

## **Internal Displacement in Iraq: History, Implications, and Future Prospects**

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May 2009

As of December 2008, estimates indicate that between 4.3 and 4.8 million Iraqis are displaced from their homes. Of this figure, more than 2.8 million have been internally displaced inside Iraq's borders, whereas an estimated 1.5 to 2.0 million are displaced outside of the country. A thorough history of displacement in the country is presented in this report, followed by the implications of such mass displacement. Although the short-term humanitarian problems are outlined, it is important to note the long-term socio-political, economic, and security implications that displacement has had on the country. The societal segregation that has intensified in the last few years is highlighted throughout the report as an impediment to development in the country. It is argued that throughout Iraq's history, displacement has been used as a tool to divide communities, maintain political power, and control economic resources in the country. The responses of the Iraqi government, its neighboring countries, the United States, and the international community to the mass wave of displacement since 2006 have been inadequate; they have been slow to protect and assist the displaced population and to address the long-term effects of this displacement. In order to alleviate the humanitarian crisis and address the long-term development challenges of the country, Iraqi officials, civil society actors, and the international community should formulate policies that ensure assistance to the displaced, security guarantees, property restitution, political participation, and national and political reconciliation. These recommendations are outlined in more detail at the conclusion of the report.

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## **Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

CAP – United Nations Consolidated Appeals Process

CRRPD – Commission for the Resolution of Real Property Disputes

DGA – Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs (U.S. State Department)

HRW – Human Rights Watch

IDP – Internally Displaced Person

IHEC – Independent High Electoral Commission

IOM – International Organization for Migration

KDP – Kurdistan Democratic Party

KRG – Kurdish Regional Government

MoDM – Ministry of Displacement and Migration

MNF-I – Multi-National Force-Iraq

OCHA – Office of Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs

PDS – Public Distribution System

PKK – Kurdistan Workers’ Party

PRM – Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (U.S. State Department)

PRT – Provincial Reconstruction Team

PUK – Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

RPG – Refugee Policy Group

RSG – Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of IDPs

SIV – Special Immigrant Visa

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

USCIS – United States Citizenship and Immigration Services

WCC – World Council of Churches

WFP – World Food Programme

# Chapter 1. Introduction and History of Displacement

## Introduction

As of December 2008, estimates indicate that between 4.3 and 4.8 million Iraqis are displaced from their homes. Of this figure, more than 2.8 million have been internally displaced inside Iraq's borders (see Figure 1.1), and an estimated 1.5 to 2.0 million are displaced outside of the country. A little over a million of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) were evicted during the Ba'athist regime, and another 1.6 million have been displaced since early 2006, mostly as a result of increased sectarian violence in and around Baghdad.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the two million refugees who have fled the country, mostly to Syria and Jordan, this means that approximately one in every six Iraqis is displaced from his or her home.

The history of Iraqi displacement is generally broken down into three time periods: 1) from the 1960s until 2003, under the Ba'athist government; 2) from the U.S.-led invasion in March 2003 until the February 2006 bombing of the Al-Askari Shi'a shrine in Samara; and 3) from the shrine bombing until the present. Most documents and reports, especially those written by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) distinguish between old internal displacement, which encompasses the first two time periods (pre-2006, estimated at 1.2 million people) and new internal displacement, which corresponds to the third time period (post-2006, estimated at 1.6 million people). Although displacement has intensified over the last three years, high levels of forced displacement have been present in Iraq since the 1960s.

Displacement, both old and new, has affected all ethnic groups and religious groups in the country. Iraqis of different ethnicities and religious affiliations have, with some exceptions, lived together with relatively little violence. Ethnic and religious differences, therefore, do not explain the internal displacement of approximately a tenth of the Iraqi population. As the history that follows will show, the Ba'athist regime's repressive mechanisms would be used for four decades to expel over a million Iraqis.

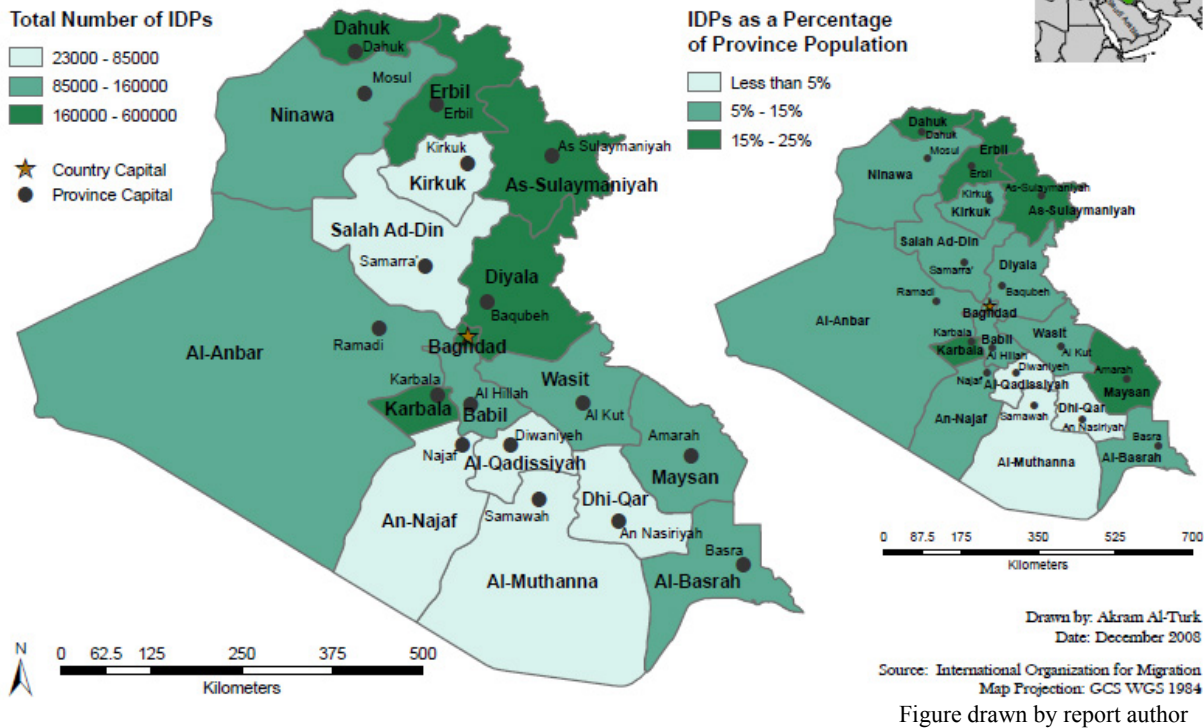
These calculations were based more on political and economic calculations and less on racially-charged motives. The most explicit form of racially-motivated displacement occurred when Iraqi government officials used racial slurs against the Marsh Arabs to justify their forced expulsion. Even then, however, the racist remarks were tools used by the regime to justify the state's development projects and repression of political dissidence.

Even in the post-2006 era, when sectarian violence was at its highest levels, the reasoning behind forced expulsion was not merely ideological; the prospects of political power and control of economic resources are major factors that define the continued tensions in the country. Expulsion is an effective method of attaining political power because it redefines and reshapes the demographic makeup of a city, province, and a country as a whole. Especially in a post-conflict country, these demographic shifts define who will attain political and economic power; understood in this manner, forced displacement becomes less about ideological hatred and irrationality and more about rational power calculations.

After outlining the long history of Iraq's displacement in Chapter One, the second chapter will discuss the implications of such mass displacement. Although displacement on this scale is surely a humanitarian concern, there are also long-term effects – socio-political and economic – that are discussed. Chapter Three looks briefly at the questions that pertain to the protection and assistance of IDPs globally and what the response to Iraq's IDP crisis has been like over the last few years. Chapter Four concludes the report by synthesizing the various issues that Iraq will face going forward and what can be done to address some of the most pressing problems. The IDP issue is but one piece of the puzzle, but it is representative of the country's long-term development and its people's hopes and dreams. Unless the IDP crisis is taken more seriously by Iraqi officials and international actors, the stability and prosperity of the country will remain precarious.

**Figure 1.1**  
**Map of Iraq's Internally Displaced Population**

**Iraqi IDPs: Total Numbers and as a Percentage of Province Population**  
**December 2008**



**Pre-2003 Displacement**

**Pre-2003 Displacement in the North**

Of the 1.2 million people internally displaced before March 2003, approximately 800,000 were displaced in the northern region of Iraq, which has been under the control of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) since 1992. The KRG, an alliance of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), and other smaller parties, has administered the governorates (or provinces) of Dohuk, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, and a part of the Kirkuk (or at-Ta'mim) governorate.<sup>2</sup> The history of

displacement in the North has its roots in the early days of the Iraqi state, when Iraqi Kurds were denied statehood; instead of independence, the former Ottoman province of Mosul, which covers much of the region the KRG currently administers, became a part of the modern state of Iraq.<sup>3</sup> Since that time, and especially since the KDP revolts against the Iraqi government in the 1960s, Kurdish aspirations for independence and the Iraqi government's suppression of that independence movement have characterized the tensions between the Kurds and the central government. In addition to the issue of independence, the question of Kirkuk and its oil reserves was and continues to be a major point of contention between the Kurds and the central Iraqi government. Whereas today, the issue will most likely be resolved through constitutional and political means, the Ba'athist regime used forced expulsion and other depopulation efforts to gain control of the oil-rich region.

In 1970, the Ba'ath party proposed a peace plan to the Kurds. Despite granting the Kurds more autonomy (in the form of the Kurdistan Autonomous Region) than offered in Syria, Iran, or Turkey, the Iraqi government did not want to relinquish too much power, especially in the oil-rich Kirkuk region.<sup>4</sup> In addition to unilaterally defining the Kurdish region, the Iraqi government used a variety of tactics to expel Kurds, Turkmen, and Assyrians from their homes.<sup>5</sup> These processes, which included replacing the local population with Arabs from other regions of the country (or "Arabization"), used both forced expulsion tactics, as well as more subtle bureaucratic methods.<sup>6</sup> Further, the Iraqi government and the Shah of Iran, with support from U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, signed a border agreement in 1975 that would discontinue the Shah's support of the KDP.<sup>7</sup> Dependent on Iranian and indirect American support for their military power, the Kurds became powerless against a more repressive Ba'athist regime. Tens of thousands of villagers from the Barzani tribe, the most powerful in Iraqi Kurdistan, were forced from their homes to southern Iraq. Estimates indicate that, between the mid to late 1970s, the Ba'athist regime forcibly evacuated at least 250,000 people from the country's borders with Iran and Turkey.<sup>8</sup> Most of the expelled Kurds were relocated to *mujamma'at*, or collective towns, away from their farms, families, and



communities.<sup>9</sup> The regime's expulsions during this time period had two major goals—to create a buffer zone along the Iranian and Turkish borders, and to ensure that the traditionally independent Kurdish population came to rely on the Iraqi state for food, water, and utilities. This was also part of the larger Arabization process mentioned above; in fact, some villagers were offered cash compensation but were forbidden to return to their homes.<sup>10</sup>

### *The Anfal Campaigns*

The expulsion of hundreds of thousands of people in the 1970s was only a precursor of the more harsh expulsions that the Ba'athist regime would enact in the 1980s. Along with its war against Iran, the Iraqi regime was waging multiple internal battles against Kurdish elements, such as the KDP, who were again allied with Tehran. Sources indicate that the Iraqi government began to use one of three techniques in the early to mid 1980s: 1) deportation of Kurds from villages, towns, and even the new *mujamma'at* starting in 1982; 2) abduction (and possible killing) of thousands of young males in retribution for collaboration with Iranians; and 3) destruction of thousands of Kurdish villages, especially in the rural areas of Iraqi Kurdistan.<sup>11</sup> The latter process, begun in 1968, became more frequent in the 1970s and 1980s, and culminated in the Anfal campaigns of 1988, which alone destroyed approximately 1,300 villages.<sup>12</sup>

