

IRAQ: Displacement from West Mosul

Short note – 22.03.2017

As of 16 March 2017, Iraq’s humanitarian coordinator has warned that the pace of displacement during the first weeks of the west Mosul operation is higher than expected, and response capacity will be exhausted if new arrivals continue to increase. On 19 February an offensive towards the western part of Mosul was launched, and on 21 February new arrivals were outpacing returns for the first time in six weeks. Since then camp capacity has been repeatedly reported as severely restricted.

Roughly 150,000–180,000 people have been displaced from western Mosul since 19 February, with 12,500 people displaced between 10 and 11 March alone. In addition to insecurity, displaced populations from Mosul have reported lack of access to food, basic services, water, electricity, and medicines, with the situation in west Mosul particularly dire.

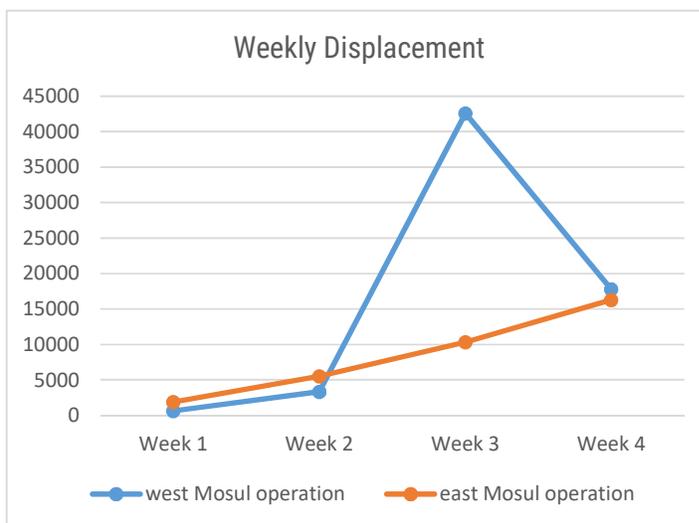
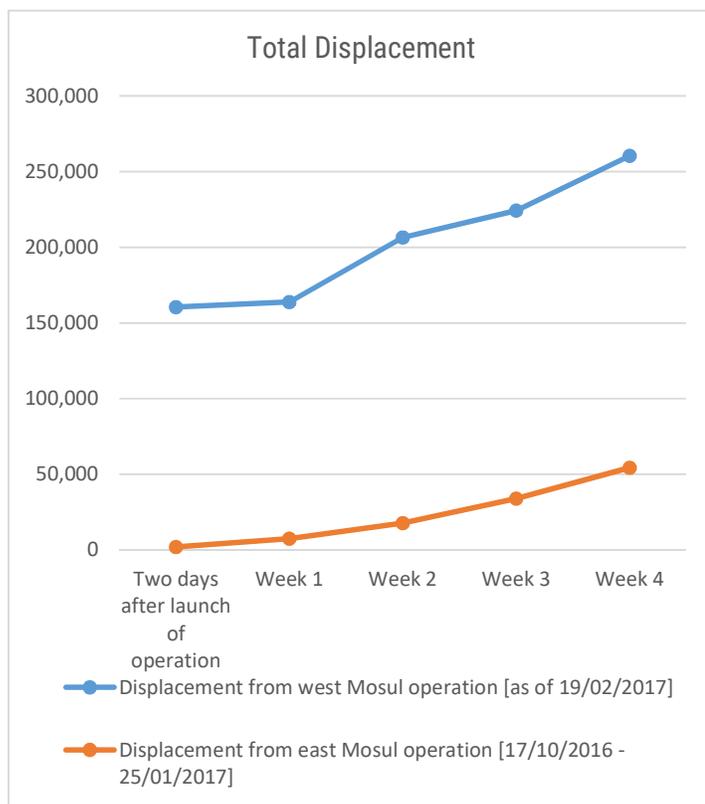
Priority sectors

Food: insecurity has been reported as the main displacement trigger from west Mosul.

WASH: particularly access to safe drinking water, is a priority need among the IDPs. Limited access to or a lack of drinking water has also been recorded in east Mosul neighbourhoods.

