UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR IRAQ

SUMMARY OF MULTI-YEAR STRATEGY 2025-2029

Context

Iraq is leaving behind the effects of three decades of political turmoil and armed conflicts that deeply impacted its people. Since the end of large-scale military operations in 2017, Iraq has been experiencing relative stability and is advancing towards sustainable development. This notwithstanding, the country still faces protracted humanitarian and development needs and a fragile security situation in parts of the country.

Iraq generously hosts over 348,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, 88% of whom are Syrian and live in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I).[1] Over 70% of refugees live in urban areas while 30% reside in nine refugee camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Overall, the protection environment is relatively favourable for refugees and asylum-seekers in Iraq, particularly in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, where refugees and asylum-seekers can access public services, such as healthcare and education. Although excluded from employment within the public sector, refugees and asylum-seekers in Iraq are allowed to work and many have found livelihood opportunities in the informal private sector. Nonetheless, Iraq continues to lack a comprehensive legal framework governing the status and protection of refugees in line with international standards. As a result, access to territory, asylum procedures and residency documentation vary depending on the country of origin and place of residence in the country. UNHCR continues to support and provide technical advice to Iraq on the development and finalization of its new refugee law.

Iraq also continues to have large numbers of internally displaced people (IDPs), including some 102,000 IDPs who live in IDP camps.[2] While many IDPs hope to return to their homes at some point, some may be unable or unwilling to do so because of their specific profiles or the situation in their areas of origin. UNHCR supports closure of camps as long as a range of durable solutions are made available to IDPs[3] and informed decisions are made voluntarily. As part of the UN Country Team, UNHCR continues to engage and advocate for progress on solutions for IDPs.

Over the period from 2025 to 2029, the situation in Iraq is expected to remain relatively stable, with contingency plans are in place in case of new refugee arrivals. UNHCR expects that Iraq will continue to extend protection to refugees and asylum-seekers from Syria and other countries and allow refugees access to government issued documentation and public services. The adoption of a new refugee law would also strengthen refugee protection at a national level.

In this context, UNHCR will work with the government to advance the inclusion of refugees in national systems and public services, continuing progress made over recent years to reduce parallel humanitarian structures. UNHCR will collaborate closely with development actors to strengthen public service delivery that is inclusive of refugees. This includes public and social services such as health, education, child protection, mental health and those that respond to violence against women. In addition, UNHCR will support data-driven and evidence-based advocacy for refugee inclusion in national social protection systems.

This strategy aligns with the broader transition in Iraq from a humanitarian response to development approaches, as well as the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, particularly on enhancing refugee self-reliance, and the Iraq 2025-2029 UNSDCF.

[1] *Figure as of December 2025*
[2] *To note, the last Displacement Tracking Matrix on IDPs in Iraq by IOM was conducted in December 2024. Due to a lack of funding the overall number of IDPs in Iraq has not been updated since then. UNHCR separately tracks the number of IDPs in camps.*
[3] *The three Durable Solutions include (1) return to their areas of origin, (2) relocation to other communities within the country, or (3) local integration in their areas of displacement.*