Although the Iraqi government had destroyed Kurdish villages since the late 1960s, the Anfal campaigns marked the first time that the regime had systematically administered the mass killings of villagers merely because they lived in areas designated as “prohibited for security reasons.” Iraqi military units, along with pro-Baghdad Kurdish militia, attacked villages, relocated their inhabitants, and, according to Ali Hassan al-Majid, architect of the campaigns, bulldozed them into mass graves.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, in 2000, a survey noted that over 250 towns and villages were subjected to chemical warfare by Iraqi forces in the late 1980s. In addition to the villages destroyed, the perpetrators of the Anfal campaigns alone would end up killing between 50,000 and 100,000 people and cause the internal displacement of approximately 250,000 people.<sup>14</sup>

### *Arabization*

The Arabization process was a much more subtle means of expelling not only Kurds, but also Turkmen and Assyrians and, to some degree, Arab dissidents. In addition to targeted violence, the regime used administrative rules that favored Arabs over non-Arabs, especially in Kirkuk. These tactics included prohibitions on non-Arabs from purchasing property, renewing licenses for economic purposes, and attending schools. The regime also set up military checkpoints, demolished Kurdish sites, confiscated food ration cards, arrested family members, and laid landmines in agricultural lands. While placing these obstacles to non-Arabs, the regime provided incentives for Arabs from the central and southern regions of the country to migrate to the Kirkuk region. These included the redistribution of land, drilling of water wells, granting of cash compensation, and providing food rations to the newly arrived immigrants.<sup>15</sup>

### *Kurdish Infighting and Foreign Intervention*

Along with state repression, the Kurdish population in the north has also been displaced as a result of infighting between the two main Kurdish parties, the KDP and the PUK. Beginning in 1994, violence broke out between the two factions, causing mostly urban dwellers to be displaced. Usually, the displaced were adherents of the opposite party; for example, KDP sympathizers either fled or were expelled from parts of Sulaymaniyah governorate controlled by the PUK. According to UNHCR and the Kurdish parties' estimates, over 100,000 people were displaced between 1994 and 1997, before a Washington-brokered ceasefire was implemented in 1998. Although the ceasefire was effective in halting the violence and allowed for more freedom of movement, few families were able to return to their homes.<sup>16</sup>

Aside from the fighting between the KDP and the PUK, there were other internal battles that caused thousands of people to leave their homes. Close to 15,000 people were displaced because of battles between the Turkish-Kurdish group, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and the two Iraqi Kurdish factions. And in 2001, the PUK was fighting a Kurdish-Islamist separatist group, Jund al-Islam (which has since changed its

name to Ansar al-Islam) that left 300 families displaced.<sup>17</sup> All of the infighting in the Kurdish north attracted the attention not only of the central government in Baghdad, but also Turkey and Iran, both of which have interests in a stable, and more importantly, acquiescent Iraqi Kurdistan. Iranian intervention, Turkey's raids to find PKK fighters, and Iraqi collaboration with the KDP against the PUK (in August 1996) all have caused further internal displacement.<sup>18</sup>

### *Returnees from Iran*

Further, a number of returnees from Iran, notably the Faili Kurds (unlike the majority of Kurds, the Failis are Shi'a), who were expelled by the Iraqi government or escaped, went from being refugees to being internally displaced in the north. Since many were expelled from Baghdad and the central region of the country, their return from Iran to the north of Iraq was, for many, a temporary stay. The numbers of this refugee-turned-IDP population, which includes some from Turkey, range in the tens of thousands.<sup>19</sup>

### **Pre-2003 Displacement in the Center/South**

The internal displacement of Iraqis in the centrally-administered regions of the country (the center and the south) has been a consequence of a few converging factors—the tensions between Saddam Hussein and the majority Shi'a population, the consequences of the Iraq-Iran war, and the deliberately engineered marsh-draining projects along the Iranian border. Similar to the situation in the north, the roots of the first factor—the rule of the majority population by a minority elite—lay in the post-colonial manifestation of current day Iraq. Despite being the majority in Iraq, the Shi'a population was governed by the Sunni elite since the days of decolonization and nation building. Although this was mostly dormant throughout Iraq's history, the repressive rule of Saddam Hussein and consequent political aspirations of the Shi'a would cause the internal displacement of thousands of Iraqis.

Exact figures for the number of displaced in the central and southern regions are hard to obtain. In some cases, it is difficult to determine whether people were displaced because of their political dissidence towards the regime, their unbearable conditions

because of the march-draining projects, or as a consequence of the nine-year war with Iran. Further, throughout the Arabization process, many Iraqis immigrated south rather than to the Kurdish-administered region. The most difficult displacement numbers to pin down is that of Arabs in the marshlands bordering the Iranian border. According to various reports, the war likely affected the Marsh Arabs the most, but other groups may have been displaced as well. According to the Iraqi Red Crescent, the number of Iraqis displaced because of the war was 80,000.<sup>20</sup>

### *Displacement in the Marshlands*

The manipulation of the marshlands in the 1990s was not a new phenomenon. In fact, development projects that altered the Marsh Arabs' environment began as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Later, British, Dutch, Russian, and Pakistani companies, beginning in the 1940s and continuing intermittently until the 1990s, were commissioned to drain the marshlands; drainage was linked to "projects for irrigation and the extension of cultivable land and the exploitation of agricultural opportunities."<sup>21</sup> The Iraqi government, along with Turkey, Syria, and Iran, built dam networks that severely decreased the amount of river flow downstream, the main source of sustenance for the Marsh Arabs.<sup>22</sup>

This hydrological engineering, however, was only a precursor for the more severe direct expulsion the Iraqi government exacted on the Marsh Arabs in the 1990s. The marshlands would become a haven for those who escaped the brutality of the government's response to the Shi'a rebellion (following the end of the Gulf War). The Marsh Arabs would also be blamed for attacks on the West Qurna oil field, one of Iraq's largest. Nonetheless, the situation of the Marsh Arabs was off the radar, simply because international organizations and companies had little presence in the region in the post-Gulf War period. All these factors made it appealing to the Iraqi regime to complete the drainage programs, which would require forcibly displacing (or in some instances, killing) the local population. In addition to using chemical weapons, destroying villages, and abducting heads of families, Iraqi authorities contaminated water supplies, poisoned fishing grounds, and denied access to aid agencies.<sup>23</sup>

The consequences were grave for the Marsh Arab population—40,000 fled to Iran, 20-40,000 remained in an increasingly difficult environment, and the remaining 170-190,000 were either killed or displaced.<sup>24</sup> The campaign against the Marsh Arabs was a racist (e.g. the degradation of them as “monkey-faced” people who were not real Iraqis) and brutal method of expulsion, and was largely out of the public eye, both locally and internationally.<sup>25</sup>

### *Repression of Political Dissidents*

Whereas the situation of Marsh Arabs has always been under the radar, the repression of political dissidents is a more-widely known issue. Saddam Hussein’s brutal aggression towards his political rivals included targeted expulsion methods such as the detention and home bulldozing of dissidents. These tactics are not well-documented, but the Iraqi government has explicitly admitted to such actions.<sup>26</sup> Further, after the establishment of Kurdish autonomy in the north, Kurds who were loyal to the central Iraqi government in the 1980s either fled or were expelled to the south. Many of these Kurds, estimated at 45,000, were relocated to military compounds in Mosul.<sup>27</sup>

## **Displacement Between 2003 and 2006**

Months before the U.S.-led invasion in March 2003, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs prepared an “Integrated Humanitarian Contingency Plan for Iraq and Neighbouring Countries” as a preparedness guide for “potential crisis” in the country.<sup>28</sup> In the plan, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that up to 1.45 million Iraqis would try to gain refugee and asylum status due to the military conflict. Additionally, UNHCR predicted that up to 900,000 new Iraqis would become displaced in the event of military combat.<sup>29</sup> Although numbers vary of exactly how many Iraqis were displaced (and how many have returned) from 2003 until early 2006, most sources indicate that military-induced displacements were lower than the initial UNHCR estimates.

The initial effects of the invasion were varied across the country. Despite lower than expected internal displacement numbers nationally, certain areas in the country experienced high numbers of displacement. Iraqi Kurdistan, prior to the invasion, had slowly begun to rebuild from the effects of the Ba'athist regime and managed to build tolerable settlements for the displaced.<sup>30</sup> After the invasion, Kurds returned to once-deserted villages or highly-militarized towns; in some cases, these returns did not cause further displacement and, in others, they did. Some of the displacement that occurred in Iraqi Kurdistan after the invasion was of Arabs leaving villages and towns that were "Arabized" during the Ba'athist regime; many of these Arabs returned south to their former homes, in Mosul or Tikrit.<sup>31</sup>

### **Military-Induced Displacement**

Shortly after the invasion, military operations caused displacement in Al-Anbar, Thi-Qar, and Basra governorates, especially in Sunni-dominated areas where insurgents were believed to be located. Much of the documented displacement, however, occurred after the initial fighting, when the Multi-National Force – Iraq (MNF-I) was tamping down on the increased insurgency. Cities across Iraq, such as Fallujah, Najaf, Kufa, Ramadi, Karbala, Tal Afar, Samarra, Basra and Baghdad, were the stages for counter-insurgency fighting and led to much of the military-induced displacement between 2003 and 2007. Multiple military campaigns in these cities caused the displacement of, in some cases, tens of thousands of Iraqis (e.g. in Najaf, from August 2004 until January 2005; in Ramadi, from early 2005 until early 2007; and in Tal Afar from 2004 until 2006).<sup>32</sup>

The largest number of displacements during the first three years of the invasion occurred in the cities of Fallujah and Kirkuk and in the governorate of Diyala. In November 2004, American, British, and Iraqi troops engaged in heavy fighting against pockets of the Iraqi insurgency in Fallujah; the two month long battle would cause the displacement of close to 200,000 people, or about 80% of the city's population.<sup>33</sup> Over the next 14 months, the displaced population began returning to the city, but up to a third

of the IDP population was still living on the outskirts of the city or, in lesser numbers, in other parts of the country.<sup>34</sup>

### **Post-War Demographic Shuffling**

Similar to the situation in post-invasion Iraqi Kurdistan, other ethnically diverse regions of the country experienced the return of Iraqis to homes they had been displaced from during the Ba’athist regime. This was especially evident in the city of Kirkuk and Diyala governorate. The former, a major site of Saddam Hussein’s Arabization process, was beginning to see the return of many Kurdish and Turkmen families.<sup>35</sup> After the invasion, tens of thousands of Kurds returned to Kirkuk, while many “settler” Arabs in Kirkuk (those who had come during the Arabization process) began to leave (or were expelled from) the city. This caused a new displaced population—Arabs who left Kirkuk to either live with family in central or southern Iraq or those who were forced to live in tents.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to the “settler” Arabs from Kirkuk that were being displaced, other Arabs that had been “imported” to northern governorates under the Ba’athist regime were, in many cases, forced to leave their homes. This was most evident in Diyala governorate, located to the southeast of Kirkuk. In September 2004, an estimated 11,300 people were occupying a soccer stadium and tents near Baquba, the governorate’s capital.<sup>37</sup> The governor of Diyala had asked anyone who was not ethnically Kurdish or Turkmen to evacuate their houses. In fact, according to the Transitional Administration Law, which was written by U.S.-led administrators, residents who were new to region (presumably under the Arabization campaigns) could be resettled, compensated or given land nearby. There were also reports of people being displaced because they were threatened by peshmerga, or Kurdish militias.<sup>38</sup>

## **Post-2006 Displacement**

### **Explosion of Sectarian Violence**

On February 22, 2006, al-Askari mosque (or Golden Dome), one of Iraq's most revered Shiite shrines located in Samarra, was bombed.<sup>39</sup> The bombing, suspected to have been carried out by Sunni insurgents, underscored the sectarian and political tensions that existed in the country. Although no group took responsibility for the Samarra bombing, many laid blame on Al-Qaeda in Iraq, an extremist Sunni insurgency group with allegiances to the greater Al-Qaeda network. Although no one was killed or hurt in the attack, there was a wave of attacks on Sunni mosques and protests throughout the country.<sup>40</sup> And, despite calls from politicians and prominent religious figures, including the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, for calm, the ensuing months would push the country to the brink of civil war. The sectarian violence, especially in Baghdad, would cause unprecedented displacement throughout the country, but especially in the capital and the surrounding governorates.

