

Update 17
Iraqi Refugee Returns/Syrian Refugees
Syria Situation
6 August 2012

1. Overview:

Iraqi returns through Al-Waleed and Rabi'aa border points recorded an increase on 5 August with the arrival of 310 more returnees in Al-Waleed and 172 others in Rabi'aa. Only 10 returnees entered through Al-Qa'im which maintained the same downward trend, mostly blamed on the continuing fighting between the Syrian opposition Free Army and government troops in Albu Kamal and adjacent areas bordering Al-Qa'im where sounds of shelling and gun fire could still be heard. Syria unrest has forced a total of 22,311 Iraqis to return to the country.

Al-Qa'im, however, saw 72 more Syrian arrivals fleeing violence, which has so far driven a total of 3,628 Syrians across the three border points. Another 9,053 Syrians crossed into Kurdistan region, which brings the total number of Syrian refugees in Iraq to 12,681.

Sixty-eight more Syrian families (281 Individuals) were registered at a school location in Karabla sub-district of al-Qa'im today. UNHCR protection team has registered, up to this date, a total of 436 families (2,036 individuals).

A Syrian family of four individuals approached the Return Assistance Centre (RAC) of the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) in Karkh side of Baghdad, seeking asylum. The family entered Iraq legally via Baghdad International Airport on 21 July. UNHCR is to register the family as asylum seekers. Similar cases of Syrians who may enter Iraq through border points or airports will be offered the same assistance.

Within the framework of the sponsorship programme, 250 Syrian individuals managed to move from the schools and public centres to live with their relatives in Al-Qa'em.

Construction works on the second camp site are continuing. Forty-two out of planned 250 tents were erected by UNHCR IP (ISHO). IP (IRW) started laying the water pipelines. The site will be an extension to the first location which has been expanded to accommodate a larger number of refugees. At the first camp location, the first batch of water tanks and air coolers were delivered. Each tent is to receive a water tank and an air cooler, as order by the Emergency Cell.

The Government is pressing for the movement of Syrian refugees from the schools and public centres where they now settle. It has already allocated ID50bn (\$40m) to assist Syrian refugees as well as Iraqi returnees.

Returnees from Syria are reported to be facing difficulties with MoDM registration. Some branch offices have different interpretations of the new MoDM registration regulations for Iraqis returning from Syria. UNHCR has been following up on the issue at the Ministry level. The Ministry is to issue clarification with instructions to all RACs and branch offices to strictly abide by the new regulations.

2. Statistics

2.1 Iraqi returnees

| Border point | Number of arrivals 5 August 2012 |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Al-Waleed: | 310 |
| Total Al-Waleed: | 13,647 |
| Rabi'aa: | 172 |
| Total Rabi'aa: | 1,711 |
| Al-Qa'im: | 10 |
| Total Al-Qa'im: | 1,731 |
| Total returnees on 5 August 2012: | 492 |
| By air: 5,222 | |
| Grand total (since 18 July 2012): | 22,311* |

2.2 Syrian refugees

| Border point | Number of arrivals 5 August 2012 |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Al-Waleed: | 0 |
| Total Al-Waleed: | 5 |
| Rabi'aa: | 0 |
| Total Rabi'aa: | 2 |
| Al-Qa'im: | 72 |
| Total Al-Qa'im: | 3,621 |
| Total arrivals since 18 July: | 3,628* |
| Total arrivals in Kurdistan since March 2011: | 9,053 |
| Grand total: | 12,681 |

3. UNHCR assistance

Al-Qa'im:

- Another 250 tents delivered to the second camp location, of which 42 tents installed.
- 3 caravans from Al-Waleed to arrive in Al-Qa'im today; two to be used as admin unit and the third as a health clinic.

Al-Waleed:

- Adequate NFI stock at rub-hall ready for distribution whenever needed.
- Water, sanitation, electricity ready to be installed.

Rabi'aa:

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

* Figures updated as at 12:00 am, Sunday, 6 August 2012
Sources of information: Border Immigration Offices/BIAP

Centre/South Governorates:

- 20 NFI kits to be delivered to each of Baghdad's six RICCs for a second round of distribution to Iraqi returnees from Syria.
- 150 NFI kits released for distribution to returnees in Anbar, Babylon, Najaf and Diyala governorates.

Domiz camp (Duhok):

- Assistance ongoing

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

5. Interviews with new arrivals

- Iraqi returnees interviewed by Al-Waleed team complained of the long delays at the border crossing and checkpoints. Anbar Operations Command does not allow buses to cross or proceed to Baghdad before 03:00 am. Some returnees required medical treatment after long wait at the border
 - UNHCR Karbala team interviewed some returnee families who expressed frustration over MoDM procrastination in registration. Today, 17 families (47 individuals) visited MoDM branch office to register as returnees from Syria. The office agreed to receive and examine the returnee applications but said it would consider them on the basis of the old regulations which may disqualify them from registration.
 - MoDM branch offices in southern Iraq today registered 2 returnee families (8 individuals) in Basra and 2 families (6 individuals) in Missan. These families returned from Syria between 20-29 July.
 - In Hilla, six families (28 individuals) were registered with MoDM as returnees from Syria today. Since 29 July, a total of 50 returnee families (210 individuals) have been registered.
 - Two returnees from Syria were interviewed by UNHCR Wassit team; both were registered with MoDM branch office. The first returnee left Kut for Damascus in 2011 with his wife and daughter. Events in Syria forced them to go back to Iraq though they have no house to go to. All were registered with UNHCR Syria.
- The second returnee, also registered with UNHCR Syria, left Iraq to find job in Syria but had to flee back to the country because of the deteriorating security.

6. Coordination

UNHCR is collaborating closely with the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoDM), MoPC, 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.