

Briefing Note – 4 September 2014

Humanitarian Implications of Violence in Northern and Central Iraq



Need for international assistance	Not required	Low	Moderate	Significant	Urgent
Expected impact	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Significant	Major

Key Findings

Anticipated scope and scale

- Assisted by US airstrikes, Kurdish and Iraqi forces have pushed back many of Islamic State's (IS) early August incursions, but key areas remain heavily contested, especially within the "disputed zone" (see map).
- The scale of displacement caused by IS's advance in the north now exceeds that of the Anbar crisis, with more than 620,000 people displaced in August alone.
- An estimated 1.8 million people have been displaced across Iraq in 2014.
- The conflict situation and the large IDP numbers are fanning sectarian tensions across the country, and displacement is increasingly occurring on a sectarian basis.

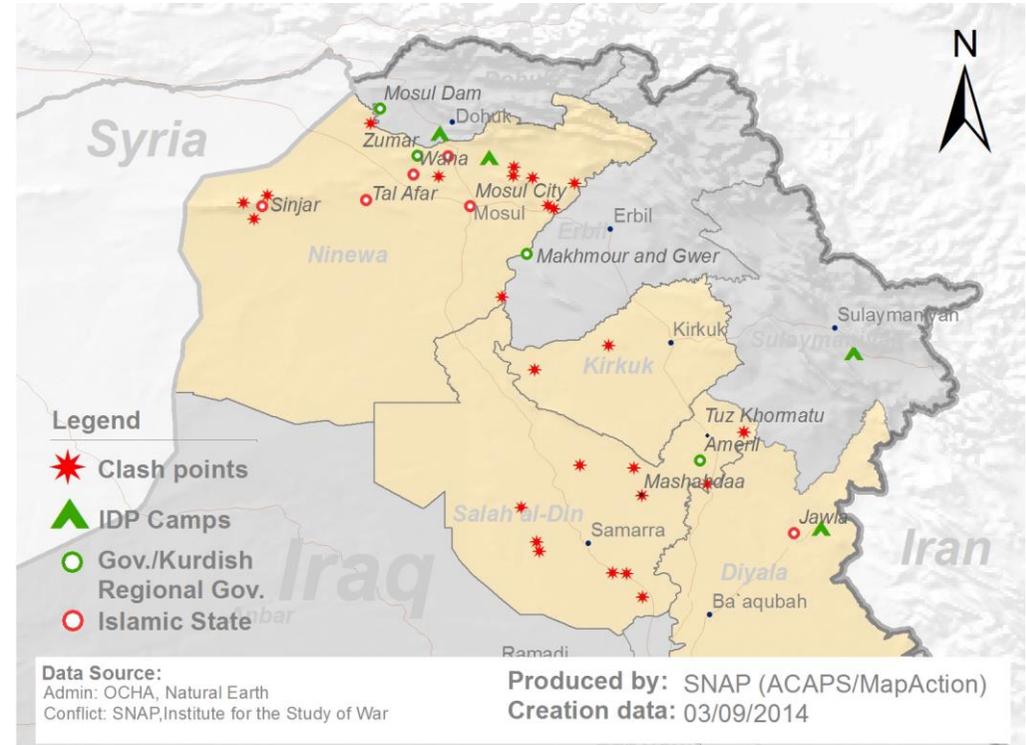
Priorities for humanitarian intervention

- Protection and free movement of IDPs in an increasingly sectarian environment, particularly Sunnis in areas once controlled by IS, and those who have fled to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I).
- Shelter for the displaced, particularly in Dohuk, Erbil, and Anbar, where many are living in insecure spaces and informal shelters, particularly schools, which increases community tensions.
- Livelihoods and community cohesion in areas with large numbers of IDPs.
- Secure locations for, and reasonable living conditions in, the IDP camps currently being set up by local authorities and, in some cases, the Turkish government.

Humanitarian constraints

- Large numbers of displaced, particularly in Diyala and Salah al Din, have received little assistance due to the proximity of conflict.
- Some IDPs have already begun to return to areas re-taken from IS. Those areas remain insecure, have limited services, and face substantial community tensions, limiting humanitarian access.
- Saudi Arabia recently offered USD 500 million for humanitarian operations in Iraq, quadrupling the available funding. However humanitarian organisations have said that bureaucratic delays mean little of this money has been made available for operations. Humanitarian operations are severely limited outside KR-I, and civilians in Anbar, Ninewa, Salah al Din and Diyala are particularly hard to reach.

