Securing Civil Documentation for IDPs and IDP Returnees in Iraq: Achievement in 2023

Civil identity documents such as birth certificates, nationality certificates, housing cards and the National Unified ID are key to accessing the basic public services in Iraq such as education, healthcare, and social security benefits, such as the Public Distribution System. Without civil documents, Iraqis may face restricted freedom of movement at checkpoints, increased risk of arrest and detention, exclusion from restitution or reconstruction programs and the inability to participate in many aspects of civic and political life.

To assist internally displaced persons (IDPs) and IDP returnees in Iraq whose documents may have been lost or destroyed whilst fleeing persecution, as well as those who may never have had access to such documentation before – such as populations at risk of statelessness – UNHCR and its partners (Harikar, Heartland Alliance International, International Rescue Committee, INTERSOS, Legal Clinics Network and Terre des Hommes Italy) continued their close collaboration with the Iraqi Ministry of Interior on facilitating access to civil documentation in 2023 through (a) outreach sessions to inform Iraqis about the process of getting their IDs; (b) individual legal counselling mainly for those with complex legal situations due to lack of any core documents or a perceived affiliation with extremist groups; and (c) the deployment of mobile missions by local Civil Affairs Departments, courts and the Ministry of Interior's Ad hoc Committee across the country to process and deliver civil documents.

Civil Documentation Key Figures: 2023

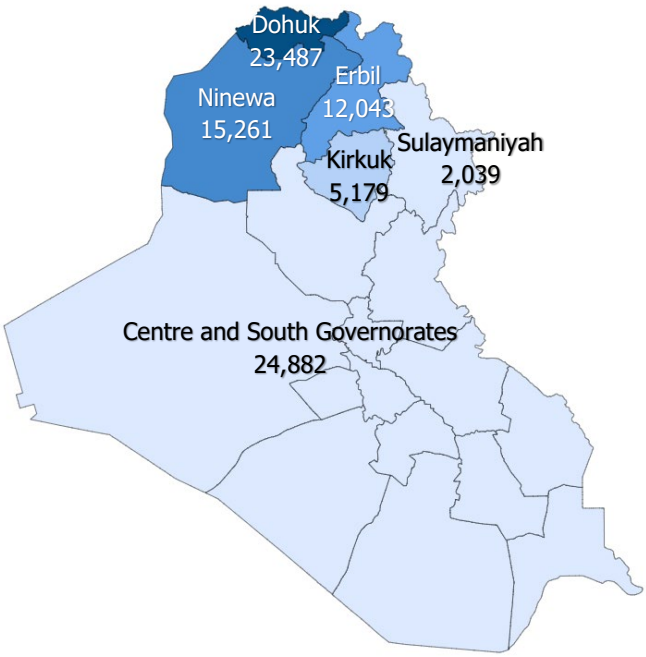
45,567 civil documents secured

51,341 persons provided with legal assistance

50 mobile missions conducted

6 legal partners with UNHCR

Civil documents secured & processed by governorate: 2023



Core civil documentation in Iraq includes:

Birth Certificate: Issued by the Ministry of Health. Provides legal recognition of a person's identity, birthplace, and parents.

Nationality Certificate: Issued by the Ministry of Interior. Serves as proof of Iraqi nationality.

Housing Card: Issued by the Ministry of Interior (Information Office), serves as proof of residency at a particular address.

Civil Status ID ***(discontinued in May 2023):*** Previously issued by the Ministry of Interior (Civil Affairs Directorate). However, old/expired IDs and/or civil registry records are still pre-requisites for other forms of documentation.

Unified National Identity Card: Issued by the Ministry of Interior (General Directorate of Passports and Nationality) since November 2019. This biometric document is a replacement for the Civil Status ID, Nationality Certificate and Housing Card.

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UNHCR and partners enhanced access to civil documentation for IDPs and IDP returnees and other in need of IDs in 2023 through:

- Promotion of **community awareness** on the importance of civil documentation and how to access it. In 2023, nearly 17,000 individuals attended civil documentation information and awareness sessions.
- Provision of **legal assistance to individuals**, including representation in administrative or legal processes. In 2023, more than 51,341 persons benefitted from some form of civil documentation-related assistance.
- Local and national-level advocacy to address legal and administrative barriers to accessing civil documentation, especially for complex cases, such as flexibility on the part of some local Personal Status Courts on the types of evidence needed to prove family links.
- Coordination and support for 50 government-led mobile civil documentation missions to bring officials from different governorates to process the documents of displaced persons who are unable to travel to their areas origin, including:
  - **34 local Civil Affairs Department (CAD) missions** – Coordinated between UNHCR field offices and CADs to issue documentation to IDPs and returnees within a single governorate.
  - **3 Mobile Court missions –** Coordinated between UNHCR field offices and local courts to obtain necessary court decisions related to civil documentation applications.
  - **13 Ad-Hoc Committee missions -** Coordinated with the Iraqi Ministry of Interior, specialised in the issuance of documentation to IDPs displaced in governorates outside of their areas of origin, including persons with limited freedom of movement.

Ibrahim's Story

In 2014, Ibrahim and his family fled the Jurf Al-Sakhr area in Babil governorate amid escalating violence. After transiting through multiple camps, they found temporary refuge in Amriat al Fallujah in Anbar governorate. Nearly a decade later, Ibrahim and his family were still unable to return to their area of origin due to safety concerns. This meant they were unable to apply for and obtain essential civil documentation This meant they were unable to apply for and obtain essential civil documentation allowing them to access public services and participate in the public affairs of their country.

In 2023, UNHCR and the Iraqi Ministry of Interior coordinated a civil documentation mission to the Bzeibiz informal site in Anbar governorate to support IDPs from Jurf al-Sakhr in obtaining core civil documents. The mission supported many Iraqis, including Ibrahim and his family, in accessing Iraqi nationality certificates.

When asked about his experience with the mission, Ibrahim said: *"I am very happy that I came here. Things went in an orderly and fast manner. In a short period of time, my family will get all the documents. These documents will give us a lot of rights, such as studying and working in the future."*

Access to civil documentation supports IDPs like Ibrahim and his family in exercising their most basic rights as Iraqi citizens, including access to healthcare, education for his children, and employment opportunities.

Thank you to UNHCR partner organizations: Harikar - Heartland Alliance International – International Rescue Committee – INTERSOS – Legal Clinics Network – Terre des Hommes Italy

UNHCR is grateful for the contribution of the following donors who made it possible to enhance the access of forcibly displaced Iraqis to legal assistance and civil documentation.

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