

Update 7
Iraqi Refugee Returns/Syrian Refugees
Syria Situation
27 July 2012

1. Overview:

Iraqi families have been streaming back into the country through Rabi'aa border crossing which has been reopened today after four days closure, with no reports of Syrian refugees entering thus far. Most of the returnees were coming from Aleppo and Damascus.

Last night, a second regular flight arrived from Damascus at Baghdad International Airport with 50 Iraqi returnees on board, bringing the total number of returnees by air to around 2,186. Another returnee flight from Damascus is scheduled tomorrow morning.

Since the outbreak of violence in Syria, a total of 14,736 Iraqis have returned to the country, according to figures from the border immigration offices.

Al-Waleed border point has received the highest number of returnees, totalling 10,643 persons while Al-Qa'im and Rabi'aa border points have recorded the arrival of 1,237 and 670 returnees respectively.

No Syrian refugee movement was observed through Al-Waleed. However, more refugees have been flowing into Al-Qa'im border point which witnessed the arrival of 964 Syrians yesterday and today, sending the number of Syrians entering Iraq through this point since the 23 July government announcement allowing them access to Iraq territory up to 2,444.

With the 8,445 Syrians who are already in Kurdistan Region, a total of 10,889 Syrian nationals have entered Iraq since March 2011.

UNHCR has already started distributing NFIs to the Syrian refugees in Al-Qa'im, supported by a team from the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM).

In the meantime, UNHCR team in Al-Qa'im today joined a high-level government delegation comprising the National Security Advisor, Mr. Falih Al-Fayyadh, the Minister of Displacement and Migration, Mr. Dindar Najman Shafeeq, the Deputy Minister of Displacement and Migration, the Deputy Health Minister, the Deputy Electricity Minister, the Border Forces Commander and the Military Advisor to the Prime Minister, for a visit to the Syrian refugee locations to see the situation on the ground.

A plot of land has been identified for the camp site inside Al-Qa'im and UNHCR plans to start the levelling works and preparation for the camp construction as of tomorrow. Loading of trucks with tents is ongoing and 200 tents will be delivered to the site tomorrow around midday. Team of IP Islamic Relief Worldwide departed to Al Qaim tonight.

2. Meetings:

- UNHCR team in Al-Qa'im attended a meeting with a high-level government delegation that visited Al-Qa'im today to assess the situation and meet with the concerned authorities in order to manage a coordinated response to the influx of Syrian refugees. The delegation consisted of the National Security Advisor, the Minister of Displacement and Migration, the Deputy Minister of Displacement and Migration, the Deputy Health Minister, the Deputy Electricity Minister, the Border Forces Commander and the Military Advisor to the Prime Minister

It was agreed yesterday that an emergency committee should be established under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) to follow up the situation of Syrian refugees.

As a follow-up, the Deputy MoDM Minister chaired meeting shortly afterwards at the office of the district Qa'im-maqam (mayor), which was attended by representatives of the local

authorities of Al-Qa'im and Ramadi and the departments of all the concerned ministries as well as UNHCR.

Two plots of land were selected for the camp site and one was identified as the proper location for the camp.

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	569
26/07/2012	686
	10,643
Rabi'aa	0
19/07/2012	290
20/07/2012	165
21/07/2012	95
22/07/2012	0
23/07/2012	0
24/07/2012	0
25/07/2012	0
26/07/2012	0
27/07/2012	120
	670
Al-Qaim	
24/07/2012	250
25/07/2012	557
26/07/2012	362
27/07/2012	68
	1,237
By air (~)	2,000
26/07/2012	186
	2,186
Grant Total	14,736*

*Figures updated as at 08:00 pm, Thursday, 27 July 2012
Source of information: Immigration Offices at the border points

3.2 Syrian refugees

Crossing point / Date	Number of refugees
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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
26/07/2012	869
27/07/2012	95
	2,444*
Kurdistan Region	8,445
	8,445
By air (~)	
	0
Grant Total	10,889

*Figures updated as at 06:00 pm, Thursday, 27 July 2012
Source of information: Immigration Offices at the border points

4. Arrival of Iraqi returnees

Nine buses arrived in Baghdad, 2 from Aleppo and 7 from Damascus, with 33 passengers on board each.

UNHCR team interviewed one Iraqi who was living in Qudsiyah, about 15km north of Damascus, described the area as a war zone under mortal shelling. He spoke of robberies and displacement of Iraqis settling there since 2006.

Most of the returnees, who were exhausted by the long journey, said they had no place to go back to and hoped to receive cash grants to enable them to pay rents.

5. UNHCR Arrangements

Al-Qa'im:

- 200 NFI packages were distributed to Syrian families residing in Al-Rummana school in Al-Qa'im. The kits included rechargeable fans, water and kerosene jerry cans, quilts, kitchen sets, mattresses, stoves and hygiene kits.
- Installation of mobile toilets started and ongoing at schools

Al-Waleed:

- 300 NFI packages delivered to Al Waleed camp.
- Camp is ready to receive returnees/refugees and fully operational
- Erbil stockpile ready to support Rabi'aa with tents and NFIs.

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, Jensiya (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

Many of the returnees interviewed by UNHCR teams at the border said they planned to return whenever the security situation permits.

The final destination of majority of returnees was Baghdad. Few numbers said they would return to other governorates.

Some returnees complained of the high transportation fees charged by the drivers.

8. Coordination

UNHCR is collaborating closely with the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoDM), Mo-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'/Syrian nationals' immediate needs.