UNHCR's Vision and Strategic Priorities

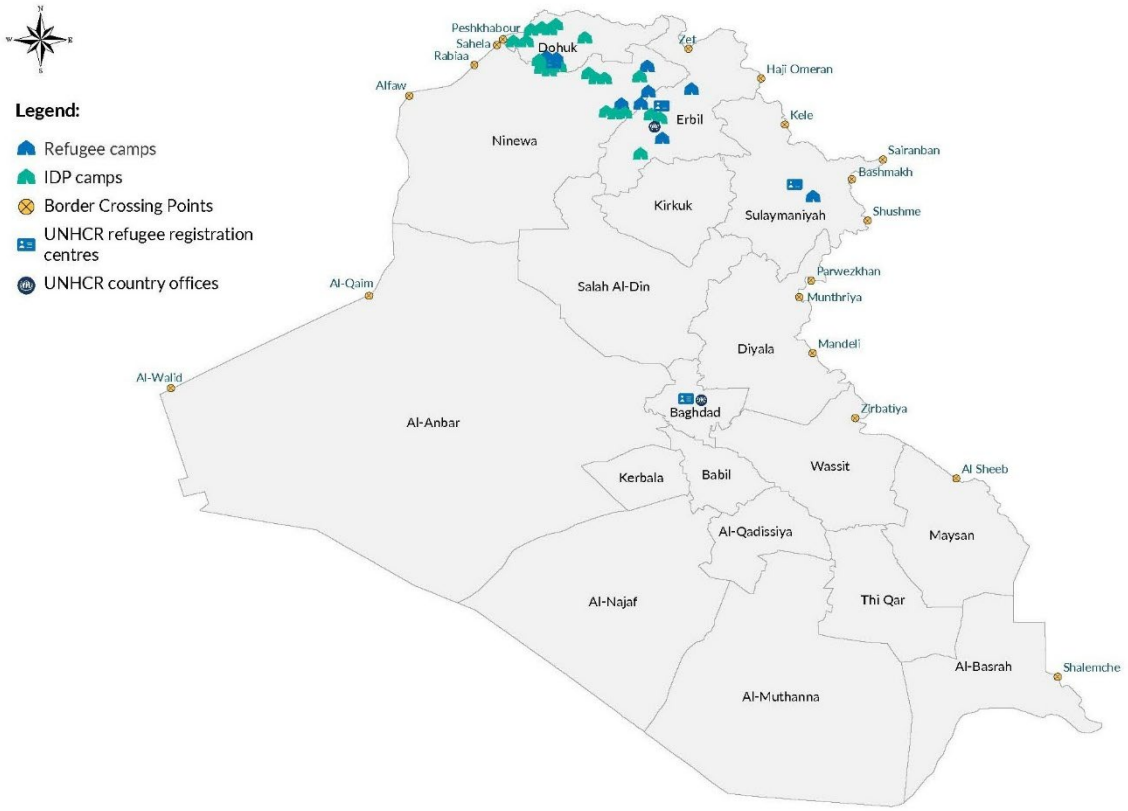
2025 - 2029

UNHCR envisions that forcibly displaced populations and stateless persons in Iraq are better protected and have full inclusive access to quality basic and protection services in the public system as well as economic opportunities provided by the Government of Iraq.

To achieve this vision - underpinned by government-led development approaches - two key strategic priorities have been identified.

The first priority is for refugees and asylum-seekers in Iraq to have access to and continue to enjoy protection, including protection from detention and refoulement, through registration and documentation provided by the authorities. Achieving this strategic priority will require sustained advocacy and technical support both at federal and regional levels in the development of legal and policy frameworks, including enacting a new refugee law aligned with international standards as per the pledge made by Iraq at the Global Refugee Forum. It will also require continued engagement on registration and documentation of asylum-seekers, in conjunction with targeted legal assistance, to prevent detention and deportation.

The second priority is for refugees to have access to solutions, in particular through inclusion in public services and access to economic opportunities. Refugees are already largely included in public health and education services. Further efforts will be directed at advancing the inclusion of refugees into national systems, including protection services and Iraq's social safety net. While these solutions are found, UNHCR will continue to support the most vulnerable through targeted assistance where funding allows.



In addition, UNHCR will continue to advocate for solutions for IDPs as part of the broader UN system. In 2025 and 2026, UNHCR will also provide legal assistance to Iraqi nationals returning from North-East Syria, and initially hosted in Al-Amal centre, to enable them to access civil documentation, in particular the unified Iraqi Identity Cards (UID), in support of reintegration efforts.

