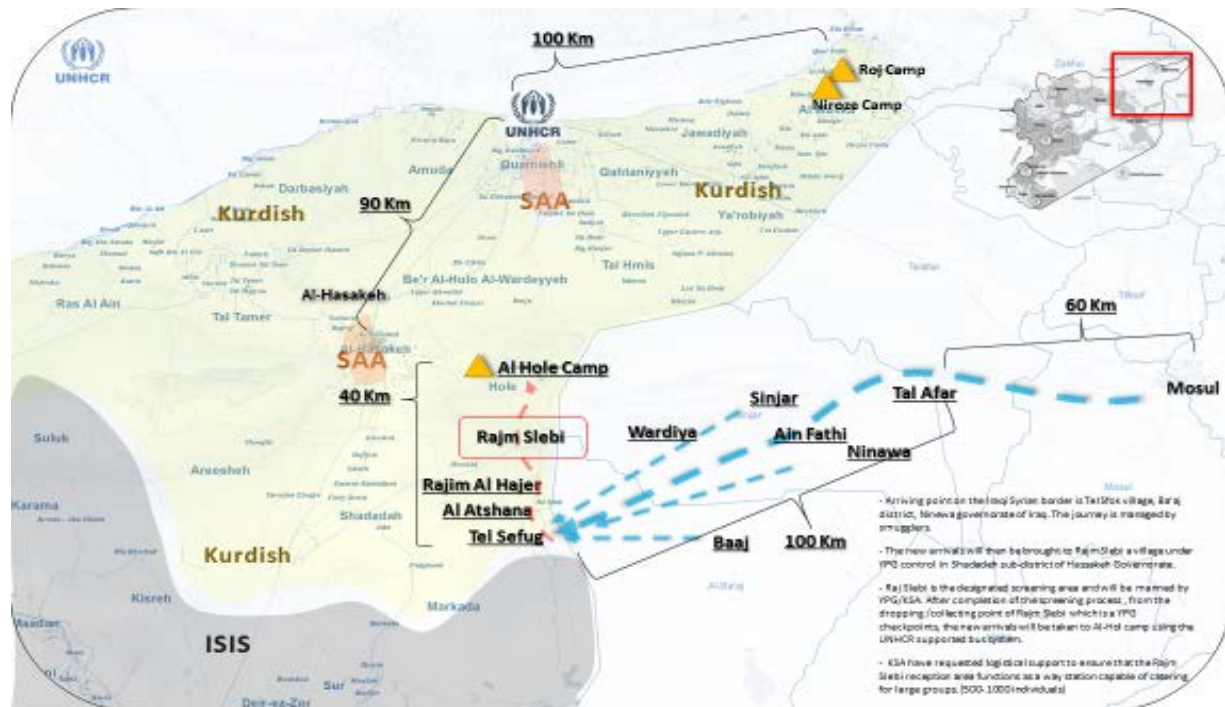


As the Government of Iraq is gearing up for a major military operation to retake Mosul city, UNHCR anticipates an influx of some 90,000 Iraqi refugees arriving through Tel Sefug village, a crossing point mainly used by smugglers, located at the eastern borders of the Hassakeh Governorate. Ongoing military actions, inside Iraq have already caused the displacement of thousands of people fleeing the conflict zones, including over 10,600 Iraqi refugees in Syria since January 2016. The arrival of Iraqi refugees in Syria and the recognition of their prima facie status is due to the open door policy of the Syrian government towards refugees.



The main preparations related to the Influx revolve around the Al Hol camp (Coordinates 36°22'30.24"N - 41°9'3.71"E), which is located 14 Km from the Syria - Iraq border and 60 Km from the closest ISIS positions. The camp was previously a UNHCR established camp for ex-Iraqi Palestinian refugees during the Iraq-Kuwait war, but later in 2010, it was officially closed as a refugee camp. As the security situation deteriorated throughout the area, in 2011, it was firstly taken over by Jabhat al Nusra (JaN) and then subsequently by ISIS until late 2014 when the YPG took control of the area. The residents of Al-Hol town were allowed to return in May 2016 after the area was cleared of mines by the local administration. The local authorities selected the Al Hol site as a refugee camp because it still had the basic camp infrastructure in place as well as a space to accommodate 20,000 individuals. Moving the camp to another location is not an option as far as the local administration is concerned.

Due to safety related reasons, UNHCR could only have intermittent access to the camp only through its partners and until very recently when UNDSS cleared UN missions to Al Hol. As a result, the first UNHCR mission to Al Hol went on 10<sup>th</sup> of October 2016. For some Iraqi refugees, Al Hol has been a place of refuge while for many, it has been a transit point, who have been seeking routes to return to Iraq.