### **More Military-Induced Displacement**

The sectarian violence was not the only cause for displacement after 2006. Turkish and Iranian military operations in the north and American/Iraqi joint operations in Al-Anbar, Diyala, Baghdad, and Basra governorates also displaced thousands of Iraqi families. In the north, starting in mid 2006, both the Iranian and Turkish militaries engaged in battles with the PKK and the Kurdistan Free Life Party that would displace hundreds of families in the region. For example, in July 2006 and again in August 2007, Iranian forces shelled areas controlled by Kurdish rebels, displacing 1,500 and 1,000 people, respectively.<sup>41,42</sup>

The American "surge" strategy that began in early 2007, which saw an increase in military operations in Al-Anbar, Diyala, Baghdad, and Basra governorates between Multi-National Forces and Iraqi security forces on one side and insurgents on the other, had a major effect on the humanitarian situation in the country. Despite helping to quell the violence that had gripped the country in 2006, military operations caused large



amounts of displacement, especially in Baghdad, Sadr City, and in Al-Anbar and Diyala governorates.<sup>43</sup> Because fighting was intense in many of these locales, accurate numbers on casualties and displaced people are hard to find. However, sources indicate that thousands of people were displaced from Diyala in mid 2007 and thousands more from Sadr City.<sup>44,45</sup>

### **Figures and Trends of Iraqi Internal Displacement since February 2006**

The most comprehensive monitoring of Iraqi internal displacement since the Samarra bombing has been undertaken by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in coordination with the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM), the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), and international and local NGOs.<sup>46</sup> The following table shows the breakdown of IDPs by governorate (of their current locations) and the percentage of IDPs to the governorate's total population. The table shows that 793,613 Iraqis (or approximately half of all post-2006 IDPs) are displaced in three governorates: Baghdad, Diyala, and Ninawa. It also indicates that the intensity of displacement (as a percent of governorate population) is highest in Diyala, Karbala, and Baghdad.

**Table 1.1  
Internal Displacement by Governorate, Post 2006**

<b>Governorate of Displacement</b>	<b>Total Displaced Individuals</b>	<b>Percent of IDPs to Governorate Population</b>
Baghdad	550,099	7.5%
Diyala	136,891	8.5%
Ninawa	106,623	3.7%
Dahuk	104,824	7.0%
Sulaymaniyah	80,935	5.0%
Babylon	77,197	4.5%

Wassit	75,457	6.9%
Karbala	70,709	7.7%
Najaf	57,716	5.2%
Al-Anbar	55,716	3.6%
Erbil	52,007	4.0%
Thi-Qar	47,423	2.8%
Missan	46,523	5.5%
Salah al-Din	45,614	3.7%
Kirkuk	43,623	4.8%
Basra	35,509	1.8%
Diwaniya	25,186	2.5%
Muthanna	18,331	2.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,630,383</b>	<b>5.5%</b>

Table adapted from IDP Working Group September 2008 Update<sup>47</sup>

The IOM has conducted in-depth needs assessments of over 1.3 million of the 1.6 million post-2006 IDPs. Of those assessed, close to 90% originated from only three governorates: Baghdad (64%), Diyala (19%), and Ninawa (6%). In Baghdad and Diyala, a large majority of IDPs (83% in both) originated from within the same governorate. This intra-governorate movement is also present in Ninawa, Kirkuk, and Al-Anbar, but is virtually non-existent in all of the southern and northern governorates. Instead, these governorates are absorbing displaced persons from other governorates.<sup>48</sup>

As shown in Figure 1.2, the displacement of people across governorate borders shows the de facto segregation of Iraqi society. The most notable example of this is Basra. A large majority of people displaced from Basra are Sunni Muslims, whereas

those currently displaced in the governorate are almost exclusively Shi'a Muslims, a majority of which have come from Baghdad. The other southern governorates have the same trends—almost all IDPs received in these provinces are Shi'a Muslims, coming from either Baghdad or Diyala. Similarly, segregation is occurring in Al-Anbar; 60% of IDPs originating in Al-Anbar are Shi'a Muslims, but the province has received almost 99% Sunni Muslims, 78% of which from Baghdad.<sup>49</sup>

**Figure 1.2**  
Ethnic and Religious Affiliation of IDPs Displaced After 2006

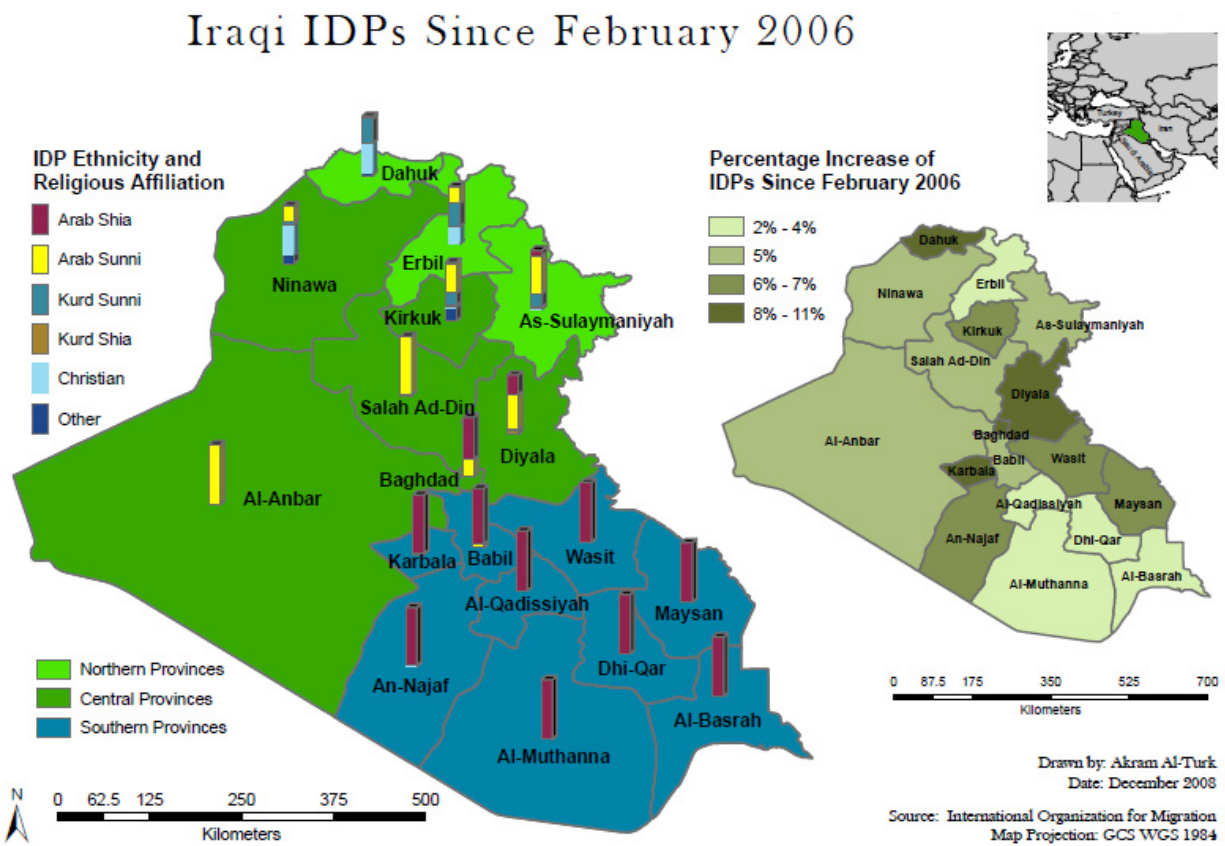
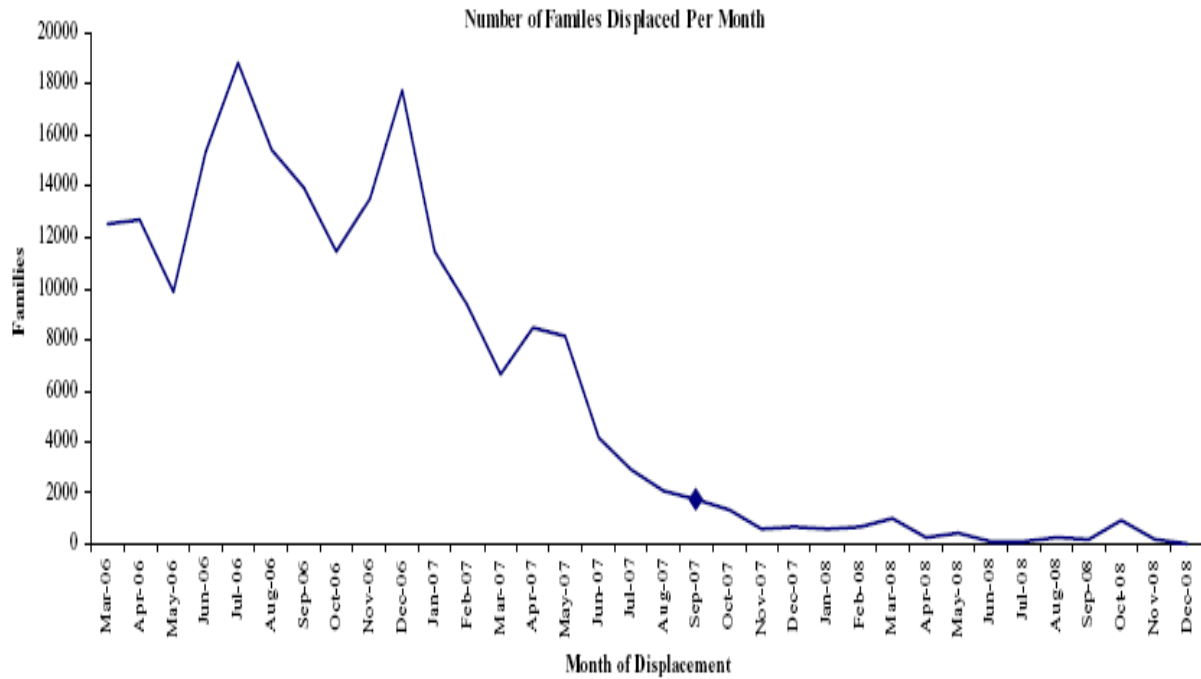


Figure drawn by report author

**Figure 1.3**  
**Families Displaced Per Month: March 2006-December 2008**



Source: IOM Emergency Needs Assessments, February 22, 2009.<sup>50</sup>

**Table 1.2**  
**Families Displaced Per Month: 2006-2008**

Year	Families displaced/ month
2006	14,152
Jan-July 07	8,033
Jul-Sept 07	2,269
Oct-Dec 07	866
2008	378

Source: IOM Emergency Needs Assessments, February 22, 2009.<sup>51</sup>

Despite a decrease in violence since 2007 and 2008, the situation of IDPs in Iraq has only marginally improved. The IOM's latest needs assessments report states that new displacement is rare. As the figure above indicates, a sharp decrease in displacement occurred between mid 2007 and early 2008. Nonetheless, the number of displaced Iraqis remains high at over 270,000 families, and returns are intermittent. Returns did, however, become more frequent starting in April 2007, especially in Baghdad. Of the over 49,000 returnee families that the IOM has monitored, approximately 31,000 are in the Baghdad governorate. A majority (69%) of returns occur within the same governorate, 20% cross governorate borders, and only 11% are from outside the country (mostly from Syria back to Al-Anbar and Baghdad).<sup>52</sup>

The situation and intentions of IDPs and returnees vary by region. In areas where the situation is fairly secure, IDPs may prefer to integrate in their new location rather than return home. Also, because of the ethnic segregation that has occurred from the sectarian violence and mass displacement, IDPs may feel more secure in their new ethnically-homogenous locations. This is particularly evident in the southern governorates, which as shown in Map 1.2, have absorbed almost 100% Shi'a Muslims. Although, nationally, 61% of post-2006 IDPs would like to return home, a majority of those in Basra, Wassit, and Thi-Qar (all in the south) would prefer to stay and integrate in their new communities.<sup>53</sup> In some cases, the IDPs' considerations may be practical more than anything else; this may be the case for many IDPs in Baghdad and Diyala, where large majorities want to return to their location of origin; this is understandable given that most IDPs in these two governorates have been displaced not far from their homes inside the governorate.

## Notes

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<sup>12</sup> Kanan Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, Uprising, and the Arab World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994).

