



## North Iraq Security Overview

### 1<sup>st</sup> July to 15<sup>th</sup> August 2018

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#### Glossary

DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party
SGBV	Sexual & Gender Based Violence
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
IS	Islamic State
KRG	Kurdish Regional Government
HPE	Ezidkham Protection Units
YBS	Yazidi Sinjar Resistant Unit

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Sources of information include Mercy Corp Humanitarian Access Team (MC HAT), INSO, and websites including, but not exclusive, Institute for the Study of War, Chatham House, Human Rights Watch, Al Jazeera, SouthFront, Rudaw, Al-Monitor, iMMAP, and Reliefweb.

In the text when '*Comment: ...*' appears in *italic* and the subsequent text is also in *italic*, this information is not fact, but the opinion of the author.

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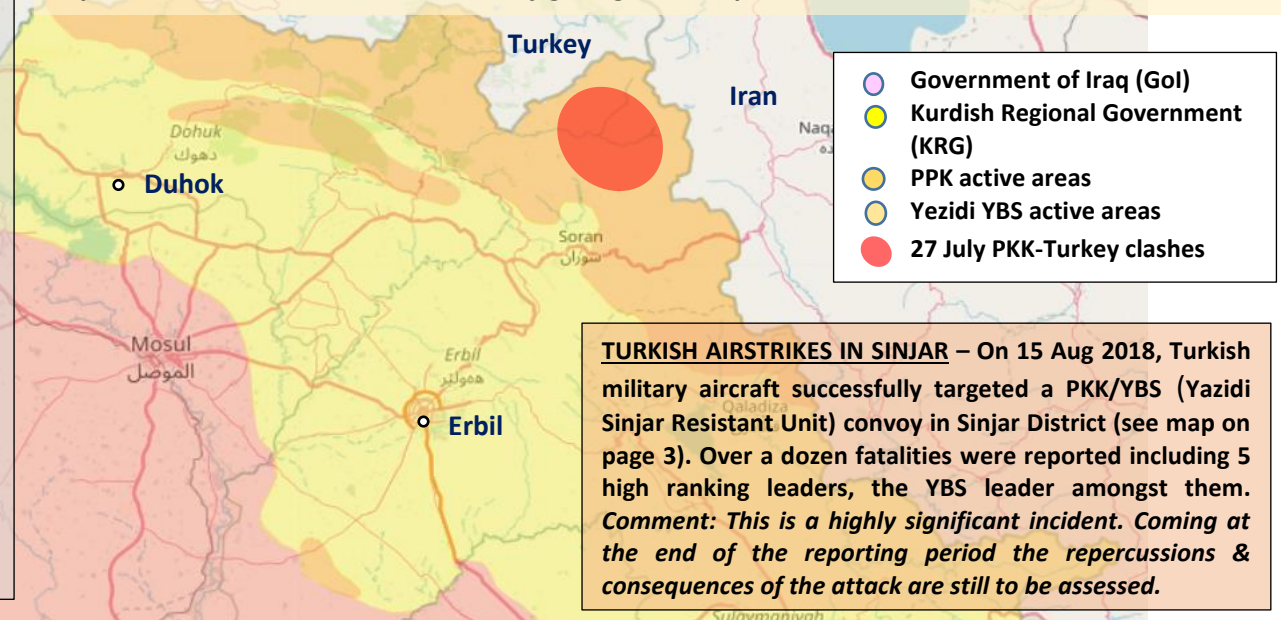
Locations	Risk Level	Comment	Forecast
<b>Erbil, Duhok, Sulaymaniyah, Zokho and direct routes between within KRG borders (except those areas assessed as High).</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<i>Whilst threats faced by INGOs in these areas would suggest the Risk Level is Low, uncertainty remains over the future relationship between the KFG &amp; the Bagdad government. Kurdish political parties might be in a strong position to benefit from a new government in Bagdad &amp; thereby improve access to the KRG.</i>	<i>*Visa issues may improve if Kurdish parties join the Sairoon bloc &amp; form a government. *Turkish military &amp; PKK clashes will continue, as will Turkish airstrikes. *Risk Levels may come down to Low in August-September.</i>
<b>Kirkuk Governorate, Hawijah Governorate, Mosel, Telafar, Sinjar Districts, within 10km of Turkey and Iran border.</b>	<b>High</b>	<i>INGOs are operating in these areas &amp; international staff do visit. However, strong Security Operating Procedures, Contingency Plans &amp; well trained competent staff are essential. Agencies must also have a high risk threshold and strong resilience.</i>	<i>*No improvements in the poor security of the listed locations is expected for the near to medium future. *Harassment of INGO staff likely to increase as INGOs areas of operations grow. *Risk Levels will most probably remain high.</i>

