards relatives in Al-Qa'im, while others have been accommodated in schools, medical centres, warehouses and other public areas.

Al-Qa'im and Al-Waleed border points also observed more Iraqi returns today while Rabi'aa border crossing point has remained closed from the Syrian side for the third day.

As of today, a total of 12,481 Iraqi refugees returned to the country. This figure is expected to rise rapidly should the surge in violence in Syria persists or intensify.

2. Meetings:

- UNHCR had a meeting with MoDM Deputy Minister. The meeting was also attended by representatives from the Ministries of Interior, Defence and Transport. The meeting appears to have been dedicated to defining the roles and responsibilities in the Government's response to the Syrian emergency. It was reported at the meeting that pursuant to an order from PM Maliki, an Emergency Committee was formed under the chairmanship of MoDM and with membership of the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Transport, Iraqi Red Crescents Society (IRCS), UNHCR and other relevant actors. It was also reported that the Committee will be dispatching two teams to Al-Qa'im and Rab'ia border points to oversee the process of establishing a camp to accommodate Syrian refugees. The first joint mission to Al-Qa'im is to be conducted on 28 July 2012.
- MoDM requested UNHCR's intervention in Al-Qa'im through the provision of tents, water, rechargeable fans, NFIs and electricity.
- UNHCR is to send 200 NFI kits to Al-Qa'im tomorrow.
- MoDM will request the Mol to instruct the concerned authorities to facilitate the process of establishing the camps.
- MoDM will send an official letter to UNHCR with a list of the items that need to be provided to the Syrian families.

- MoDM has provided UNHCR with copies of letters instructing all the branch offices in Baghdad and the governorates to provide UNHCR teams, on a daily basis, with lists of registered Iraqi returnees from Syria.

3. Statistics

3.1 Iraqi returnees

Border point / Date	Number of returnees
Al-Waleed	
18/07/2012	1,250
19/07/2012	3,800
20/07/2012	857
21/07/2012	1,135
22/07/2012	613
23/07/2012	866
24/07/2012	867
25/07/2012	150*
	9,538
Rabi'aa	0
19/07/2012	290
20/07/2012	165
21/07/2012	95
23/07/2012	0
24/07/2012	0
25/07/2012	0
	550
Al-Qaim	
24/07/2012	250
25/07/2012	143
	393
By air (~)	2,000
	2,000
Grant Total	12,481**

*Figure updated as at midday today, Wednesday, 25 July 2012

3.2 Syrian refugees

Crossing point / Date	Number of refugees
Al-Waleed	
24/07/2012	

25/07/2012	
	0
Rabi'aa	
24/07/2012	
25/07/2012	
	0
Al-Qaim	
24/07/2012	640
25/07/2012	246
	886
By air (~)	
	0
Grant Total	886**

**Source of information: Immigration Offices at the border points

4. Arrival of Iraqi returnees

Eight buses arrived this morning at Al-Liqaa' Square and 14 Ramadan Square in Baghdad, with 17-33 passengers on board each. They were all escorted by Iraqi security forces.

Most of the families, who looked exhausted after trip, refused to talk to UNHCR staff or to have their pictures taken.

One Iraqi family is reported to have arrived in Hilla centre. UNHCR field staff and the PARC team are to follow up on their case to provide any assistance needed.

5. Non-Iraqis fleeing into Iraq

UNHCR field team at Al-Waleed border point learned from the Immigration Office that 100 Afghans had entered Iraq, intending to travel to Iran. UNHCR field staff are verifying this information.

6. UNHCR Arrangements

Al-Waleed:

- UNHCR IP (IRW) has completed the rehabilitation of the health care center at Al-Waleed camp. The centre has been supported with an emergency medicine package and first-aid kits.
- A separate area for Syrian refugees is being prepared within the boundaries of the Camp
- More UNHCR tents are to be installed tomorrow morning.
- The Rub hall has been prepared to receive emergency supplies.

- The purchase of emergency packs of clean water and other life-sustaining items has started this morning. The items will be delivered to the camp no later than tomorrow afternoon.
- Electricity has been reconnected and will be provided for a defined duration starting from today.

Al-Qa'im:

- A team from UNHCR and IRW visited the proposed location of the camp in Al-Qa'im today and identified lack of infrastructure, water and electricity.
- More than three truckloads of tents and NFIs have arrived at the site. Sixty tents have already been installed. 150 more tents will soon be erected and 12 mobile toilets will be installed.

7. Returnee/refugee needs

Needs for NFIs, water network/tanks, generators with fuel and tents have been identified at locations set to receive Syrian refugees in Al-Qa'im.

Returnees' needs, however, stretch from documentation, including PDS cards, Jensiya (national ID) document, to shelter (for some), food and cash, based on a rapid assessment conducted by UNHCR staff both at the border and at the disembarkation point.

8. Interviews with new arrivals

UNHCR team at Al-Waleed border interviewed seven returnee families who fled Al-Hajar Al-Aswad area near Al-Yarmouk Camp in Damascus. They said fighting and military operations subsided within this part of the capital, allowing them some free movement to return to Iraq.

9. Coordination

UNHCR is collaborating closely with the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoDM), MoI-PC, and Governorate Offices. In the meantime, the Office has engaged in a coordination process with various humanitarian actors/stakeholders, including the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) consisting of agencies and NGOs, to ensure necessary support to the Iraqi Government's efforts to respond to the returnees' immediate needs.