

Update 9
Iraqi Refugee Returns/Syrian Refugees
Syria Situation
29 July 2012

1. Overview:

Hundreds more Iraqis have made the hard trip back home, fleeing violence and unrest, some leaving behind property and belongings.

The latest statistics released by the border authorities indicate the arrival of 315 Iraqis at Al-Waleed border point. One hundred and thirty-three more have returned through Rabi'aa border crossing while 87 others have entered through Al-Qa'im. Up to this date, a total of 18,581 Iraqis have returned from Syria, including 5,222 returnees by air.

Al-Qa'im border has recorded a high number of Syrian arrivals with the entry of 358 more Syrians. No Syrian refugee arrivals have entered through Al-Waleed or Rabi'aa so far. This brings the total number of Syrian refugees who entered Iraq since 24 July to 2,802, added to it a total of 8,445 Syrian Kurdish refugees who are already in Kurdistan.

UNHCR has already strengthened its presence in Al-Qa'im where its team is engaged in the preparations to set up a camp for the new Syrian arrivals. Emergency Committee has selected a different location for the camp other than the site allocated within the College of Education. The new site, albeit smaller in area, can hold 200-250 tents (about 1,000 people) and is closer to the river. The local authorities have started the levelling of ground and cleaning works. UNHCR, through its IP IRW, is to start installing the tents tomorrow once UNHCR technical team finalizes the camp layout tonight.

UNHCR team has, meanwhile, conducted assessment of the situation of Syrian refugees accommodated in schools in different locations in Al-Qa'im to identify their needs. The exercise is planned to be completed tomorrow.

2. Meetings:

- UNHCR team in Al-Qa'im attended a meeting with MoDM Deputy Minister, the Qaim-maqam (mayor) of Al-Qa'im district and General Sahib from the Permanent Committee for Refugees of the Ministry of Interior (Mol-PC). Also present were UNICEF, IRC, Iraqi Red Crescent Society and national NGOs.

It was agreed that all the organization should coordinate the activities carried out for the Syrian refugees to prevent any overlapping of roles.

Another plot of land has been identified as a proper location for the establishment of UNHCR camp.

A joint UNHCR-IRW-UNICEF visit was later conducted to the new site.

- In Ninewa, UNHCR Field Unit attended a meeting for the Crisis Management Cell to discuss the response to Iraqi returns and the possible influx of Syrian refugees into Rabi'aa. Participating in the meeting were MoDM, Ninewa Governor, IOM, IMC, IRCS, the Coordination Committee with International Organization (CCIO), IMC, the Department of Health and Directorate of transportation.

The meeting discussed the possible establishment by UNHCR and IRCS of a camp to host the new Syrian arrivals and the assistance to be provided to them.

UNHCR expressed readiness to work closely with the concerned authorities, UN agencies and other actors to select a location for the camp.

On returns, the Governor called for MoDM role with the Government to allocate a special fund to transport Iraqis from Syria, calling for direct flights to be run from Damascus and Aleppo to Mosul to help those Iraqis who cannot afford the road trip from Baghdad to Ninewa.

- UNHCR Najaf team joined an emergency meeting today with MoDM, UNAMI, IOM and IRC to discuss Iraqi returnees from Syria to Najaf and the expected arrival of Syrian refugees in response to the recent call by the Chairman of Najaf Provincial Council welcoming Syrians refugees in the governorate.

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
27/07/2012	244
28/07/2012	315
	11,202
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
28/07/2012	133
	803
Al-Qaim	
24/07/2012	250
25/07/2012	557
26/07/2012	362
27/07/2012	98
28/07/2012	87
	1,354
By air (~)	5,036
26/07/2012	186
	5,222
Grant Total	18,581

*Figures updated as at 12:00 am, Sunday, 29 July 2012
Source of information: Border Immigration Offices/BIAP

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
26/07/2012	869
27/07/2012	95
28/07/2012	358
	2,802
Kurdistan Region	8,445
	8,445
By air (~)	
	0
Grant Total	11,247

*Figures updated as at 12:00 am, Sunday, 29 July 2012
Source of information: Border Immigration Offices

4. UNHCR arrangements

Al-Qa'im:

- 200 tents arrived in Al-Qa'im today.
- 200 more NFI packages delivered today. The distribution of 200 packages to Syrian families accommodated in Al-Rummana school completed yesterday. The kits include rechargeable fans and water jerry cans.
- Additional 200 tents will be delivered to Al Qaim tomorrow

Al-Waleed:

- 300 NFI kits delivered to Al Waleed camp.

Rabi'aa:

- Erbil stockpile is ready to support Rabi'aa with tents and NFIs.

5. 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 as well as employment, based on a rapid assessment conducted by UNHCR staff both at the border and at the disembarkation point.

6. Interviews with new arrivals

- Most of the returnees interviewed by UNHCR teams at the borders spoke of security deterioration spilling into areas beyond the known hot spots. They confirmed that more returnees would be coming back.
- UNHCR field team in Diyala visited one returnee (Taha Abboud Al- Samarrai) who fled Iraq during the sectarian violence in 2006. While in Syria, Taha settled Doumah while in Syria worked as a labourer. He is married to a Syrian woman and has 2 children. With the recent escalation of violence, Taha was left with no option but to go back to Iraq with his family. Diyala team was informed by Diyala Federal Police/Intelligence about the arrival of 41 Iraqi families from Syria in Baqubah over the past two weeks. Eight returnee families approached UNHCR Return, Integration and Community Centre (RICC) today, guided by UNHCR leaflet received at the border, seeking any kind of assistance.
- Three Iraqi returnee families (13 individuals) visited MoDM branch in Babylon today. The families fled Damascus after receiving death threats. Two families are staying with relatives in Hilla center and the other now lives in Dabla village of Al-Qassim sub district. A Syrian family (of mother and son) that entered Iraq in May 2012 is also reported to be staying with relatives in Dabla village.
- UNHCR Najaf team reported the arrival of one bus carrying 25 Iraqis returnees from Syria since 26 July.
- In Karbala, UNHCR team interviewed 15 returnees who approached MoDM branch for registration and assistance but MoDM did not register them, waiting to receive clear instructions in an official letter from the Ministry to avoid double registration. The team met with the manager of MoDM branch. It appeared that that some of the returnees already registered with MoDM and returned to Syria after registration.
- UNHCR South team reported the arrival of 3 returnee families from Syria in Basra, 10 in Thi-Qar and 6 families in Diwaniya

7. 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.