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<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, “Iraq: 1999 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices,” (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Washington, D.C., February 25, 2000).

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<sup>19</sup> Fawcett and Tanner, p. 15.

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<sup>32</sup> United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, “Humanitarian Updates,” and “Situation Reports.” Available: <http://www.uniraq.org/library/humanitarian.asp>; <http://www.uniraq.org/library/sitreps.asp>. Accessed: March 28, 2009.

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<sup>43</sup> U.N. Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to Paragraph 6 of Resolution 1770 (2007), S/2008/495" (July 2008), p. 18.

<sup>44</sup> IRIN, "Thousands flee upsurge in violence in Diyala province," *IRIN*, May 14, 2007.

<sup>45</sup> U.N. Security Council (July 2008), p. 10.

<sup>46</sup> IDP Working Group, "Internally Displaced Persons-Update (September 2008)," (Amman, Jordan: IDP Working Group, October 2008), p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> IDP Working Group Report (2008), p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> International Organization for Migration, "IOM Emergency Needs Assessments, February 22, 2009: Three Years of Post-Samarra Displacement in Iraq," (IOM, 2009), p. 5.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 1-3.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 7.



## **Chapter 2. Implications of Displacement**

The displacement of almost one in five Iraqis has had and will continue to have an effect on the development of the country and the stability of the region. Although the short-term problems of displacement are humanitarian in nature, the mass movement of people can have long-term implications – the security and stability of communities both inside Iraq and in neighboring countries; impacts on the socio-economic conditions of IDPs, returnees, and host communities; the segregation of Iraqi society and marginalization of its minority communities; and the lack of political participation among its most vulnerable sub-populations.

### **Humanitarian Dimension**

IDPs and returnees, despite a decline in violence since 2007, still face difficult conditions; many do not have access to basic needs, including shelter, water, food, and work. Based on IOM assessments, housing continues to be one of the highest-priority needs for IDPs. The majority of IDPs are renting and only 1% live in tent camps, but 18% live with family or friends and another 22% are living in collective settlements, public buildings, or makeshift housing.<sup>1</sup> The latter figure confirms local NGOs' estimates that over 250,000 Iraqis are homeless or have squatted in government buildings or on government-owned land, in Baghdad alone.<sup>2</sup> In January 2009, the Iraqi government decided to give squatters living on government-owned property two months to leave or face legal action; since then, the government has decided to extend the deadline. To further exacerbate the housing problems, the MoDM will only be allocated 8 billion Iraqi dinars (\$6.85 million) rather than the requested 40 billion dinars (\$34.2 million) for housing projects. Consequently, MoDM housing plans will have to wait until 2010.<sup>3</sup>

IDPs and returnees also lack access to food rations, sanitary water, and good health care. According to the World Food Programme (WFP), almost a million Iraqis are

food insecure (a significant decrease from four million in 2006), and close to 10% of the population are extremely dependent on the Public Distribution System (PDS), the food rationing system. Without access to PDS, the WFP estimates that another six million Iraqis could become food insecure.<sup>4</sup>

The PDS is, however, more difficult to implement for IDPs, since many of them live outside the governorate they are registered in. Nationally, only 19% of post-2006 IDPs have access to PDS rations and 44% have periodic access. Lack of access is highest in governorates that have high inter-governorate displacement: Dahuk, Sulaymaniyah, Basra, and Kirkuk. Governorates that have the highest level of intra-governorate displacement—including Baghdad, Diyala, and Ninawa—have higher levels of periodic or full access to PDS rations.<sup>5</sup> To alleviate this lack of access, the Iraqi government, in May 2008, contributed \$40 million to the WFP's emergency operation in Iraq and Syria; most of the funding will help WFP and local NGOs distribute food to the most vulnerable IDPs.<sup>6</sup>

Iraqis also either have no access to water or, when they do, have to rely on unsafe sources of it. Many Iraqis can no longer depend on public services for their water supply, forcing them to buy their water from more expensive sources. The quality of water has deteriorated in much of the country for a number of reasons: lack of maintenance of infrastructure, a shortage of engineers and operators, illegal connections to the water supply, an outdated network of pipes, and unreliability of water-treatment plants.<sup>7</sup> In fact, many water-treatment plants are shut down or operate at reduced capacity due to an unreliable electricity supply network. This causes water-treatment plants, as well as health care centers and hospitals, to depend on another unreliable source of electricity: generators.<sup>8</sup>

A March 2009 UN report stated that only one in five families outside Baghdad has access to functioning sewage facilities and only a third has access in Baghdad. In 2008, more than 500,000 cases of acute water diarrhea, including some cholera cases, were reported; diarrhea is one of the leading causes of death among children in Iraq.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, Iraq's health care system has deteriorated since 2003, mainly as a result of

the emigration of many healthcare professionals. Estimates of the exact number of doctors and medical staff that have left the country are as follows: Iraq's Minister of Health estimated that 18,000 of Iraq's 34,000 doctors have left the country; in 2006, the Brookings Institution estimated that 2000 doctors had been killed and 250 kidnapped; and the Iraqi Doctors' Syndicate estimated that 60-70 percent of specialists have left the country since 2003.<sup>10</sup>

The effects of this so-called brain drain are a health care system that went from being among the best in the Middle East a few decades ago to one that is extremely overwhelmed, undersupplied, and understaffed. According to a former Iraqi health minister, 70% of critically injured people die in emergency rooms because of a lack of staff and supplies.<sup>11</sup> For IDPs, who may live in poor accommodations, lack of access to water and sanitation and a failing health care system further exacerbates their difficult conditions. Although a majority of IDPs have access to water (80%) and healthcare (86%), the quality of these services are bound to be as bad, if not worse than what the rest of the population receives.<sup>12</sup>

One of the biggest obstacles to resettling IDPs and restoring their sense of normalcy is the inability of most IDPs to access their properties. According to IOM monitoring, only 16% of IDPs have access to properties they left behind, whereas 43% cannot access their properties, mostly because they have been occupied or destroyed.<sup>13</sup> This explains the fact that more than 80% of IDP families identify shelter as a high priority need. Undoubtedly, a lack of property access, along with the other humanitarian needs mentioned above, directly affects the highest priority need for IDPs: access to work (85% of IDP families).<sup>14</sup> (See Chapter 4 for more on property restitution)

## **Socio-political Dimension**

The severity of displacement, however, is not just a humanitarian concern; the expulsion and movement of large segments of the population will have long term societal and political effects. Much of these effects have to do with the demographic shifts that

have occurred in previously heterogeneous cities and governorates. The highest displacement numbers are in Baghdad, Diyala, Ninawa, and Kirkuk, which have historically been ethnically mixed provinces. The starkest example of a city that has become more segmented in the last few years is Baghdad. The violence and consequent displacement has made Baghdad a segregated city; mixed neighborhoods have now become either predominately Sunni or Shi'a.<sup>15</sup>

The segregation process is not only a result of the sectarian violence, but also of security measures that the MNF – I has undertaken. In April 2007, American military forces began erecting security barriers, consisting of trenches, barbed wire, concrete walls, and manned checkpoints, that have separated Sunni and Shi'a neighborhoods. For example, the Amriya district in Baghdad, which since the invasion has become a predominately Sunni neighborhood, is surrounded by concrete walls; after heavy fighting in other parts of the country, displaced Sunnis poured into Amriya and many Shi'a were killed, expelled, or fled. Residents of the walled-off district have had to deal with deteriorating social services and rarely venture outside the walls for security reasons.<sup>16</sup>

The demographic shift is not only happening in Baghdad and other central cities, but also in the north. The KRG, in efforts to maintain its authority in Iraqi Kurdistan, has encouraged, many times with monetary compensation, non-Kurds to move south.<sup>17</sup> In areas such as Kirkuk and Khanaqin (a predominately Kurdish area in Diyala), Kurds are discouraged from relocating elsewhere and, in the case of Khanaqin, Arabs and Turkmen are not allowed entry.<sup>18</sup> And although hundreds of thousands of Arabs have fled or were expelled from Baghdad, Diyala, and Ninawa and settled in Iraqi Kurdistan, the KRG carefully monitors them.<sup>19</sup>

Displacement has also made Iraq a less diverse place, ethnically and religiously, due to the forced expulsion and voluntary emigration of the country's minorities. At the onset of the 2003 invasion, Christians and other minorities, including Yezidis, Sabeen-Mandaeans, and Baha'i, were the first to be targeted. Iraq's Christian population has declined from 1.4 million to 700,000 over the last 20 years; the rate of emigration has increased over the last few years, due to attacks on churches and the assassination of

prominent religious figures.<sup>20</sup> Christians from Mosul, capital of Ninawa governorate and home of various Christian sects for over a millennium, have been displaced en masse, many to Syria or to the Ninawa plains. An estimated 1,720 Christian families from Mosul and thousands more from Baghdad have fled to these plains.<sup>21</sup>

The Palestinian refugee community has also been a vulnerable population since the invasion. Despite being residents in Iraq for decades, many Palestinians have had little protection in the last few years. Of the estimated 27,000 Palestinian refugees living in Iraq before 2003, approximately 15,000 are left—three thousand of which are living in squalid camps near the Syrian border—and several thousands have once again become refugees in other parts of the world.<sup>22</sup> Although thousands of Palestinians have entered Syria illegally and hundreds legally, the three thousand living in tent camps along the border are denied entry and live in unbearable conditions.<sup>23</sup>

The Palestinian situation underscores the importance of neighboring countries' refugee/asylum policies in solving the Iraqi displacement (both externally and internally) issue. Although Syria and Jordan have taken in the brunt of Iraq's refugee population, the socio-economic conditions of Iraqis in these countries is one factor that will determine whether they return home. Eleven percent of documented returnees in Iraq have come from outside the country (most from Syria), but many of these Iraqis may not be returning to better conditions. Undoubtedly, the security situation in Iraq and the prospect of work are determining factors for many Iraqi refugees wanting to return home; however, for many, refugees return to Iraq because their conditions in Syria are too unfavorable to stay.

In early 2008, Human Rights Watch (HRW) conducted interviews with returnees from Syria, who cited two Syrian policies that have forced them to return: “the effective ban on legal employment for Iraqis in Syria and a stricter residency regime introduced last year.”<sup>24</sup> Unfavorable conditions abroad, which may effectively force Iraqis to return home, threaten to turn Iraqis from refugees to IDPs. The HRW report noted that a majority of the interviewed returnees from Syria became internally displaced “after finding their homes destroyed or occupied by others.”<sup>25</sup>

## Security Dimension

Despite the increase in returns over the last year, both within the country and from neighboring countries, the pace of returns is still very slow. In May 2008, UNHCR estimated that more Iraqis entered Syria than left for Iraq. This is the case despite recent efforts by the Iraqi government to shuttle refugees back home from Syria.<sup>26</sup> The UNHCR figures are telling, underscoring the fact that the conditions for returns for most Iraqis have not been met. In addition to tough socio-economic conditions and loss of property, security is also a major concern for IDPs and refugees hopeful to return home.<sup>27</sup>

The relative decline in violence in Iraq has been attributed, with varying degrees of importance, to four factors: Muqtada al-Sadr's freeze on his militia, the collaboration of Sunni insurgents with Americans against al-Qaeda in Iraq, the increased American troop levels (the "surge"), and the new ethnically-divided geographic makeup of cities like Baghdad. Despite the lull in violence, many observers note that this may be temporary and that some radical elements in Iraqi society are merely buying time.<sup>28</sup> Given that return numbers are marginal relative to the decrease in violence, this line of reasoning makes sense. Many IDPs and refugees are unwilling to return home unless they are assured of security; this is especially the case for Iraqis that were living in mixed neighborhoods that have become homogeneous. Stories of murder, torture, abduction, and general threats are enough to keep most of Iraq's displaced population from returning home.