## 1. Political and Conflict Summary

(Map Source <http://syriancivilwarmap.com>)

**POST-ELECTION RECOUNT** – Iraq's Parliamentary Elections on 12 May 2018 produced large gains for the Shia political groups that oppose the current government. However, amidst allegations of fraud, the parliament in early June ordered a manual recount. The results of the recount were presented on 10 August & there was little change to the original results. Shia leader Muqtada al-Sadr's political bloc, Sairoon, was confirmed as the largest bloc with 54 seats out of 329. The Iran-affiliated al-Fatih alliance took 48 seats. Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's al-Nasr bloc remained in third place with 42 seats. Three months after the election, the winning parties are still embroiled in negotiations over forming the next governing coalition, with no sign of an imminent conclusion. Sairoon, as the largest bloc in parliament, has 3 months in which to form a government. But impatience is mounting in the country where frequent & large protests against corruption & poor services, particularly electricity supply, have been taking place in the predominantly Shia southern provinces. *Comment: This situation presents opportunities for Kurdish political parties who together hold 43 seats in parliament. They could give their support to one of the Shia blocs in return for greater autonomy & government funding.*

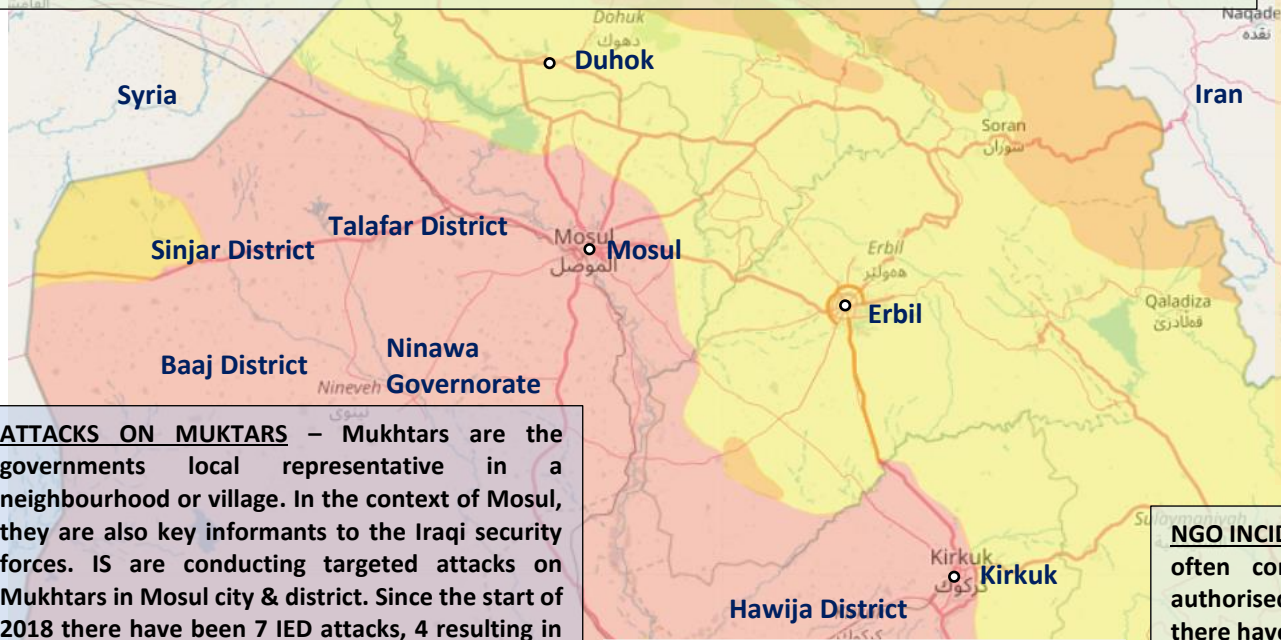
**ERBIL & DUHOK GOVERNORATES** – Conflict between the PKK and Turkish armed forces is the main conflict driver in north and northeast Iraq. In July there was an estimated 90 incidents between the two. This includes direct small arms fire, indirect artillery fire (mostly Turkish) & Turkish airstrikes. Turkey has more than 15 military outposts in the mountainous north & northeast areas of Erbil and Duhok Governorates. Whilst Turkish forces initiate most of the clashes, on 21 July 2018 a major clash took place when the PKK attacked 4 Turkish outposts in Chiyadel & Khuwa Kurk Mountains to the northeast of Erbil. During the clashes, Turkish military aircraft & helicopters conducted airstrikes onto several PKK positions in the same mountainous area. Multiple casualties on both sides were reported. *Comment: A reduction in the fighting is not expected in the medium term.*