Some Contested Areas in Northern Iraq, August 2014



This is not a comprehensive picture of conflict, but shows a number of significant conflict sites.

Conflict and Political Developments

In the north of Iraq, Kurdish Peshmerga forces, assisted by Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), US airstrikes, and other armed groups have continued their counteroffensive against IS in Ninewa, Kirkuk, Salah al Din, and Diyala, retaking some key areas. The fighting however continues to fuel displacement (see [Crisis Impact](#)).

Conflict Developments

- Growing numbers of Sunni tribes in Anbar governorate have declared their readiness to take up arms against IS, and have reportedly formed Al Hamza Brigades for this purpose ([BBC 29/08/14](#) [AlJazeera 31/08/14](#) [AlMonitor 29/08/14](#)). How much resistance they put up will however heavily depend on support from the ISF, and political concessions to Sunni parties in the formation of a unity government ([ISW 31/08/14](#)).
- In a re-enactment of April this year, IS again closed all of Fallujah dam's ten gates, prompting the Iraqi air force to target three of them to avert flooding and water supply interruption downstream ([Shafaq News 26/08/14](#) [ISW 26/08/14](#)). IS is likewise reported to have disrupted water supply to the Balad Ruz area (Diyala governorate) by manipulating the Sudur mini-dam ([ISW 02/09/14](#)).
- Ongoing attacks in Baghdad, primarily in Shi'ite-majority neighbourhoods and against Iraqi security facilities, and very likely carried out by IS, continue to destabilise the capital. ([ISW 24/08/14](#) [ISW 26/08/14](#)). VBIED attacks also continue in Shi'ite-majority cities such as Kerbala and Hillah, attesting to IS's relative freedom of action even beyond its area of control ([ISW 25/08/14](#)). According to one report, IS has established a presence in the beltway just south of Baghdad ([Almada 01/09/14](#)).
- Several key areas remain heavily contested, including Tikrit ([LWJ 19/08/14](#) [ISW 21/08/14](#)), Baiji refinery ([ISW 26/08/14](#)), Haditha dam ([ISW 17/08/14](#)), and Baghdad's southwestern flank ([ISW 17/08/14](#)). IS is reported to have driven ISF from Fadhliya and Karaghul (Jurf al-Sakhar) ([ISW 19/08/14](#)).
- Cooperation continues to grow between the Iraqi Peshmerga, the Kurdish PKK in Turkey, and the PKK's Syrian wing, the PYD/YPG - despite historic animosities. The involvement of the PKK, blacklisted as a terrorist entity by Turkey and Western Governments, was crucial to the Peshmerga's efforts to re-secure Makhmour ([AlJazeera 16/08/14](#) [TNI 01/09/14](#) [Rudaw 05/08/14](#)).
- The US has reportedly dropped leaflets, signed by Iraq's Ministry of Defence, over Mosul city urging Iraqis to resist IS and to avoid IS positions ahead of what appears to be an air campaign. Some analysts have suggested this may signal the imminence of a broader assault on IS's primary stronghold in Iraq ([NBC 21/08/14](#) [Iraqi News 01/09/14](#) [ISW 02/09/14](#)).