Shelter: there are recurrent reports of overstretched capacity in camps in the vicinity of Mosul. Needs are likely to increase.

Displacement Snapshot



Between 17 October 2016 and 26 January 2017, 188,000 people were cumulatively displaced. Some 29,000 returned to their areas of origin, putting new displacement from the east Mosul operation at 159,000 people throughout 14 weeks.

Between 19 February and 21 March 2017, over 330,000 people were cumulatively displaced. Some 70,000 have returned to areas of origin, putting new displacement from the west Mosul operation at 110,000 people throughout roughly 4 weeks.

Crisis impact

As of 16 March 2017, Iraq's humanitarian coordinator has warned that the pace of displacement during the first weeks of the west Mosul operation is higher than expected, and response capacity will be exhausted if new arrivals continue to increase (OCHA 19/03/2017). On 19 February an offensive towards the western part of Mosul was launched, and on 21 February new arrivals were outpacing returns for the first time in six weeks. Since then camp capacity has been repeatedly reported as severely restricted (Thomson Reuters Foundation 20/03/2017; UNHCR 09/03/2017; UNHCR 11/03/2017).

Roughly 150,000–180,000 people have been displaced from western Mosul since 19 February, with 12,500 people displaced between 10 and 11 March alone (OCHA 21/03/2017; Rudaw 12/03/2017). In addition to insecurity, displaced populations from Mosul have reported lack of access to food, basic services, water, electricity, and medicines, with the situation in west Mosul particularly dire. As of 11 March hunger has been reported as the main displacement trigger (UNHCR 11/03/2017). The main supply route into west Mosul has been cut since mid-November 2016 (OCHA 19/03/2017). Siege-like conditions have been reported in Mosul's old city, with people surviving on stocked goods. Water has also run out. Families have been reported drinking water from wells, where quality is likely to be low and durability of supply uncertain (Thomson Reuters Foundation 20/03/2017). Apart from water supply, insecurity is expected to be impacting other WASH services such as solid waste management or sewage systems. Over 80% of Mosul's infrastructure is estimated to be destroyed (UNHCR 14/03/2017).

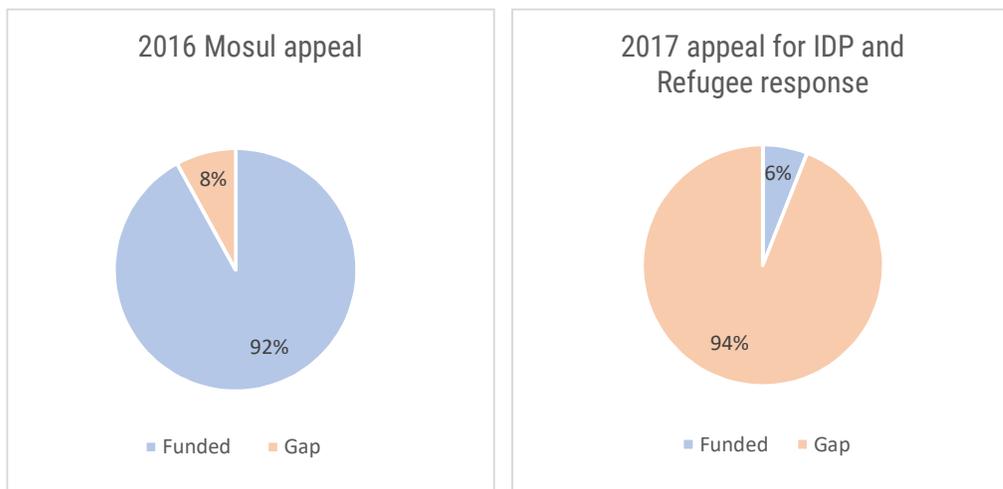
The government began a military operation against Islamic State (IS) in Mosul on 17 October 2016, with the participation of multiple local and international partners. Despite a worst-case scenario of up to 1 million displaced, by 25 January eastern Mosul had been recaptured from IS and displacement was much lower: 159,000 people in approximately 14 weeks (CNN 25/01/2017).