**ERBIL CITY** – On 23 July 2018, 3 armed men attacked the Erbil Governorate building & took several hostages. The hostage situation lasted several hours before KRG forces stormed the building freeing the hostages, arresting 2 gunmen & killing the third. The authorities later stated the attack was carried by members of the Kurdish Islamic Group (KIG). KIG is a small Kurdish political party with 2 seats in the National Congress. The authorities allege the attack was in retaliation to earlier Security Force raids on the houses of two of the party's prominent members. *Comment: The incident highlights the volatility of Kurdish politics & the lack political neutrality amongst the Security Forces. In the 1990's there was a civil war between the two current leading political parties & today different elements of Security Forces are still aligned with either of the parties.*

On 10 Aug another NGO international female staff member was sexually harassed – a taxi driver exposed himself to her. The same day another NGO international female staff member was followed & indecently propositioned by a taxi driver. These were the 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> reported cases of SGBV incidents in Erbil city since the start of 2018. The 14<sup>th</sup> incident had involved by a boy selling gum on the street physically harassing a female NGO staff member, despite being accompanied by a male colleague. *Comment: This is a persistent problem in Erbil & it is generally believed SGBV incidents go under reported. There are few patterns in the incidents – they can happen at any time during the day, with or without male companions, & may involve physical assault or verbal harassment. However, many happen in the Ankawa neighbourhood due to the high number of INGOs located there, & many involve men in cars or taxis following & harassing the victims.*

**NINAWA & KIRKUK GOVERNORATES** – During the IS reign in north Iraq, both Ninawa & Kirkuk governorates were heavily occupied by IS, although in Kirkuk it was mostly the Hawija District. As a result, currently in both governorates there are weekly attacks by IS ‘stay-behind’ fighters on government local community leaders & government armed actors i.e. Iraqi police, Iraqi army & PMUs (Popular Mobilization Units – government militia raised to fight IS & created on religious & ethnic lines). However, most of the activity in both governorates are search & arrest operations by the Iraqi armed actors; in July there were 182 such operations in Ninawa & an estimated 90 in Kirkuk. The operations can impede NGO activity, more so in Ninawa than Kirkuk. NGO field staff have been stopped at checkpoints hampering access, even when carrying authorisation letters, and arrest operations have taken place in IDP camps compromising humanitarian space.



**ATTACKS ON MUKHTARS** – Mukhtars are the governments local representative in a neighbourhood or village. In the context of Mosul, they are also key informants to the Iraqi security forces. IS are conducting targeted attacks on Mukhtars in Mosul city & district. Since the start of 2018 there have been 7 IED attacks, 4 resulting in casualties & fatalities, 1 abduction & 1 homicide. *Comment: By attacking Mukhtar, an influential & visible public figure, IS are sending a clear message that anyone who works with or for the authorities are at risk. Such a threat will dissuade people from wanting to become a Mukhtar or take on similar duties, thereby undermining local governance & the effectiveness of the security forces.*

**KIRKUK CITY** – Kirkuk continues to be a violent city. In the last 2 weeks of July alone there was one complex attack, 3 IEDs (one near a school) & 2 grenade attacks (one in Kirkuk’s Paediatric Hospital). *Comment: Whilst IS is the most likely perpetrator, local actors cannot be ruled out for the grenade attacks which resulted in few casualties & no fatalities. Kirkuk has a mixed population of Arab Sunni, Shia, Turkmen and Kurds. There are strong political and inter-communal tensions, and resistance to the Iraqi security forces from some groups.*

- Government of Iraq (GoI)
- Kurdish Regional Government (KRG)
- PPK active areas
- Yezidi YBS active areas

**ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR BY GOVERNMENT ARMED ACTORS** – In Ninawa Governorate, mostly in & around Mosul & Sinjar Districts, there are frequent incidents of indiscipline, confrontational & violent behaviour by the various government armed actors. These may be towards each other, notably between PMUs & official Iraqi Security Forces, or towards civilians & NGOs (see text box below). In Mosul, local Iraqi Police were given responsibility for security in the city in February 2018, but PMUs frequently show no compliance with the law & clash with the Police, occasionally resulting in fatalities. In Sinjar, tensions exist between the Iraqi Security Forces & the PMUs Ezidkham Protection Units (HPE) & the Yazidi Sinjar Resistant Unit (YBS). There are also frequent reports of PMU & Iraqi Security Force assaulting civilians. On 9 August it was reported PMUs units were ordered to withdraw from Sinjar, Talafar & Baaj districts west of Mosul. They were replaced by Iraqi Army units, but the order did not include PMUs of Shabak, Christian, Turkmen, & Yazidis ethnicity. *Comment: The reason for the withdrawal is unclear. It may well be to reduce local tensions between the Shia PMUs & non-Shia local communities. However, the withdrawal may leave gaps in security if the Iraqi army do not have sufficient manpower to replace the PMUs; thereby giving an opportunity for IS to conduct more attacks.*

**NGO INCIDENTS** – In Ninawa & Kirkuk Governorates humanitarian space is often compromised by government armed actors either through authorised actions or undisciplined behaviour. Since the start of 2018 there have been 10 such incidents, 7 in Ninawa. Incidents include:

- Arresting of IDPs in IDP camps
- Demands for IDP household lists
- Assaulting NGO staff at IDP camps, often when inebriated
- Abuse & harassment at checkpoints
- Arresting NGO staff

In one incident the driver of a marked INGO vehicle was held at gun point by local villagers who believed him to be a suicide bomber. *Comment: The incidents highlight the threats faced by national NGO staff due to the unprofessional behaviour of government armed actors & the lack of awareness of humanitarian principles among these actors. This is despite efforts by NGO-coordination bodies to ensure the security forces are aware of International Humanitarian Law & International Human Rights Law.*

## 2. Humanitarian Situation

Iraq: Internally displaced people by governorate (as of 31 July 2018)



### IDP STATISTICS & LOCATIONS

- As of 30 June 2018, DTM has identified 3,904,350 returnees (650,725 families), who have returned to their location of origin.
- Main returns are to Ninewa Governorate (Mosul & Telafar)
- The DTM has also identified 2,002,986 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), (333,831 families), who remain dispersed across 18 governorates, 103 districts & 3,348 locations in Iraq.

[http://iraqdtm.iom.int/LastDTMRound/Round98\\_Map\\_Returnee%20dashboard\\_2018\\_June\\_30\\_IOM\\_DTM.PDF](http://iraqdtm.iom.int/LastDTMRound/Round98_Map_Returnee%20dashboard_2018_June_30_IOM_DTM.PDF)

**SHELTER** – IDP Returnees in critical shelters are mostly concentrated in the four districts of Tikrit (5,730 individuals) & Balad (5,364) in Salah al-Din, & Telefar (3,852) & Sinjar (1,314) in Ninawa Governorate. The provision of adequate & targeted shelter support to refugees residing out of camps requires increased attention as needs remain very high.

**PROTECTION** – Explosive hazard contamination remains a critical threat to returnee populations, particularly in Mosul city. Between 10 July 2017 & the beginning of May 2018, an international NGO recorded nearly 130 explosive hazards incidents, more than 80 of which caused nearly 190 civilian casualties.