Growing Foreign Intervention

- The US has bombarded IS positions around the Shi'ite Turkmen town of Amerli, where an estimated 15,000 people have been under siege for nearly three months, paving the way for Peshmerga, Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Shi'ite armed groups to break the siege. Previous US airstrikes had been in the far north, in or near the Kurdish region, so the attack on a target as far south as Amerli was seen as a substantial expansion of the US intervention ([AlJazeera 31/08/14](#) [AlJazeera 31/08/14](#) [ISW 31/08/14](#)).
- A media report suggests US and German special operations forces fought alongside the Peshmerga at Zumar, marking an important break from airstrikes and non-combat advisory roles ([DailyBeast 02/09/14](#)).
- As Washington steps up its intervention, IS has released a video purportedly showing the beheading of a second US journalist ([USA Today 02/09/14](#)).
- Beyond humanitarian relief, military assistance reportedly continues to flow from US and European Governments, as well as from Iran, to the Kurdish Peshmerga. ([DeutscheWelle 31/08/14](#) [Guardian 31/08/14](#) [Time 27/08/14](#) [EKurd 29/08/14](#)).
- Other than Shi'ite Iraqi and Lebanese proxies, Iran has according to one report deployed an Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) division in southern Iraq, as well as paramilitary Basij forces in Najaf and Kerbala, and a top IRGC general is believed to be personally directing Iraq's defence against IS ([Intelligence Online 16/07/14](#) [BasNews 17/08/14](#)). President Hassan Rouhani has also made explicit that the holy Shi'ite cities of Najaf and Kerbala constitute a red line ([Ghom-e Farda 26/08/14](#)).

Political Developments

- As negotiation of the next coalition government proceed, Iraq's Sunnis, whose cooperation is regarded as necessary in the fight against IS, are re-emphasising their demands, among which are greater power-sharing arrangements and the abrogation of a controversial anti-terrorism law, which the outgoing government of Nuri Al-Maliki has repeatedly used against Sunni rivals ([AlMonitor 21/08/14](#) [AlJazeera 17/08/14](#)). It is unclear to what extent the ruling Shi'ite majority would be willing to acquiesce to Sunni demands.

For more information on conflict drivers and stakeholders, [see this series' report dated 24 July 2014](#).

Shifting Front Lines and Displacement

The conflict in disputed areas continues to fuel displacement, limit humanitarian access and endanger people trying to return to recaptured areas, or who are settled near the border.

As the frontlines between IS, the pro-Shi'ite central Government, and the Kurdish areas gradually stabilise, the mass migration caused by IS's advance across the Ninewa plain appears to have tapered off. But fighting continues along the northern edge of IS territory in Ninewa, Salah al Din, Kirkuk, and Diyala governorates.

Territory Retaken by Iraqi Government / Kurdish Regional Government

- **Amerli:** Some 15,000 residents were trapped for nearly three months (WashingtonPost 01/09/14, UNICEF 02/09/14). Operations are ongoing to Amerli's north and west, where some 35 towns are still being held by IS (AlJazeera 01/09/14, OCHA 29/08/14).
- **Zumar,** together with the 'Ain Zala oilfield and a refinery, fell under IS control on 2 August. It was retaken at the end of the month by Peshmerga, alongside Iraqi forces and, allegedly, US and German special operations forces (ISW 21/08/14 DailyBeast 02/09/14). However, IS heavily mined the area before withdrawing (Rudaw 01/09/14). Several nearby villages were also reportedly retaken from IS (ISW 28/08/14).
- **Makhmour and Gwer:** Retaken by Peshmerga on 7 August; most of the two towns' residents (roughly 12,000 and 10,000, respectively) had already fled (WaPo 28/08/14, LAT 11/08/14). The Iraqi Government claims Peshmerga have now retaken 95% of the territory they held in Makhmur district before IS's advance (GOI 02/09/2014).
- **Suleiman Bek:** after over 11 weeks under IS control, ISF, Peshmerga and Shi'ite armed groups retook the Sunni town at the end of August. Most residents had fled (AllIraqNews 01/09/14 WaPo 01/09/14 Rudaw 01/09/14).
- **Mosul dam:** Retaken on 17 August by Peshmerga and Iraqi forces with US air support since falling under IS control on 7 August. IS reportedly booby-trapped approaches to the dam and forced nearby residents to flee (ISW 17/08/14).
- **Ninewa Plains:** Peshmerga forces reportedly took Bashiqa sub district (Hamdaniya District), with US air support, on 17 August (ISW 17/08/14).

Territory Currently under IS Control

- **Mosul city:** Taken by IS on 10 June, over 500,000 were displaced into KR-I and areas around Ninewa governorate. Mosul remains the key stronghold for IS and its allies in Iraq.