Further, the longer people are displaced, the worse the long-term conditions may be. As noted above, the displaced have become segregated, and tensions remain high between the various ethnic and religious groups. To exacerbate the security situation, non-state actors have used IDPs as pawns in their ideological and political battles. Just as the Ba'ath regime manipulated the demographic makeup to consolidate power and ensured IDPs relied on it for social services, today's non-state actors are using IDPs for their particular agendas. In a situation where the central government has not been able to consolidate political power, maintain its monopoly on the use of violence, or provide adequate social services for its people, hardline non-state actors have stepped in to fill the

void. Most notably, al-Sadr's Mahdi Army has provided social services, humanitarian aid, and protection to Shi'a IDPs. Whereas some of the recruitment into the militias is forced, there is anecdotal evidence that it is voluntary as well.<sup>29</sup>

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> IOM (February 2009), p. 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> Dahr Jamail, "Iraq: Still Homeless in Baghdad," *InterPress Service*, February 19, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Jamail (2009).

<sup>4</sup> World Food Programme, "WFP bolsters operations to provide food to vulnerable displaced in Iraq," WFP, May 27, 2008. Available: <http://www.wfp.org/news/news-release/wfp-bolsters-operations-provide-food-vulnerable-displaced-iraq>. Accessed: February 24, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> IOM (February 2009), p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> WFP (2008).

<sup>7</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross, "Iraq: No Let-up in the Humanitarian Crisis," *ICRC*, March 2008, p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> ICRC (2008), p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations, "On World Water Day The UN Says Water Central to Recovery of Iraq," *UN*, March 2009.

<sup>10</sup> John Zaracostas, "Exodus of medical staff strains Iraq's health facilities," *British Medical Journal*, 334 (April 28, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> World Health Organization, "Violence threatens health in Iraq," *WHO*, April 17, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> IOM (February 2009), p. 9-10.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> General James L. Jones, USMC (Ret.), Chairman, "The Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq," (September 6, 2007), p. 34. Available: <http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/isf.pdf>. Accessed: April 2, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Nir Rosen, "Prepared Testimony Before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations," (April 2, 2008), p. 7-8.



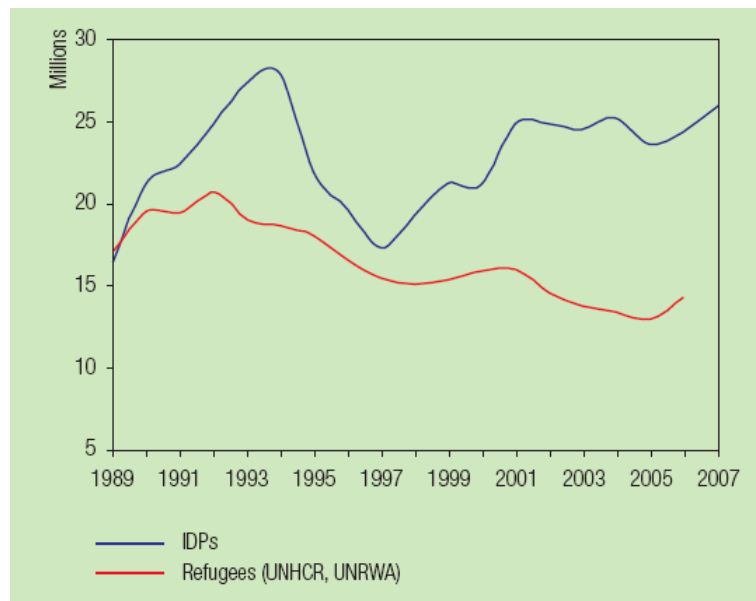
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- <sup>17</sup> Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), “Mixed Picture for IDPs in the North,” *IRIN*, February 24, 2005.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
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- <sup>21</sup> Sahar al-Haideri, “Mosul Christian Community Dwindles,” *Iraqi Crisis Report*, August 7, 2007. Available: [http://www.iwpr.net/?p=icr&s=f&o=337685&apc\\_state=heniicr2007](http://www.iwpr.net/?p=icr&s=f&o=337685&apc_state=heniicr2007). Accessed: January 19, 2009.
- <sup>22</sup> Nir Rosen, “No Going Back: Little relief in sight for millions of displaced Iraqis,” *Boston Review*, 32 (September/October 2007).
- <sup>23</sup> Rupert Colville, “How the world has turned its back on the Palestinian refugees in Iraq,” *Refugees*, 146 (2007), p. 24.
- <sup>24</sup> Human Rights Watch, “From Exile to Peril at Home,” *UNHCR*, September 22, 2008. Available: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/topic,4565c2254d,47f0977b2,48e085fe1a,0.html>. Accessed February 27, 2009.
- <sup>25</sup> Human Rights Watch (2008).
- <sup>26</sup> Human Rights Watch (2008).
- <sup>27</sup> IOM (February 2009), p. 8.
- <sup>28</sup> Nir Rosen (September/October 2007).
- <sup>29</sup> Sarah Kenyon Lischer, “Security and Displacement in Iraq: Responding to the Forced Migration Crisis,” *International Security* 33 (Fall 2008), 106.

## Chapter 3. Responses to Post-Invasion Displacement

### The Issue of IDPs in the International Arena

It was not until the early 1990s that the issue of internally displaced persons was closely examined and formalized in the United Nations system. Since 1987, the number of IDPs worldwide has exceeded the number of cross-border refugees,<sup>1</sup> yet the humanitarian implications of internal displacement and consequently, the protection of the displaced was off the radar. Unlike refugees, who were assisted and protected by the Office of the UNHCR, those who were persecuted or fled inside their countries' borders had no formal mechanism to receive aid. Some IDPs may have been lucky to intermingle with the refugee population and receive aid from UNHCR or get help from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), but many were helpless. In many cases, the IDPs' government was either the oppressor or did not have the means to provide help.

**Figure 3.1**  
**Number of Refugees and IDPs Globally**



Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre<sup>2</sup>

During the 1980s, humanitarian and human rights nongovernmental organizations advocated for the IDP issue to be on the agenda of the U.N.'s Commission on Human Rights. This advocacy, much of which came from religious groups such as the World Council of Churches (WCC), along with the academic backing of the Refugee Policy Group (RPG), a Washington think-tank, became the catalyst for putting the IDP issue on the U.N.'s agenda. Generally speaking, the objective of this concerted effort was to go beyond viewing internal displacement as merely a short-term humanitarian issue but rather as having major human rights implications. Specifically, the goal was to encourage the U.N. Commission to appoint a rapporteur or working group to focus on IDPs. The effects of a rapporteur would, according to Roberta Cohen, a former U.S. delegate to the Commission, place a spotlight on the IDP question, frame it as a human rights issue, and seek ways to protect the millions who are internally displaced in their countries.<sup>3</sup>

Although a rapporteur was never appointed, in 1992, U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali named Francis Deng, a Sudanese law professor and ambassador as his representative to the secretary-general on internally displaced persons (RSG). The RSG's mission during the early years was twofold: to gain insights into the IDP problem and gain governments' support of the RSG's mandate to assist and protect IDPs; and to gather information from governments, U.N. agencies, and NGOs on how to legally and practically provide that assistance and protection. For many NGOs, Deng's mission and approach were insufficient, in that he was not critical enough of governments that did not protect their internally displaced population.

In fact, Deng's prudent approach underscores the tensions underlying the issue of assisting and protecting IDPs. Unlike refugees, IDPs were and continue to be the responsibility of their own government; foreign intervention threatens the U.N. Charter's recognition of national sovereignty and domestic jurisdiction.<sup>4</sup> For those that did not advocate for foreign intervention yet did not hold national sovereignty as sacrosanct, the question became about what the proper international response should be if governments

did not meet their responsibilities. It is this central question that continues to frame the question of how to assist and protect IDPs.

## **Introduction to Post-Invasion Displacement Responses**

By most accounts, the initial response to assist and protect IDPs, inside Iraq, regionally, and internationally, was inadequate. The Iraqi government's complacency in acknowledging the scope of its displacement problem, much less tackling the problem, is a major component of this inadequacy; nonetheless, there were other major stumbling blocks—the refugee policies of neighboring countries, the slow reaction of countries such as the U.S., and the U.N.'s lack of funding. It was not until 2007 that the displacement issue, both in and outside of Iraq, received more attention, and consequently, more funding. Nonetheless, the situation of the millions of IDPs and refugees remains inadequately addressed—funding has fallen short of the U.N.'s Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), the conditions of the displaced population remain precarious, and the Iraqi government has only taken small steps in alleviating these problems.

## **Iraqi Response**

As internal displacement increased in 2007, Iraqi officials failed to acknowledge the scope and severity of the problem. In fact, before the displacement spike, starting in mid 2005, the Iraqi government was dominated by sectarian Shi'a parties and their militias, who were partly responsible for the displacement of now vulnerable Sunnis.<sup>5</sup> The IDP situation was also exacerbated by the movement restrictions imposed at the provincial level. In late 2007, when displacement had reached its highest levels, the UNHCR reported that 11 of the country's 18 governorates had imposed barriers to IDP movement. Governorates with high numbers of IDPs became unable to support the influx of IDPs; if IDPs did manage to cross governorate lines, many were denied basic social services. Local officials were not registering people as IDPs, leaving many without documentation.<sup>6</sup>

Further, the Iraqi government has become increasingly inefficient, the road network for aid delivery is less accessible, and governorate offices, some occupied by militias, are not collaborating with each other. Iraqi officials have also been hesitant to implement any policies that would signal to IDPs that their new homes are permanent.<sup>7</sup> Given the sectarian political environment in the country, demographic shifts have major political implications; not allowing IDPs to transfer over their documents and establish permanent residence in their new locations is as much a political calculation as anything else.

## **Regional Responses**

In addition to the domestic issues highlighted above, the response by neighboring countries not only has an effect on refugees living in those countries but also IDPs in Iraq. Because of recent restrictions by Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia placed on emigrating Iraqis, the displaced are either forced to live in settlements or camps near the border (such as the Palestinians highlighted above), or are forced into difficult conditions, sometimes in governorates that already lack the capacity to accommodate them. Therefore, understanding and reforming the immigration policies of neighboring countries is an integral piece of alleviating the IDP problem in Iraq.

Exact figures on the number of Iraqis outside of the country are inconsistent, but estimates range from two to 2.5 million. Of these, approximately 500,000 left the country before the 2003 invasion, including most Iraqis living in Iran.<sup>8</sup> Even in countries like Jordan and Syria, who have absorbed the largest number of displaced people after the invasion, the presence of Iraqi refugees is not a new phenomenon (Unless used in its more technical definition, the term “refugee” merely refers to Iraqis that have been expelled or emigrated from the country, not to those officially registered by the UNHCR). Syria and Jordan have taken in the bulk of displaced Iraqis. The former has taken in between 1.2 and 1.5 million, and the latter has close to half a million Iraqis living within its borders. Iraqis have also been displaced to Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey, Iran, and

the Gulf states.<sup>9</sup> Along with these “informal” figures, the UNHCR publishes the numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in each of the countries—as of March 2008, there were 182,701 in Syria, 52,758 in Jordan, and 10,020 in Lebanon.<sup>10</sup> The numbers show that official refugee numbers are much less than the total number displaced in each of the countries, meaning that the assistance and protection provided by the UNHCR are unavailable to most.

Syria and Jordan were the most welcoming of Iraqis after the 2003 invasion, allowing many to enter on tourist visas. Since Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon are not signatories to the 1951 U.N. Convention on Refugees, the key legal document that defines who is a refugee, his/her rights, and the legal obligations of states,<sup>11</sup> Iraqi refugees are only considered temporary guests. Further, Syria and Jordan, while initially generous in allowing Iraqis, are wary of the long-term implications of having a large refugee population, reminiscent of the mass exodus of Palestinians in 1948. In fact, both Jordan and Syria have clamped down on border entry, imposing various visa restrictions.

