

Update 6
Iraqi Refugee Returns/Syrian Refugees
Syria Situation
26 July 2012

1. Overview:

A plane with 136 Iraqi returnees on board landed at Baghdad international airport this afternoon coming on a regular flight from Aleppo. Another plane is scheduled to arrive from Damascus later in the evening.

UNHCR has learnt from the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) that the Iraqi Ministry of Transport has suspended all free chartered flights from Damascus to Baghdad but will make exceptions for humanitarian cases. The Ministry is reported to have claimed that that fewer Iraqis are at risk in Damascus.

According to the latest statistics released by the immigration offices at the borders at 12:00 am today, Thursday, 26 July, a total of 13,450 Iraqis returned from Syria. Of this number, 9,957 entered through Al-Waleed border point, 807 through Al-Qa'im and 550 returnees through Rabi'aa. Around 2,136 Iraqis returned by air, according to Baghdad airport authority.

At Rabi'aa border crossing, no movement of refugees or returnees has been observed as the border remains closed from the Syrian side for the fourth consecutive day.

With 1,480 Syrian refugees arriving in Al-Qa'im, there have been unconfirmed reports of some troubles by the Syrian refugees who are complaining of the poor services and restricted movement. The new arrivals were escorted by the military to schools and the college in the district and those with relatives in Al-Qa'im were not allowed to leave, according to the same reports.

In Al-Waleed, the border authorities reported receiving the dead body of an Iraqi man who was killed by "insurgents" in Syria for reasons that are still not known. The man lived in Papila area of Damascus.

Rehabilitation of Al-Waleed camp is continuing although the Government may opt not to re-open the camp.

The Permanent Committee for Refugees of the Ministry of Interior (Mol-PC) will visit the three border points of Rabi'aa, Al-Qa'im and Al-Waleed tomorrow, Friday, 27 July to assess the progress of work undertaken.

2. Meetings:

- UNHCR held a meeting in Al-Waleed with Al-Waleed Border Commander and representatives from MoDM, Ramadi Governorate, Intelligence Service and Mol to coordinate the response to the influx of refugees and returnees and the preparation of Al-Waleed camp to accommodate any Syrian arrivals.

An official letter is to be sent to Ramadi Governorate and the concerned departments to support Al-Waleed with schooling and teachers, provide health care through regular visits and grant refugees access to health facilities in Rutba and surrounding areas.

- UNHCR is to attend a meeting in Rabi'aa on Saturday, 28 July, with the representative of Mol, Mayor of Rabi'aa and the border authority to discuss the planning and preparation of response to Syrian refugee influx and Iraqi refugee returnees to Ninewa.

3. Statistics

3.1 Iraqi returnees

Border point / Date	Number of returnees
Al-Waleed	
7/18/2012	1,250
7/19/2012	3,800
7/20/2012	857
7/21/2012	1,135
7/22/2012	613
7/23/2012	866
7/24/2012	867
7/25/2012	569
26/07/2012	
	9,957
Rabi'aa	0
7/19/2012	290
7/20/2012	165
7/21/2012	95
7/23/2012	0
7/24/2012	0
7/25/2012	0
	550
Al-Qaim	
7/24/2012	250
7/25/2012	557
	807
By air (~)	2,136
	2,136
Grant Total	13,450*

*Figures updated as at 12:00 am, Thursday, 26 July 2012
Source of information: Immigration Offices at the border points

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	886
25/07/2012	594
	1,480*

Kurdistan Region	
	8,445
By air (~)	
	0
Grant Total	9,925

*Figures updated as at 12:00 am, Thursday, 26 July 2012
Source of information: Immigration Offices at the border points

4. Arrival of Iraqi returnees

Four buses arrived in Mansour (Baghdad) today from Aleppo and 16 others from Damascus, each carrying 33 passengers on board.

Most of the arrivals were too tired to speak as the trip from Al-Waleed to Baghdad took 25-16 hours.

Drivers coming from Aleppo spoke of security deterioration and said the checkpoints between Aleppo and Hama held by the Free Syria Army.

5. UNHCR Arrangements

Al-Qa'im:

- 200 NFI packages, including rechargeable fans and water jerry cans arrived in Al-Qa'im.
- Al-Waleed:

- 300 NFI packages delivered to Al Waleed camp.
- Erbil stockpile ready to support Rabi'aa with tents and NFIs.

Diyala:

- A site visit was conducted to MODM -Diyala Branch office and the Returnees Assistance Centre (RAC). Three families were registered as returnees from Syria.
- Another 3 families returning from Syria approached UNHCR Return, Integration and Community Centre (RICC) today for registration and assistance, guided by UNHCR leaflet received at the border.

6. 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 and Al-Waleed.

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

7. Interviews with new arrivals

Diyala Field team tried to contact some Iraqi returnees from Syria but they refused to talk to UNHCR, afraid of identifying themselves probably for fear of reprisals as many Iraqis living in Syria are believed to have former links with the Ba'th party or security apparatus of the former regime.

In Baghdad, UNHCR interviewed one returnee family originating from Basra. They were living in Sayyida Zainab area in Damascus. They complained of the worsening conditions there where no water, electricity, transportation or services are available. The trip to the Syrian border took them about 5 hours while it took them 15 hours to travel from the Iraqi border to Baghdad.

Returnees in Al-Waleed were worried about their their resettlement cases in Syria, afraid they might be closed.

8. 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.