- **Tal Afar:** Taken by IS shortly after Mosul, displacement took place to Sinjar area and – for some 30,000 Shi'ite Turkmen and Shabak families – to Shi'ite areas in the south of the country (ISW 16/08/14 REACH 18/08/14).
- **Jalawla:** Taken by IS around 10–11 August. Based in Khanaqin, Dayala, ISF, Peshmerga and, allegedly, Iranian forces are reportedly attempting to retake Jalawla, which IS has heavily emplaced with IEDs (ISW 25/08/14 BasNews 17/08/14). On 25 August, some 50,000–60,000 IDPs arrived at Khanaqin camp, fleeing clashes around Jalawla and Sa'adiyah (UNICEF 28/08/2014, OCHA 30/08/2014).
- **Sinjar:** Still held by IS, although the siege in nearby Mt Sinjar has been broken. As a result, over 200,000 individuals have been displaced, mostly to Dohuk governorate (125,000 individuals in Dohuk, Zarkho, Sumel), 10–15,000 to Newroz camp in Syrian Kurdistan, and 12,000 to Turkey. An unknown number, possibly 5,000, remain on Mt Sinjar (UNHCR 12/08/14 REACH 14/08/14 IOM 24/08/14).
- **Ninewa Plains:** predominantly Christian towns such as Qaraqosh, Tel Keif, Bartella and Karamlesh fell to IS around 7 August. As many as 200,000 individuals – primarily ethnic/religious minorities – are estimated to have fled to KR-I (130,000 to Erbil's Ainkawa area, and about 70,000 to Dohuk governorate). Among these were 50,000 Christians displaced from Mosul in June (BBC 19/08/14 REACH 07/08/14).
- **Wana:** Peshmerga continue to clash with IS in the sub-district (ISW 26/08/14).
- **Badush dam** (under construction) was taken by IS on 23 July.

Crisis Impact

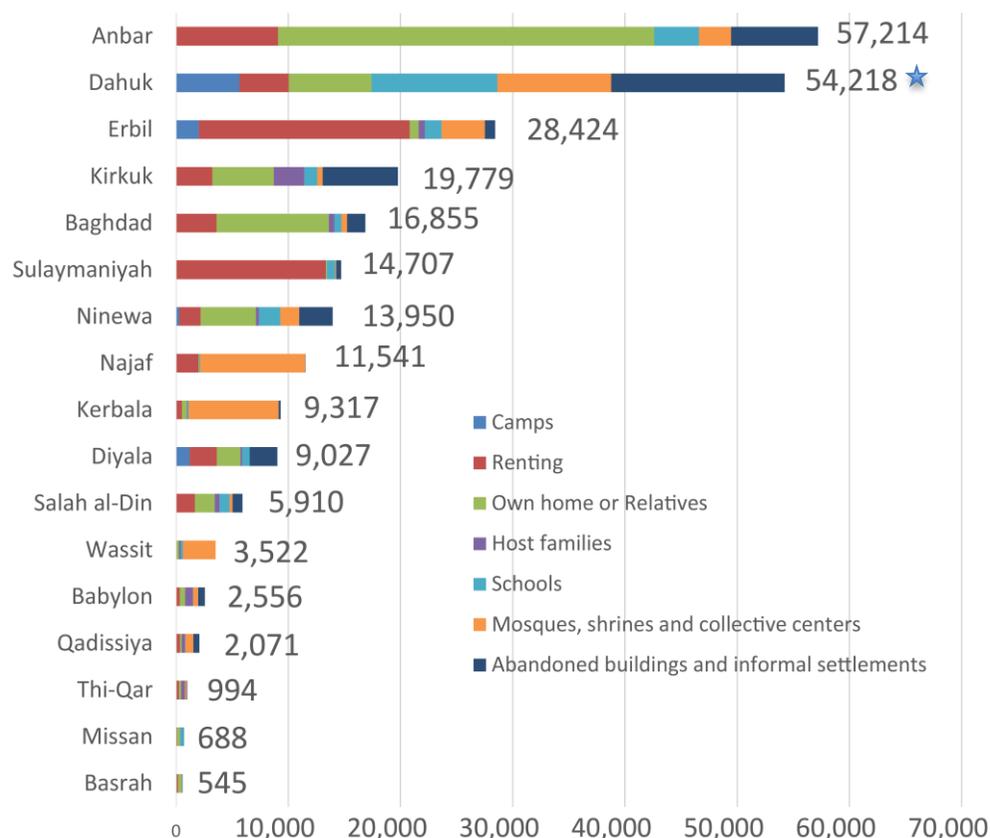
Displacement

Due to improved data collection, estimates of the displacement caused by IS's advances in early August have risen to more than **620,000 people**.