In October 2007, Syria imposed stricter visa restrictions (from six-month renewable permits at the border to three-month single-entry visas that must be obtained in Baghdad) after a period in which it received approximately 2,000 Iraqis a day.<sup>12</sup> In Jordan, Iraqis are treated as guests and are considered illegal immigrants if they overstay their short-term visas. Nonetheless, the Jordanian government turned a blind eye towards the entry of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis until the November 2005 suicide bombings of Amman hotels by three Iraqis. Immediately following the bombings, Jordan limited the number of residence permits and denied men between the age of 18 and 35 entry.<sup>13</sup>

The implications of the Iraqi refugee situation are humanitarian, socio-economic, and, potentially, security-related. Because most refugees lack official refugee status and therefore are not afforded social and economic protections, many have to rely on personal savings and remittances in their host countries. A survey in Syria showed that over 1/3 of Iraqis living there rely on their savings as their main source of income, and 3/4 receive support from relatives back home. The same trend is apparent in Jordan—a majority of Iraqis relies on savings or receives money from abroad. This reliance on depleted

savings and external support, along with the difficult barriers to work, leaves many Iraqi refugees socio-economically vulnerable. And although some Iraqis could, early on, afford to live in decent housing in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, rising housing costs have forced many to live in less desirable areas of Amman, Damascus, and Beirut.<sup>14</sup>

The long term prospects for Iraq's refugee population depend on a few different factors: first, how good the conditions are in Iraq (and specifically, in the neighborhood that a refugee lived in), whether refugees are able to integrate into the host countries' communities, and the possibility of third-country resettlement. Although some countries, like the United States, have increased their Iraqi resettlement quotas (while some have decreased them), a very small percentage of Iraq's displaced population will have a chance to resettle from Iraq or from one of the first-asylum countries. In some ways, this is a failure of some western nations to share the burden of hosting Iraqi refugees; in other ways, it has been the hesitance of the Iraqi government, until recently, to acknowledge its massive displacement crisis.

## **American Response**

Before the 2003 invasion, the U.S. did not have a formal plan in order to deal with the possibility of massive displacement caused by the war. Like the rest of the international community, the U.S. was also slow to acknowledge the displacement problem altogether, placing a much higher priority on security and, to a lesser degree, reconstruction. In January 2007, however, Ellen Sauerbrey, Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) testified to the Senate Judiciary Committee that Iraqi displacement was the top priority for her bureau, adding that PRM would not impose a quota on the number of Iraqis who can be resettled in the U.S. She also said that the majority of the 20,000 unallocated refugee admission spots could be used for Iraqi refugees.<sup>15</sup> One month later, Paula Dobriansky, Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs (DGA) and chair of newly-created Iraq Refugee and Internally Displaced Task Force announced that DGA was considering the

use of special immigrant visas (SIVs) to assist Iraqis who worked with the U.S. during the war.<sup>16</sup> A few months later, Sauerbrey stated that SIVs would only apply to Iraqis who worked for the U.S. government for at least three years. She also said that it was possible that 25,000 Iraqis could be resettled in the U.S. in 2007. The official goal, however, was to accept 7,000 refugee referrals from the UNHCR. Both Sauerbrey's original estimate and the official goal were overly optimistic, as the U.S. ended up only resettling 1,608 Iraqis in FY 2007.<sup>17</sup> Despite this low number, the acknowledgment of the situation and increased efforts at resettlement were steps in the right direction. Iraqis who were resettled starting in June 2007 were the first in the U.S. that had been displaced as a result of the current war, rather than those Iraqis who fled before 2003.<sup>18</sup>

The U.S. did exceed its stated goal of 12,000 resettlements in FY 2008, partly explained by the Department of Homeland Security's decision to send 150 staff members to the Middle East to speed up the interview process. This was a much needed step, as the failure to resettle in 2007 was largely due to an understaffed process; former Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker, at the time, noted how there was only one interview team in Jordan and none in Syria, where most Iraqi asylum seekers were located.<sup>19</sup>

As of February 2009, more than 4,000 Iraqis were admitted to the U.S., of about 17,000 referrals to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP).<sup>20</sup> Referrals come mostly from UNHCR, and, to a lesser extent, from a U.S. Embassy or particular NGOs, including the IOM. Iraqis who worked for the U.S. government or government contractors, American media organizations or NGOs, or who translated for American armed forces may bypass the referral system, especially in Jordan and Egypt.<sup>21</sup>

In June 2008, Senate bill 2829, which made provisions of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2008, was passed. Section 1244 of the Act authorizes 5,000 SIVs for Iraqi employees and contractors (along with their spouses and children) annually through the end of FY 2012.<sup>22</sup> This is in addition to the SIV program for Iraqi translators and interpreters. Despite a more accessible resettlement process, facilitated by more staffing and legislation, the procedures for Iraqi citizens residing (and displaced) in Iraq is limited to those who, like in Jordan and Egypt, worked for the U.S. government or



American-affiliated organizations (it's estimated that over 70,000 Iraqis who worked alongside American armed forces remain in the country and are targeted for violence).<sup>23</sup> According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Iraqis who believe they are at risk because of their association with the U.S. should consult the IOM for guidance. Aside from this category of Iraqis and this non-obligatory suggestion by USCIS, there seems to be no effort at resettling Iraqis that have been internally displaced. Given the border closure of Iraq's neighbors, this leaves Iraqi IDPs little chance to settle in the U.S.

Most of U.S. support for dealing with Iraqi displacement is through humanitarian assistance funding, which has steadily increased since 2006. In FY 2006, funding amounted to \$43 million for helping Iraqi refugees, IDPs, and conflict victims in general. Funding increased to \$171 million in FY 2007 and \$398 million in FY 2008. The State Department contributed \$287 million of FY 2008's \$398 million to the UN and other multilateral humanitarian organizations working in Iraq and neighboring countries; the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance contributed \$75 million, mostly aimed at assisting IDPs. The rest of the assistance funding is distributed to other international organizations, like the WFP and the IOM, and NGOs working throughout the region.<sup>24</sup> In addition to the funding geared at direct assistance of the displaced population, U.S. assistance funding is used to build up institutional capacity, most notably that of the Ministry of Displacement and Migration. Finally, the U.S. military, through its Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), has engaged in minimal humanitarian assistance. The PRTs serve as conduits between multi-national military forces and provincial and local governments in all 18 provinces in Iraq, and they engage mostly in capacity building and governance strengthening.<sup>25</sup>

## **U.N. Response**

In August 2003, U.N. headquarters in Baghdad was bombed, killing Special Representative Sergio Vieira de Mello and 21 other U.N. staff members.<sup>26</sup> Due to security concerns after the bombing, U.N. agencies moved their international staff outside Iraq. Although some staff has returned, the U.N. continues to face a host of issues in the country. In addition to security issues that restrict movement and the ability to provide humanitarian assistance, the U.N. mission in Iraq is mired by a bad reputation in the country. U.N. sanctions in Iraq throughout the 1990s, the corrupt U.N. Oil for Food program, and constant weapons inspections before the invasion did not sit well with the Iraqi population.<sup>27</sup> To add to this credibility problem, the U.N. resolution to expand its mandate in the country recognizes the importance of multi-national forces in providing security and logistical support for U.N. operations. Although these forms of support are important in conflict zones, the perceived relationship between U.S. forces and the U.N. delegitimizes the latter, given its historical role as a neutral actor. The organization may be able to regain legitimacy by effectively delivering humanitarian assistance, but, again, this hinges on better security in the country.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> United States Committee for Refugees, cited in Thomas G. Weiss and David A. Korn, *Internal Displacement: Conceptualization and its consequences*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, “Global IDP estimates (1990-2007).” Available: [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpPages\)/10C43F54DA2C34A7C12573A1004EF9FF?OpenDocument&count=1000](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpPages)/10C43F54DA2C34A7C12573A1004EF9FF?OpenDocument&count=1000). Accessed: May 1, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Weiss and Korn, p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> U.N. Charter, Article 2, Paragraph 7. Online version of charter available: <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/> Accessed: April 21, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Nir Rosen (September/October 2007).

<sup>6</sup> BBC, “Doors closing on Iraqi displaced,” *BBC*, October 10, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Nir Rosen (September/October 2007).

<sup>8</sup> International Crisis Group, “Failed Responsibility: Iraqi Refugees in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon,” *Middle East Report* N°77, July 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Congressional Research Service, “Iraqi Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons: A Deepening Humanitarian Crisis?” *CRS*, February 13, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> ICG (2008).

<sup>11</sup> UNHCR information on the 1951 Refugee Convention, available: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/protect?id=3c0762ea4>. Accessed: April 21, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> CRS (2009).

<sup>13</sup> CRS (2009).

<sup>14</sup> ICG (2008).

<sup>15</sup> Ellen Sauerbrey, “Testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee,” January 16, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Human Rights First, “Timeline: U.S. Government Response to Iraqi Refugee Crisis,” *Human Rights First*.

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Available: <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/asylum/lifeline/pages.asp?country=iq&id=29&misc1=timeline>. Accessed: November 10, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, “Fact Sheet: Iraqi Refugee Processing,” *USCIS*. Available: <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=df4c47c9de5ba110VgnVCM1000004718190aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=68439c7755cb9010VgnVCM10000045f3d6a1RCRD>. Accessed: April 20, 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Human Rights First website.

<sup>19</sup> Ambassador Ryan Crocker, “Iraqi Refugee Processing: Can We Speed It Up?” September 2007. Available: <http://www.rcusa.org/uploads///pdfs/Crocker%20Cable%20,%209-07.pdf>. Accessed: April 21, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> USCIS (2009).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> U.S. State Department, “Special Immigrant Visas for Iraqis – Who Worked for/on Behalf of the U.S. Government.” Available: [http://travel.state.gov/visa/immigrants/info/info\\_4172.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/immigrants/info/info_4172.html). Accessed: April 29, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth G. Ferris, “The Looming Crisis: Displacement and Security in Iraq,” *Brookings*, August 2008, p. 18.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Department of State, “U.S. Government Reaches Record for Iraqi Refugee Admissions and Humanitarian Assistance in Fiscal Year 2008,” October 2, 2008. Available: [http://iraq.usembassy.gov/pr\\_dos\\_10022008.html](http://iraq.usembassy.gov/pr_dos_10022008.html). Accessed: April 21, 2009.

<sup>25</sup> United States Embassy in Iraq, “Fact Sheet on Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs),” December 17, 2007. Available: [http://iraq.usembassy.gov/iraq/20060223\\_prt\\_fact\\_sheet.html](http://iraq.usembassy.gov/iraq/20060223_prt_fact_sheet.html). Accessed: April 21, 2009.

<sup>26</sup> United Nations, “Report of the Independent Panel on the Safety and Security of UN Personnel in Iraq,” October 20, 2003. Available: <http://www.un.org/News/dh/iraq/safety-security-un-personnel-iraq.pdf>. Accessed: May 1, 2009.

<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth G. Ferris (2008), p. 23.

## **Chapter 4. Future Prospects: Issues and Recommendations**

Given that the response, both domestically and internationally, has been inadequate, what can be done to alleviate the short-term humanitarian needs of IDPs, while also addressing the long-term development issues that Iraq will continue to face? It is useful to break up the issues in this manner (short vs. long-term) because the immediate humanitarian needs require different policy prescriptions from the long-term development needs of the country. In terms of short-term needs, the Iraqi government and the international community should try to accommodate the needs of the most vulnerable communities in the country. This entails funding humanitarian assistance projects, such as those in the health and education sectors, while also ensuring that IDPs feel secure. It also means a more concerted effort by government officials in identifying the neediest communities and delivering basic services to them in a fair manner, not based on sectarian biases and patronage.

For the long-term, the Iraqi government needs to take an active role in guaranteeing political rights to IDPs, so that they do not feel disenfranchised. National and provincial governments, along with local-level organizations and communities, must also continue their efforts at wide-scale property restitution and national and political reconciliation. These issues, although extremely important for the displaced population, are just as important for the country's other citizens. Addressing the IDP crisis must be a holistic approach, and therefore, a discussion of the long-term socio-economic and political development of the country is germane to the report's topic.