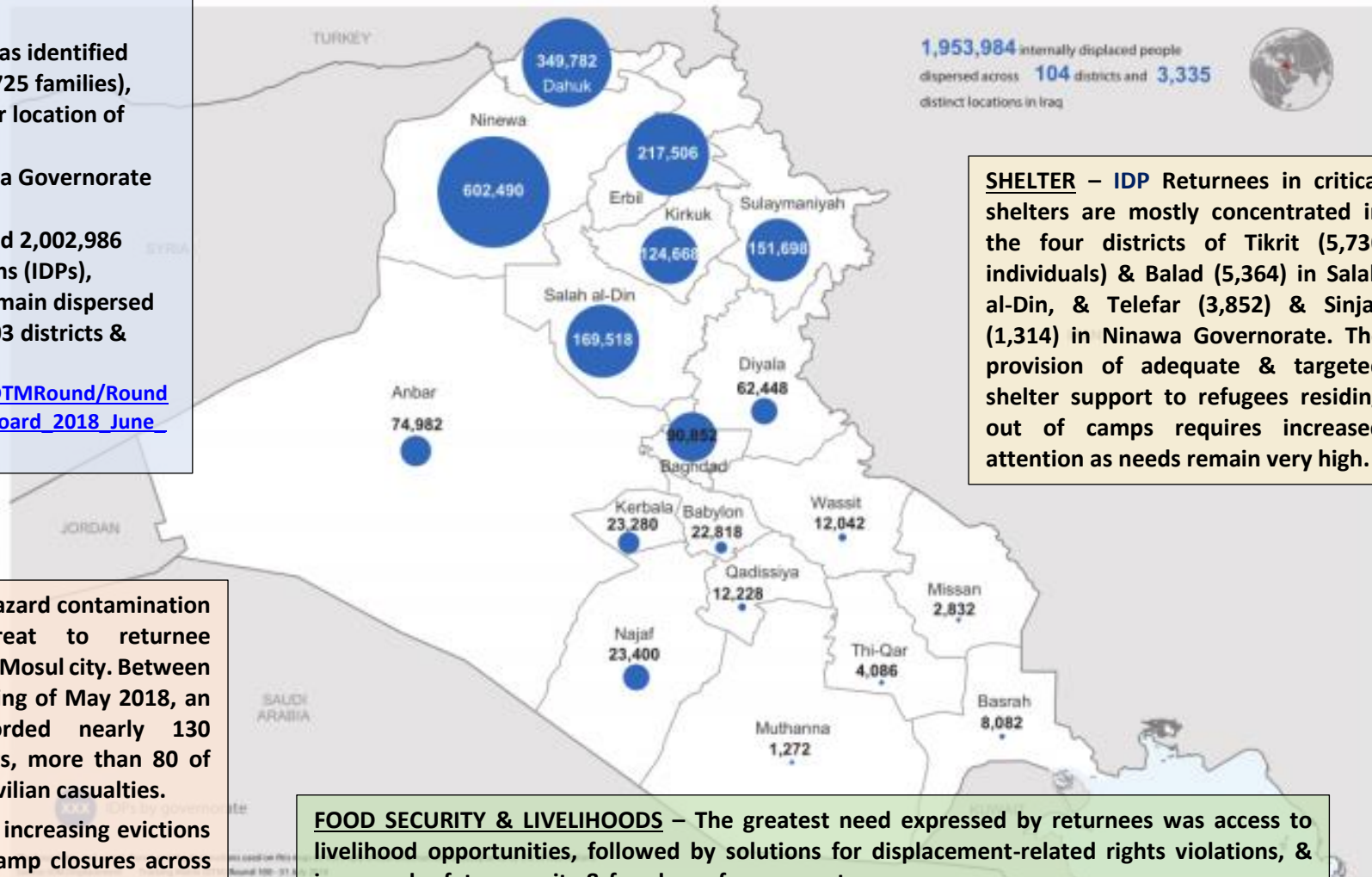
Relief organizations report increasing evictions & forced returns due to camp closures across multiple locations in Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, & Salah al-Din governorate.

A key concern of an UNHCR Partner is prevalence of Child Labor.

**FOOD SECURITY & LIVELIHOODS** – The greatest need expressed by returnees was access to livelihood opportunities, followed by solutions for displacement-related rights violations, & improved safety, security & freedom of movement.

Iraq's 2018 cereal harvest will likely be 11 percent lower than the 2017 harvest & nearly 17 percent lower than the 2013–2017 average, according to a late June UN Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO) projection.

Needs & gaps continue to exist for Syrian refugees trying to avoid negative coping strategies & create long-term sustainable livelihood solutions for themselves & their families.