In Syria, as of 01 October, the total estimated population of Iraqi refugees and asylum seekers registered/identified in Hassakeh governorate was 20,590. This number includes 8,864 Iraqis residing in three refugee camps (Newroz, Roj and Al Hol) who have not been registered yet and 11,726 urban refugees/ asylum seekers living in different urban locations within the governorate (Qamishly, Hassakeh, Yaroubia, Malkia and other locations).

### Population in the three refugee camps

Camp	0-2	2-5	5-12	12-18 F	12-18	18-60 F	18-60 M	>60 F	>60 M	Total ind	Total families
Newroz Camp	95	236	459	165	174	403	371	58	50	2,011	391
Roj Camp	204	308	544	157	132	415	455	31	28	2,274	461
Al Hol Camp	345	685	1104	266	287	977	978	70	47	4,759	1,007

### Current status of UNHCR preparedness for the influx of 50,000 refugees from Iraq

The contingency plan anticipates that up to 90,000 Iraqis may flee to Syria due to the conflict in Mosul, most of whom will transit back to Iraq within 3 – 6 months of their arrival in Syria. However, it is estimated that up to 20,000 individuals may remain in Syria and need assistance for the longer term. This scenario is expected to take place in two phases. In terms of preparedness, in phase one, UNHCR Syria has developed a contingency plan to receive and make the necessary arrangements, such as the delivery of assistance, including camp accommodation in Al Hol and logistics support for waystations along the border used as drop in points by local authorities for 50,000 individual refugees. The response capacity under phase two will be expanded to cover a refugee population of up to 90,000.

Phase I: preparedness and arrangements in place for receiving the first 15,000 refugees with arrangements in place is being finalized and will be ready by 20 October 2016.

As part of Phase I, preparedness will continue for up to a total of 50,000 refugees in Al Hol Camp for which NFI and shelter material in stock, additional supplies being shipped in; storage capacity is being expanded, reception and screening capacity will be reinforced and expansion of the Al Hol camp will continue with the support of sister UN agencies and NGOs. These arrangements are expected to be in place by 30 October 2016.

Phase II: contingency planning for a maximum of 90,000 refugees in total (keeping in perspective the developments during phase I.

Following are the key steps of the operational plan:

- Iraqis seeking to enter the governorate will be gathered in Tel Sefug village, Ba'aj district, Ninewa governorate of Iraq.
- The new arrivals will then be brought to Rajm Slebi, a village under YPG control in the Shadadeh sub - district of Hassakeh Governorate and screened by the local administration.

- The new arrivals will then be taken to Al-Hol camp using the UNHCR supported bus system. The Rajm Slebi reception area functions as a way station capable of catering for large groups. (1000 individuals per day).
- UNHCR/ partner staff will be escorting busses and monitoring activities at the drop in points. External actors (INGO's) will also supplement the monitoring of these drop in points as well as support food distribution activities.
- At the Al Hol reception center, baggage's security and searching (local administration camp security), medical screening (Al Birr/NGO), vaccinations (Al Birr NGO), identification profiling processes (UNHCR), food (WFP/Partners) and NFI distribution (UNHCR/NGO partners) will take place before the new arrivals are allowed to proceed to the camp. Al Hol reception arrangements are planned to cater for 1000 individuals per day.
- UNHCR is taking active steps to open a small office in Hassakeh to optimise its access and working hours inside Al Hol.

## Coordination

The people and government of Syria have always been gracious and hospitable to refugees with their open door policy, recognizing their *prima facie* status as refugees on the Syrian soil.

UNHCR is currently maintaining a four-way coordination process between the Government of Syria, the local authorities, the UN agencies and INGOs operating from Iraq, while keeping in perspective the sovereignty and safety issues arising from the unique political situation prevailing in the Hassakeh Governorate. The UNHCR Protection teams in Syria and Iraq are in regular contact and are following up closely on developments. UN Syria is also in the process of negotiating special arrangements for UN staff and INGOs and opening of border crossing.

A renewed impetus to strengthen coordination between the UN agencies and INGOs active in and around the Hassakeh camps was initiated by UNHCR. Fresh coordination mechanisms and delegation of responsibilities to plan for the large anticipated influx have been agreed upon with key UN agencies and active INGOs. Coordination and consultations have been taking on a daily basis as well as the timely and unhindered sharing of information between stakeholders on both sides of the border. These consultations are aimed at addressing the current protection challenges in cross border movements as well as synchronizing contingency plan preparations cross both sides of the border.