### **Short-Term Humanitarian Needs**

#### **Funding Humanitarian Assistance Appeals**

The U.N.'s 2008 Consolidated Appeal Program (CAP) was a request from governments and international donors for \$274 million towards humanitarian assistance

to Iraqis both inside and out of the country. Of this amount, \$207 million (76%) has been funded (contributions + commitments), with sectors such as agriculture/food security and education receiving less than 25% of their requests. The largest two contributors are the U.S., which has funded \$68 million (33%) of the CAP, and the Iraqi government, which has contributed another \$40 million (19%).<sup>1</sup>

The 2009 CAP has broken down funding requests into two pillars: Pillar I is a total request of \$192 million, and its projects are located in the most vulnerable locations inside Iraq, where government services are scarce or non-existent. The programs in Pillar I will provide basic services and protection to vulnerable communities and focus on re-integrating returning families. Pillar II is a \$355 million appeal program targeted at Iraqi refugees living in neighboring countries. The overall goal of Pillar II programs is for host countries to provide safe and comfortable conditions for Iraqi refugees. As of April 2009, \$74 million (39%) of Pillar I projects and \$123 million (35%) of Pillar II projects have been funded.<sup>2</sup> Although the separation of the CAP into Iraq-specific and regional projects is a good step in terms of monitoring and evaluation, the amount of funding is still inadequate in some sectors. Across both pillars, the education, water and sanitation, and health sectors, essential for the most vulnerable communities underserved by the Iraqi and neighboring governments, have received less than 25% of funding so far.<sup>3</sup>

### **Protecting IDPs Outside of Their Home Governorate**

Many IDPs do not receive basic services because they reside outside of their home governorates. Dependant on food rations, through the Public Distribution System, these IDPs must file for residency in their new governorate, a process that is inefficient and, for many, life threatening (in some cases, IDPs must return to their home governorate in order to change their address).<sup>4</sup> For others, they lack documentation altogether and are, therefore, cut off from basic services. Iraqi officials, both nationally through the MoDM, and provincially, must address these issues and make this bureaucratic process less strenuous on vulnerable IDPs. Forcing them to go back only to change address or obtain documentation puts many IDP families at risk.

## **Not Encouraging Forced Returns**

Similarly, the Iraqi government has been actively encouraging IDP and refugee returns since late 2007. The government has not considered whether communities are capable of absorbing large amounts of returns and has failed to assess whether conditions are favorable for return. Instead, the Iraqi government has encouraged returns as a public relations strategy to show that the security and political situations in the country are stable. Nonetheless, the slow trickle of returns indicates that conditions are not conducive for return, despite a majority of IDPs wanting to return home. Without security guarantees, the provision of basic services, and property restitution, Iraq's displaced population will not return to their homes.

## **Identifying Which Communities are in Greatest Need**

The IOM's needs assessments of post-2006 IDPs have been instrumental in helping Iraqi officials and humanitarian assistance NGOs identify which communities, by governorate, are in greatest need. However, the IOM, along with the MoDM in the central government and the KRG in the north, does not identify the specific needs of the pre-2006 displaced population. This may be for the simple fact that many pre-2006 IDPs (and especially those displaced before the invasion) have integrated into their new communities. In fact, this may precisely be the case in Iraqi Kurdistan, where 80% of pre-invasion displacement occurred. Most of these "old" IDPs have integrated into their host communities and enjoy a more stable life than Iraqis in the central and southern regions.

As for pre-invasion IDPs in the central and southern regions, there have been some efforts by the central government to fund projects for the most disaffected population, the Marsh Arabs. Millions of dollars have been spent since 2003 to revive the destroyed marshlands, and the government, in May 2009, earmarked \$30 million for water and education projects aimed at children in the marshlands.<sup>5</sup> This particular example shows the utility of the government focusing its efforts on rebuilding the

livelihoods of disadvantaged communities (some of whom, like the Marsh Arabs, have been discriminated against for decades).

The challenge for the Iraqi government is not only to recognize that the needs of pre- and post-invasion IDPs may be different but also that each governorate's IDPs will have different needs. Tackling the humanitarian needs of IDPs, then, requires two steps—first, identifying needs on a local level, and second, delivering the proper services based on those identified needs. Service delivery, however, is not merely a means to alleviate the humanitarian suffering of IDPs but is also a mechanism that strengthens the legitimacy of the government. Therefore, in order for IDPs to not feel disenfranchised by the Iraqi state, the government must be able to deliver these basic services. This is also a security concern, in that militias may use the state's weakness to serve IDPs and recruit from this vulnerable population.

As noted above, post-2006 displacement has radically altered the demographic makeup of the country, transforming it into a more segregated society. Segregation based on ethnic and religious lines, in and of itself, does not hinder the ability of the state to deliver basic services to all its citizens. However, as the Iraqi government strives to gain legitimacy, two important issues arise concerning humanitarian assistance in general and service delivery in particular. First, how well is the government, through its displacement ministry, the MoDM, delivering services to *all* of the governorates it has jurisdiction over (all of Iraq minus the three governorates and parts of Kirkuk under KRG authority)? Second, do IDPs have political representation in their governorate of residence (which presumably helps them access services they need)?

### *Government Assistance*

Figure 1.1 shows the level of displacement in each governorate, indicating that Baghdad, Diyala, and the Kurdish north face the largest numbers of displacement. And, as seen in Figure 1.2, the IDP population is fairly segregated, especially in the southern governorates and in a few of the central governorates. These two figures give a clear picture of where fault lines and further tensions may arise. The governorates with high



numbers of displacement are among the most heterogeneous; they have large minority populations that may not be served by those wielding power at the provincial or national level. For example, as-Sulaymaniyah governorate has a high number of IDPs, both in raw numbers and as a percentage of its total population, and most of its IDPs are Sunnis, living under a now more powerful KRG. As will be noted below, this is also the case in Ninawa province, where the majority Christian IDP population may not feel represented by the new Sunni party in power.

This also begs the question of whether the Iraqi government, politically dominated by a Shi'a coalition, is fairly distributing humanitarian services to all of the IDP population within its jurisdiction. Table 4.1 breaks down, by governorate, two high-priority needs of IDPs, the level of humanitarian assistance received overall, and the amount of assistance given by the MoDM (in descending order of the last category). The last column is telling because it shows that the percentage of IDPs in the predominately Shi'a south that receive MoDM assistance is, with the exception of Basra, above the national average. The only central governorate where IDPs receive above-average support from MoDM is Ninawa, whose IDP population is predominately Christian. In the predominately Sunni Anbar and Salah Ad-Din governorates, the majority of the IDP population relies on other forms of humanitarian assistance (in the case of Anbar, IDPs rely on either humanitarian organizations or the host communities).

**Table 4.1**  
**Percentage of IDPs Receiving Humanitarian Assistance**

Governorate	Percentage of IDPs that Needs:		Percentage of IDPs Receiving Humanitarian Assistance	
	Food	Shelter	Overall	From MoDM
Wasit	67.7%	28.6%	89.5%	85.2%
An-Najaf	91.2%	86.4%	87.6%	70.2%
Karbala	52.6%	73.0%	82.5%	58.2%
Babil	71.3%	50.4%	73.3%	56.7%

Maysan	32.3%	72.5%	74.3%	56.0%
Ninawa	25.8%	64.7%	75.7%	43.2%
Dhi-Qar	67.4%	92.9%	72.5%	35.4%
Al-Muthanna	60.0%	78.6%	72.2%	29.7%
Al-Qadissiyah	62.8%	90.0%	88.8%	27.4%
<b>Iraq Average</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>63.3%</b>	<b>26.3%</b>
Basra	67.5%	99.0%	54.6%	22.1%
Diyala	97.3%	45.5%	81.1%	20.8%
Kirkuk	88.5%	62.1%	40.0%	16.4%
Al-Anbar	92.9%	67.3%	92.2%	8.6%
Baghdad	73.5%	86.0%	50.4%	7.3%
Salah Ad-Din	88.5%	62.1%	52.4%	4.4%

Table adapted from IDP Working Group September 2008 Update<sup>6</sup> and IOM Governorate Profiles<sup>7</sup>

The level of MoDM assistance does not correspond with the level of high-priority needs of IDPs. This indicates that the government may be assisting IDPs based on sectarian allegiances rather than on their legitimate needs. The central government and the MoDM are dominated by Shi'a Arabs and Shi'a Kurds, respectively, causing some Sunni and other minority populations to suspect that they are underserved, which Table 4.1 seems to confirm. There has also been anecdotal evidence of Sunni organizations that have had a hard time registering at the central government's NGO office.<sup>8</sup> Corruption has also hindered the ability of both the government and NGOs to effectively deliver assistance to IDPs. A patronage system exists among some government officials, meaning that the most vulnerable communities and individuals may be excluded from receiving basic services.

## **Long-Term Strategies to Facilitate Returns**

### **Ensuring political participation among IDPs**

Only three months before the January 2009 provincial elections, no more than 100,000 (or less than five percent) of IDPs were registered to vote.<sup>9</sup> IDP participation in the elections was sporadic throughout the country. This may reinforce previous research that shows voting among displaced populations to be much less than those who are not displaced. It may also be a reflection of a voting system that is tenuous at best. The Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) did try to accommodate IDPs, allowing them to vote in absentia for candidates in their governorate of origin. The effectiveness of such a system, however, is questionable. Whereas many IDPs want to return home, many either cannot, have already integrated into their host community, or do not have the desire to go home. These IDPs, then, are not voting for candidates that will represent them in their new communities and will have little incentive to vote at all. If a different system is devised, in which IDPs vote in their current location, the same problem arises with IDPs who plan on returning—they would be voting in their temporary locations that they may be leaving soon. But, given the greater segregation that has occurred over the last few years, the former system (and the one used in the January 2009 election)—in which IDPs vote for their home governorate candidates—is theoretically a way to delegitimize militias who have tried to wrest away political power by means of ethnic cleansing.

Unfortunately, there are no official numbers of how many IDPs voted in the provincial elections, but there was a host of obstacles that indicate voting turnout among IDPs was much lower than the national turnout (51%). A lack of communication by government officials left many IDPs confused about proper voting procedures, whereas others did not have the proper documentation. Still others had to endure long, inefficient voting lines, some were turned away because ballots ran out, and some were not allowed to vote without the presence of the head of the family.<sup>10</sup>

Minority populations seem to have endured more obstacles than others. This is important, given that ethnic and religious minorities make up a disproportionate percentage of IDPs. Whereas the country's Chaldo-Assyrians, Shabaks, Yazidis and Turkmen represent three to five percent of the country's population, they make up 8.5% of IDPs. Some of these minorities, namely Christians from Mosul, were being forcibly displaced during the time that Iraqi officials were registering voters; this displacement added thousands of IDPs almost overnight and is an example of how displacement affects the political picture in Iraq. Mosul, in Ninawa governorate, is a perfect example where forced expulsion of large numbers of people is used as a political move. Extremist Sunnis in the city expelled over 2,000 Christian families in October 2008, which may have long-term political and social effects for this ethnically diverse city.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, results of the provincial elections show that political power has shifted in considerable ways since the 2005 elections, in which most Sunni and some Shi'a factions boycotted. The shifts that will affect IDPs most occurred in the provinces that experienced the largest number of post-2006 displacement: Baghdad, Diyala, and Ninawa (which happen to be among the most ethnically diverse in the country).

In Baghdad, despite increased participation by Sunni parties, the outcome heavily favored the Shi'a parties—Nuri al-Maliki's State of Law Alliance, independent pro-Sadrists candidates, and former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's secular Iraq National party. The Sunni mainstream party, the Accord Front, only managed 9% of the votes (garnering it only nine seats of 57), in a province that only a few years ago was predominately Sunni.<sup>12</sup> Although many IDPs displaced out of the province are Sunnis (and presumably were able to vote in absentia for Baghdadi candidates), there is little reason to believe they were able to affect the outcome.

In Diyala and Ninawa provinces, Sunni parties won majority seats, which could affect the level of assistance and service provided to minority IDPs. Both of these provinces have experienced recent sectarian tensions that may become exacerbated if parties begin to fight for IDP votes in upcoming elections (notably the December 2009 national Parliamentary elections). In Diyala, the Sunni Accord Front narrowly beat the

Kurdish slate, the Kurdistan Alliance.<sup>13</sup> In addition to the tensions that exist between the autonomous-seeking Kurds and the central government, Sunni expulsion of Shi'a during the height of displacement is another fault line that could cause further violence. The most precarious situation for IDPs, however, may occur in Ninawa, where the Sunni Hadba'a party won a plurality of seats in the elections. Elements of the Hadba'a party strongly oppose Kurdish incursion into the province and want to maintain the Arab and Muslim identities of Ninawa.<sup>14</sup> The election of the Hadba'a party threatens to further disenfranchise the mostly Christian and other minority IDP population, one which has recently experienced forced displacement.