Operational constraints

Access to populations in west Mosul is severely constrained, with the main supply route into the area cut since mid-November 2016. The establishment of a safe corridor is likely to be possible in the near future due to recently reported ISF advances (OCHA 19/03/2017); however this is unlikely to prompt agencies to deliver goods to west Mosul as security is expected to remain volatile. Instead, a safe corridor is likely to cause more people to flee, increasing the number of IDPs in safer areas. Displaced people from west Mosul have been reported in severe need of assistance.

Security in east Mosul remains volatile and humanitarian workers have been injured. On February 15, aid deliveries to the area were halted for four days due to insecurity (AP 15/02/2017). This is likely impacting on agencies' ability to respond to the needs of the non-camp displaced population.

Funding is a concern. Without increased resources response is unlikely to meet needs.



Sectoral needs

Food and livelihoods: As of 11 March hunger has been reported as the main displacement trigger from west Mosul, with people remaining in Mosul's old city surviving on stocked goods. It is unclear how long current stocks inside west Mosul may last (Thomson Reuters Foundation 17/03/2017; UNHCR 11/03/2017).

Lack of access to food has also been reported among displaced from east Mosul, primarily due to high prices (UNHCR 21/02/2017; UNHCR 05/03/2017). In east Mosul itself, assessments in ten different neighbourhoods suggest that lack of access to food is a primary concern, mainly due to decreased cash availability and employment opportunities. Unemployment rates vary from 50–90% in the assessed areas, while current food stock durability of households ranges from 2–15 days (ACTED 09/02/2017, ACTED 10/02/2017, ACTED 09/03/2017, ACTED 17/03/2017).

WASH: Access to safe drinking water has been consistently cited as a priority need among IDPs from Mosul. Lack or limited access to drinking water has also been recorded in east Mosul neighbourhoods, with unprotected boreholes cited as the main source of water (ACTED 09/02/2017, ACTED 10/02/2017, ACTED 09/03/2017, ACTED 17/03/2017). In addition, infrastructure damage and insecurity due to conflict is expected to have impacted sewage and solid waste management systems. Communities in east Mosul have reported limited or no WASH services available (ACTED 09/02/2017, ACTED 10/02/2017, ACTED 09/03/2017, ACTED 17/03/2017). Over 80% of Mosul's infrastructure has been destroyed, according to the Iraqi government (UNHCR 14/03/2017).

Shelter: Two days after the offensive on western Mosul, new arrivals were reported as outpacing returns for the first time in six weeks (AlJazeera 19/02/2017; UNHCR 21/02/2017).

Camp capacity has been reported as overstretched, with some camps at full capacity as of 20 March (Thomson Reuters Foundation 20/03/2017; UNHCR 09/03/2017; UNHCR 11/03/2017). The situation is likely to deteriorate as shelter needs are most likely to grow: in addition to increased displacement from western Mosul, UNHCR protection monitors indicate that some returnees in east Mosul may consider moving to camps, due to insecurity and lack of access to basic services (OCHA 19/03/2017).

Protection: As of 19 March, concerns of use of explosives in the densely populated old city area, located in west Mosul, have been raised. Although the establishment of a safe corridor may be possible in the near future due to reported ISF advances, the risk of sniper fire is likely to be high (OCHA 19/03/2017). In east Mosul security remains volatile despite the government claiming that IS are no longer present. IS has carried out a series of drone attacks, some of which have injured aid workers (OCHA 12/02/2017). In some assessed neighbourhoods of east Mosul, unaccompanied children have been reported (ACTED 09/02/2017, ACTED 10/02/2017, ACTED 09/03/2017, ACTED 17/03/2017).

Health: People in west Mosul have been reported without access to medicines (Thomson Reuters Foundation 17/03/2017). In newly recaptured areas access to health services is limited due to volatile security. Lack of fuel and ambulances impact response. Insecurity has also impacted the assessment of suspected cases of communicable diseases. Associated with poor WASH, poor access to healthcare is likely to increase the risk of disease outbreaks. (WHO 18/03/2017). Between 7 and 18 March, 307 casualties were received in trauma stabilisation points on the frontlines of west Mosul. Since 17 October, 5,057 trauma cases have been recorded, 56% of which were civilians (WHO 18/03/2017).