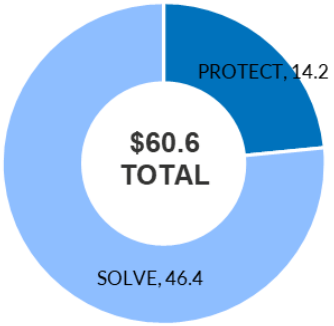
UNHCR Iraq's 2025-2029 strategy has been developed to align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2025-2029 in Iraq, offering an opportunity to support the Government of Iraq's strategic vision to respond to residual humanitarian needs through sustainable development, as well as supporting delivery of the commitments of the Government of Iraq and UN Country Team at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum (GRF).

In implementing this strategy, UNHCR will continue working closely with government partners, including the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and other key counterparts at federal and regional levels. UNHCR will enhance collaboration with UN agencies and development actors to include refugees in their programmes, and with private sector actors to advance refugee economic inclusion.

Funding Needs

In 2026, UNHCR will require USD 60.6 million to meet the needs of refugees, asylum-seekers, and other displaced populations in Iraq.

Of this amount, USD 14.2 million is needed to implement activities under the PROTECT impact area and USD 46.4 million is needed to implement activities under the SOLVE impact area.



The Kawargosk Community Centre, constructed by UNHCR, now serves as a vibrant and inclusive hub that provides safety, education, and empowerment for refugees, displaced Iraqis, and members of the host community. Situated near one of Iraq's largest refugee camps, the centre is currently managed by the Kurdistan Regional Government's Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. With its spacious work areas, dedicated counselling rooms, and colourful play spaces, the centre stands as a model of UNHCR's commitment to supporting the inclusion of refugees within public services.

UNHCR has played a key role in strengthening local child protection systems by training nearly 950 government social workers focused on child protection. Some of these trained social workers are now deployed at the Kawargosk Community Centre, where they identify and support children at risk of violence, neglect, early marriage, child labour, or lack of safe care. Their work includes providing counselling, conducting family outreach, and ensuring referrals to health, legal, and educational services. Ultimately, the centre offers a safe and supportive environment where children can speak freely, and families receive guidance on positive parenting—helping the most vulnerable children access the protection and education they need. This is an example of UNHCR's strategy of transitioning from parallel humanitarian programmes to government-led systems.

Results Framework

PROTECT: Refugees and asylum seekers have access to and enjoy protection in Iraq

OUTCOMES AND KEY ACTIVITIES:

1. In Iraq, legislation, policies, and procedures on refugees and asylum-seekers are in accordance with international norms and standards.
    - Support the development and advocate for the implementation of a refugee law and asylum procedures in Iraq.
2. Quality registration and documentation is accessible to asylum-seekers and refugees in Iraq.
    - Support the issuance of legal identity and documentation to refugees and asylum-seekers by Government.
    - Undertake individual registration for refugees and asylum seekers and issue and renew UNHCR documentation, as necessary.
    - Promote access to justice and legal assistance and prevent the risk of refoulement and detention.
3. National identification documents are accessible and issued to Iraqi nationals returning from North-East Syria
    - Support to relevant Government entities to issue and deliver civil documentation.

SOLVE: Refugees and asylum-seekers have access to solutions primarily through inclusion in public services and access to economic opportunities.

OUTCOMES AND KEY ACTIVITIES:

1. Public services, including protection services, and employment are accessible to refugees and asylum-seekers.
    - Advocate for maintaining and expanding access to relevant public services including social protection and support an inclusive legal and policy employment framework for refugees and asylum-seekers.
    - Support the management and transition refugee camps to be sustainable settlements.
    - Support the government to manage IDP camps, while advocating for solutions with international norms
2. Vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers are supported to cover their basic needs.
    - In the absence of access to national social protection schemes, provide targeted cash assistance to the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers.
3. Refugees from Syria return home voluntarily, in safety, and with dignity.
    - Facilitate voluntary return by coordinating with Government authorities and by providing counselling and assistance to those opting to return.
4. Third country solutions are available to refugees with specific profiles.
    - Undertake identification and processing of resettlement cases.