### **Recognizing the Potential Significance of Iraq's Refugee Population**

The two million Iraqis living outside of the country were not allowed to vote in the provincial elections. Many refugees are mostly from urban centers in the country and represent Iraq's different ethnic and religious groups, even in predominately Sunni Syria and Jordan. In both countries, Iraqi Sunnis are the majority, but the Shi'a and Christian populations represent sizable minorities (approximately 20% Shi'a and 10-15% Christians), along with other minorities.<sup>15</sup> A majority of refugees are middle-class Baghdadis, many of whom left the country because of sectarian violence or the overall bad conditions in the country.<sup>16</sup> Their exclusion from Iraq's elections hardens the sectarian divide and segregation of the last few years, and the longer they are displaced, the harder it may be for them to re-integrate into society (if they decide to return). Given that many refugees were among the professional class in Iraq, their continued exclusion from Iraqi society threatens the long-term development of the country.

### **Facing the IDP Crisis, Rather than Ignoring it**

Some Iraqi officials, including Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki would rather "close the file" on the IDP crisis, as they see no reason why there should be any more displacement.<sup>17</sup> This shows short-sightedness on the part of some officials, who would rather the MoDM stop registering IDPs and ignore the issue altogether. The Iraqi government's allocation of funding towards IDP-related problems is another indicator

that displacement is not a major concern for the government. In 2007, the government allocated a mere \$200 million of its \$70 billion budget towards services for IDPs and refugees.<sup>18</sup> In October 2008, after offering families a meager \$800 as an incentive to return home, the government stopped disbursing the money. And, for 2009, the sharp decline in global oil prices has cut Iraq's budget from \$82 billion to less than \$60 billion, with further cuts expected.<sup>19</sup>

### **Property Restitution**

One area in which the Iraqi government has been proactive is property restitution. As with the recommendation above about distinguishing between “old” and “new” displacement, the Iraqi government's property-recovery policies make a distinction between pre- and post-invasion displacement.<sup>20</sup>

#### *Pre-2003 Cases*

In 2004, the Iraqi government set up the Commission for the Resolution of Real Property Disputes (CRRPD) to address property rights violations during the Saddam era. More than 150,000 claims (a third of which from Kirkuk alone) have been filed for restitution or compensation for property. Although a step in the right direction, the CRRPD does not address damaged or destroyed property, posing a problem for communities whose houses were razed during the Ba'athist regime. Peter van der Auweraert at the IOM offers other lessons from the CRRPD experience:

- An administrative process for restitution is more efficient than a judicial process, which tends to be bogged down by bureaucratic processes, inefficient assessment of property values, and arduous requirements for documentation.
- Large-scale property restitution cannot be done successfully by compensating individual property owners without addressing all victims of eviction.
- Establishing a restitution commission is difficult in a weak state with incapable institutions or corrupt leadership. In Iraq, where the rule of law

and good governance are weak, and state institutions are politicized nationally and locally, large-scale property restitution will be extremely difficult.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Post-2003 Cases*

About a quarter of post-2006 IDPs cite their reason for displacement on being evicted from their property. While displaced, IOM surveys show that 17% of IDPs say their original homes have been destroyed and another 34% state that they have been occupied by others. Overall, 70% of displaced Iraqis cannot return to their homes.<sup>22</sup> In the summer of 2008, the Iraqi government set up Decree 262 that offered financial incentives for returnee families and Order 101 to facilitate property recovery. Like the CRRPD, these directives provide a good start to address the property restitution problem, but only a few hundred cases have been filed and numbers actually decreased in early 2009.<sup>23</sup>

The Iraqi government's recognition of the problem and its initiative to tackle it are promising signs. Nonetheless, the system has its limitations. First, Decree 262 and Order 101 are available to refugees in neighboring countries displaced between 2006 and 2008 and were displaced for at least eight months. This means that many refugees are excluded from filing claims. Second, in order to avoid fraud, the MoDM overcompensated by imposing strict bureaucratic requirements that have made it difficult for many IDPs and refugees to file claims. IDPs are required to show proof they were registered as IDPs, which excludes many who never registered as IDPs. They must also provide proof of their displacement and return; again, this risks the exclusion of vulnerable IDPs who cannot provide the proper documentation. Third, the agencies implementing the two directives lack the capacity to handle a lot of cases; further, the displaced must return to their governorate of origin to request assistance, a burden for many who cannot afford to return only for a request.<sup>24</sup>

### *Addressing Property Restitution on the Local Level and Pushing for National Reconciliation*

In Baghdad and Najaf governorates, provincial officials have established localized programs to address property restitution. The program in Baghdad has helped thousands of residents and business owners repair their damaged properties, whereas, in Najaf, over 200 displaced families living in a tented camp have been offered \$4,250 each to return home or find new housing. In the Saidiyah neighborhood in Baghdad, a council composed of Sunnis and Shi'a implemented a system to address property loss issues and help families return to their homes.<sup>25</sup> The Implementation and Follow-Up Committee for National Reconciliation supported the council, which is an example of a neighborhood-led initiative aimed at property restitution through local reconciliation efforts.

This brings up the issue of how reconciliation, both at the local and national levels, can alleviate the issues plaguing the displaced population. Although it's been shown that sectarian divides and societal segregation are difficult to overcome, reconciliation efforts can help build up social trust and a sense of normalcy among Iraq's different communities. The reconciliation process must involve civil society and community-based organizations and must include members from Iraq's disadvantaged (and increasingly emigrating) minority communities. The case of the Saidiyah council is an example where members of the community designed their own reconciliation processes at the local level. Looking ahead, the Iraqi government should encourage similar reconciliation efforts on the local level; it can also provide the provincial governments more administrative and legislative power so that Iraqis feel like their government is responsive to their needs.

### **Long-Term Development Strategies**

Some of the most salient issues related to internal displacement in Iraq—unemployment, the provision of social services, and political reconciliation—have taken a back seat to the issue that predominates Iraqi and American governments' discourse: security. Although improvement in security is a component of helping Iraqis return home and lead normal lives, it may distract policymakers from focusing on other equally



important problems: an unstable economy dependent on oil revenues; a lack of political and national reconciliation; and a corrupt and incapable state.

### **Economic Diversification**

Ninety-four percent of state revenue in the last few years has come from oil profits.<sup>26</sup> Because of the recent drop in global oil prices, the central government, which has recently added hundreds of thousands of Iraqis to its payroll, has had to significantly cut its budget.<sup>27</sup> Further, Iraq's oil infrastructure has been deteriorating for years, posing a difficult policymaking question for Iraqi officials—do they invest in improving the infrastructure or should they try to diversify their export market? Much of the focus has been on the former, with some pushing the Iraqi government (and the KRG) to allow foreign companies unfettered access to Iraq's oil fields. Instead, the government, along with American officials and international organizations, should be encouraging the diversification of exports away from oil.

### **Political Reconciliation**

A decision to diversify away from oil can also alleviate another problem facing the country—the lack of power-sharing agreements among the different political actors. As long as the Iraqi economy depends solely on oil, those in power—the Shiite political coalition in Baghdad and the KRG in the north—will have no reason to decentralize the political structure. There will continue to be little accountability, and political and ethnic minorities (notably the Sunni population in the Center and minority groups in the North) will continue to feel disenfranchised.

The Iraqi government, dominated by a strong Shiite coalition, has done little to address the potentially calamitous fault lines that have occurred since the February 2006 Samarra bombing. The government's exclusion of Sunni factions into the state structure shows its lack of commitment to national and political reconciliation.<sup>28</sup> The overall decrease in violence in the country has done very little to address the necessary reconciliation.

## **Concluding Recommendations**

The Iraqi government, with help from the U.S. and the U.N., should focus its efforts on three major objectives. First, the central government must loosen its grip on power, allowing other political factions to share power and help make some of the economic decisions necessary for a more diversified economy. Second, within a decentralized political structure, it must build up the institutional and legal frameworks to ensure accountability and that the voices of local and provisional governments are being heard. And finally, it must work with lower-level government officials and civil society actors to provide basic social services for the whole population, especially those who have been displaced from their homes. These three objectives must be implemented within a larger framework that allows Iraq's minorities and smaller political factions to voice their concerns. Without this mechanism, Iraq's fragmentation, and the continued displacement of millions of its citizens, will continue to destabilize the country and stagnate its long-term development.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> UN Consolidated Appeal: Iraq 2008, Table G: Total Funding Per Donor, as of April 30, 2009. Available: [http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/reports/daily/ocha\\_R5\\_A808\\_\\_\\_0904300206.pdf](http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/reports/daily/ocha_R5_A808___0904300206.pdf). Accessed: May 1, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> UN Consolidated Appeal: Iraq and the region 2009, Table E: List of Appeal Projects, as of April 30, 2009. Available: [http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/reports/daily/ocha\\_R3prov\\_A835\\_\\_\\_0904300206.pdf](http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/reports/daily/ocha_R3prov_A835___0904300206.pdf). Accessed: May 1, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> UN Consolidated Appeal: Iraq and the region 2009, Table D: Requirements, Commitments / Contributions and Pledges per Sector, Available: [http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/reports/daily/ocha\\_R3sum\\_A835\\_\\_\\_0904300206.pdf](http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/reports/daily/ocha_R3sum_A835___0904300206.pdf). Accessed: May 1, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Ken Bacon and Kristèle Younès, “Iraq: Preventing the Point of No Return,” *Refugee International* Field Report, April 7, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> IRIN, “Iraqi Government Earmarks \$30 Million for Impoverished Marshlands,” *IRIN*, May 6, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> IDP Working Group, “Internally Displaced Persons-Update (September 2008),” (Amman, Jordan: IDP Working Group, October 2008), p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> IOM Governorate Profiles. Available: <http://www.iom-iraq.net/library.html>. Accessed: May 6, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Bacon and Younès (2009).

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Ferris, “Iraqi Elections and Displacement,” *The Brookings Institution*, October 2, 2008. Available: [http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2008/1002\\_iraq\\_ferris.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2008/1002_iraq_ferris.aspx). Accessed: May 2, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Swan, “Iraq: an insight into the situation of minorities in the 2009 Provincial Elections,” in *Liberal Matters*, February 2009, p. 34-35.

<sup>11</sup> Aidan Jones, “Killings Force 13,000 Christians to Flee Mosul,” *The Guardian*, October 25, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Kenneth Katzman, “Iraq: Politics, Elections, and Benchmarks,” *Congressional Research Service*, March 25, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> “Iraqis in Jordan: Their Number and Characteristics.” Available: [http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos\\_home\\_e/main/Iraqis%20in%20Jordan.pdf](http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/Iraqis%20in%20Jordan.pdf). Accessed: May 6, 2009.

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<sup>16</sup> Ashraf al-Khalidi, Sophia Hoffman, and Victor Tanner, “Iraqi Refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic: A Field-Based Snapshot,” The Brookings Institution – University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement.

<sup>17</sup> Jones (2008).

<sup>18</sup> “Iraq: Parliament demands financial help for IDPs, refugees,” *IRIN*, September 25, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Bacon and Younès (2009).

<sup>20</sup> Deborah Isser and Peter Van der Auweraert, “Land, Property, and the Challenge of Return for Iraq’s Displaced,” *United States Institute of Peace Special Report 221*, April 2009, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Van der Auweraert, “Property Restitution in Iraq: Presentation at the Symposium on Post-Conflict Property Restitution,” Hosted by the United States Department of State, September 6-7, 2007.

<sup>22</sup> IOM (February 2009), p. 8-9.

<sup>23</sup> Isser and der Auweraert (2009), p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> Kate Mackenzie, “Iraq seeks to make up oil price shortfall,” *Financial Times Energy Source Blog*, April 27, 2009.

<sup>27</sup> Ahmed Rasheed, “Iraq parliament likely to cut 2009 budget, again,” *Reuters*, February 28, 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Brian Katulis, Marc Lynch, and Peter Juul, “Iraq’s Political Transition After the Surge: Five Enduring Tensions and Ten Key Challenges,” *Center for American Progress*, September 2008, p. 5. Available: [http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/09/pdf/iraq\\_transition.pdf](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/09/pdf/iraq_transition.pdf). Accessed: November 24, 2008.

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