## Protection

UNHCR continues to advocate and support the government's open door policy and its continued *prima facie* recognition of Iraqi refugees. In addition, UNHCR is fast-tracking the hiring, additional national protection staff to be deployed in the camp and at the border to increase its field presence. In view of Al Hol's specific challenges, beyond protection screening and rapid need assessments, UNHCR intends to incrementally roll out the full spectrum of community-based protection services in the camp through NGO partners. UNHCR also intends to beef up its protection monitoring and mass information capacity, as well

as its ability to rapidly adapt and respond to fast moving events. Both field and registration teams will be consolidated with the addition of six staff to provide identification of protection needs and verification other services.

UNHCR and the INGOs agreed to coordinate their capacity building efforts towards the camp management in order to improve the camp's governance and the refugees' overall access to international protection. More specifically, UNHCR aims to gradually align the camp management structure with refugees' rights and roll out the full range of community based-protection and community participation practices. There is a very strong protection advocacy and community-based protection agenda in UNHCR's plans to mitigate freedom restrictions beyond the camps, SGBV and all forms of exploitations pervasive in the camps. Protection interviews during registration activities and special community outreach will aim at maintaining the civilian character of the camps. At UNHCR's request, the INGOs will specifically focus on providing an adapted response for persons with specific needs as well as mental health and psychosocial support.



### Camp Sites Preparation and Extension

UNHCR informally engaged the local authorities to consolidate camp infrastructure and optimize camp absorption capacity. Local authorities have provided UNHCR with additional land that will expand Al Hol hosting capacity of 50,000 individuals. A land surveyor is currently on site and is finalizing the land survey to support the design of the Masterplan. A reception center has already been designed to process the new arrivals and its equipment are being purchased or airlifted.

UNHCR is actively working on the improvement of living conditions in the camp and have engaged contractors for ground preparations, building of communal kitchens and the rehabilitation of existing infrastructure such as distribution sites and shelters. Earth moving equipment and delivery of gravel for site preparations has started. In addition a second phase for extension of the camp is also being planned.



### Food

WFP confirmed to UNHCR, its ability to cover the food requirements for the 50,000 refugees in Al Hol and its extension. In a meeting between the two organizations, it was agreed to explore alternative warehousing and dispatch arrangement that would simplify service delivery in Al Hol. Six Rubb Halls, provided by WFP will be installed at Al Hol for creating this capacity.



### Shelter and Non-Food Items

Through 11 airlift operations organized in August by UNHCR from Amman and later by WFP Logistics Cluster from Damascus, UNHCR replenished its standard stock of shelter and Non-Food Items (NFIs) and propositioned a contingency stock in Qamishly for 50,000 individuals/10,000 families. UNHCR is currently going on bringing additional tents by air and mattresses by road for cost effectiveness. The Office is also in the process of expanding its warehousing capacity to cater to the increased demand. This will be concluded by mid-October 2016. The receipt of these NFIs brought the capacity of the current warehouse to its limits, prompting the need for identification of additional storage space. In concert with the newly

identified warehouse space, the storage capacity for NFIs will cover 11,000 families. 2,496 tents have already been prepositioned in Qamishly, with an additional stock due to arrive from Zarqa (Jordan) and from UNHCR suppliers.



### WASH

The UNICEF team leader in Qamishli, and UNHCR engineers' team in the field has met to integrate WASH requirement into the master plan related to the extension and land preparation works needed to service 50,000 refugees in Al Hol and its extension. The NGO SIF, a UNHCR partner is fastracking WASH implementation with the provision of technical support in the design and procurement of the WASH components needed for Al Hol.



### Health

WHO has agreed through the Director of Health to support Al Birr/local NGO health care facilities and organizations providing health care services in the camps with funding for the night shift staff and drugs. WHO also agreed to support health care facilities and service providers targeting communities around Al Hol and in the governorate at large should the influx impact large part of the governorate. Priority health care facilities in and around Al Hol have been identified



### Transit Arrangements

UNHCR will provide logistical support of the Rajm Slebi reception center for transportation of new arrivals from screening point to Al Hol camps. The support will entail the provision of large tents, 2 shower latrine units, one water tank and food distribution services.



### Challenges

Safety concerns and differences have an important impact on UN operations in Hassakeh. UNHCR has been struggling to deploy regular UN staff on mission to Hassakeh city and beyond to deliver services to Al Hol camp. UNHCR plans to reopen a small field unit in Hassakeh.

An additional complicating factor is the internal displacement of the population that occurred during the month of August 2016. New administrative rules have been introduced which have seriously hindered the delivery of assistance by both UN agencies and Syrian NGOs to IDPs and refugees. Negotiation plans through the Hassakeh Governor are being ironed out to address these problems.

The other major concern is the UN ability to dispatch supplies by road for which UNHCR has requested, through the International Syria Support Group, the opening of Pesh Khaboor border crossing with Iraq.

UNHCR is also looking at expanding storage /warehouse capacity inside Al Hol to mitigate the administrative and logistical burden.