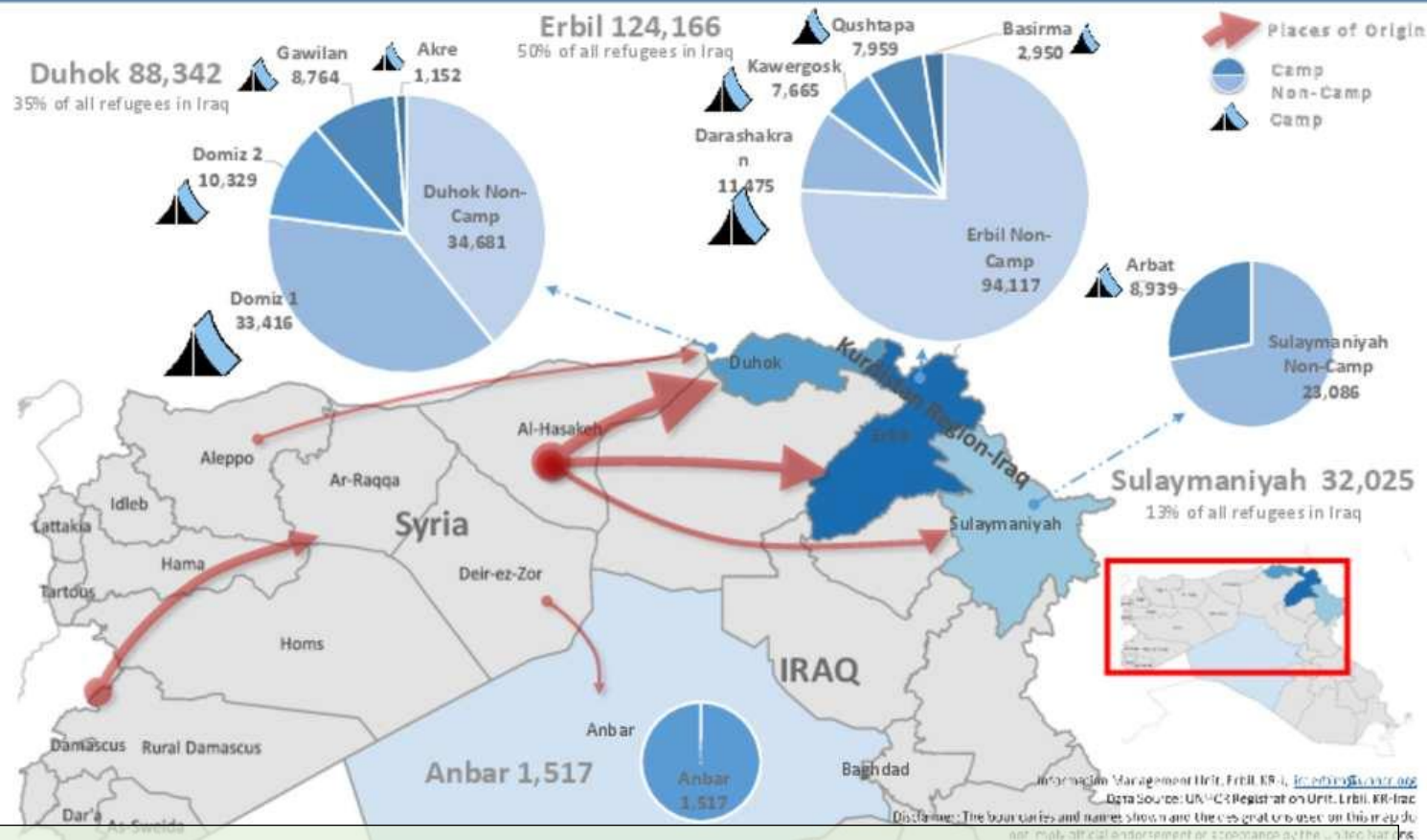




## Iraq: Syrian Refugee stats and locations

31 July 2018

**Stats: 249,123 persons** (80,476 households) covered by Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP 2018)  
 Population in Camps and non-Camps: 37% (92,649 persons) live in 9 camps & 63% (156,474 persons) in non-camp/urban areas  
 Locations: 98% (244,533 persons) live in Kurdistan Region – Iraq (KR-I), 03% (4,590 persons) live in other locations in Iraq



### SYRIAN REFUGEE STATISTICS & LOCATIONS

Total Number: 249,123 people (80,476 Households).

Population in Camps and non-Camps:

- 37% (92,649 people) live in 9 camps
- 63% (156,474) in non-camp/urban areas
- 98% (244,533) in Kurdistan Region (50% in Erbil, 35% Dohuk and 13% Sulaymaniyah)

<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/65084>

**EDUCATION** – NGOs are concentrating on training of teachers, providing teaching supplies & access to schools. UNICEF delivered teaching & learning supplies to support education services for more than 63,500 children across Iraq. The funding gap is expected to affect payment of refugee teachers' incentives.

**WASH & HEALTH** – WHO reported that approximately 38 percent of Health Cluster-supported health facilities are at risk of closure by the end of July due to a lack of funds, potentially affecting more than 900,000 people. In return areas there is limited access to ambulance & health services and most health facilities, including secondary & tertiary health facilities, are damaged & suffer a shortage of health personnel. Safe water remains a major concern for the populations living in the areas of return in Ninawa.

Shortage of medicines for chronic diseases & access to mental health & psychosocial support services remains limited for non-camp refugees. With an increase in temperature, water demands increase, this coupled with reduced hours of available electricity making it very difficult to provide sufficient water.