- The largest influx has been to Dohuk governorate, which now hosts more than 480,000 IDPs (see Chart). KR-I now hosts some 850,000 IDPs, in addition to 217,000 Syrian refugees.
- Anbar continues to host 340,000 IDPs, who were displaced at the beginning of the year.
- Across Iraq, 1.66 million people are believed to have been displaced in 2014. As those numbers are considered conservative, UN agencies are working with a planning figure of 1.8 million (IOM 28/08/2014, OCHA 28/08/2014, USAID 28/08/2014).
- **Syrian refugees:** Syrian asylum seekers returning to Syria from KR-I has reached an average of 300 a day. Since January, some 20,445 have returned to Syria, but more than 215,000 remain in Iraq. There have been no new Syrian arrivals, as the Peshkapour border point has been closed since April (UNHCR IAU 15/08/2014).

- **Returnees:** Some IDPs have already begun to return to areas taken back from IS, specifically Makhmour, Shariya, and Sumel. Widespread infrastructure damage poses challenges in these areas, and humanitarian organisations still have limited access. Community tensions are high, as some returnees believe their neighbours were collaborating with IS (GoI 02/09/2014, WFP 14/08/2014, NYT 15/08/2014). IS has reportedly mined or emplaced a large number of IEDs in some areas, which hampers safe return for IDPs.

Displaced Families in 2014 by Shelter Type



Source: IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix.

★ The 28 August IOM dataset includes some 27,000 families registered with the government for whom no shelter information was available, almost all of them in the Zakho and Sumel districts of Dohuk Governorate. As a result, this chart does not fully represent the number of IDPs in Dohuk, which IOM estimates to be close to 81,000 families. Average family size: 6.

Protection

- The violent sectarian agenda being pursued by IS is provoking a backlash. There have been attacks on Sunni mosques and growing anti-Sunni violence, presumably by Shi'ite armed groups. Rising casualty figures suggest Iraq is on the verge of a return to the widespread sectarian violence of 2007 (UN 01/09/2014, PI 31/08/2014).
- Rumours that Sunni Arabs in the north betrayed their Yazidi and Kurdish neighbours to IS have stoked anger. Media reports say Sunni IDPs are being prohibited from returning to areas of the disputed zone re-taken from IS, or from entering KR-I proper. Sunni Arab IDPs fleeing Jalawla and Sa'adiya have been described as being virtually interned in a camp outside the KR-I border (WaPo 28/08/2014, NYT 26/08/2014, PI 29/08/2014, PI 28/08/2014, CSM 28/08/2014).
- Many IDPs have fled without proper identification, and the numerous Peshmerga checkpoints at KR-I borders and in the disputed areas of neighbouring governorates significantly limit their freedom of movement (PI 29/08/2014). Reports suggest that authorities in Kerbala may have shut the governorate's borders to IDPs, at least temporarily (OCHA 22/08/2014).
- UN and humanitarian agencies report increasing numbers of IDPs asking if they can claim asylum or be assisted to resettle in another country. Expectations of resettlement overseas remain high among IDPs. The humanitarian community needs to provide accurate information to the displaced community about the prospects of resettlement, and organisations offering psychosocial support stress that this should be done sensitively to avoid negative reactions (OCHA 28/08/02).
- The creation and re-population of IDP camps close to disputed areas raises concerns both about protection and future displacement, particularly for camps that have already been targeted by armed groups. 300 families recently returned to Gawilan camp, which was evacuated on 7 August due to deteriorating security (WFP 19/08/2014, IAU 15/08/2014). Likewise, about 2,000 IDPs are now residing in Garmawa camp, only weeks after more than 1,000 families had fled the camp following a Peshmerga withdrawal in the face of an IS advance (OCHA 25/08/2014, IRIN 15/08/2014, OCHA 16/08/2014).

Protection of Civilians in IS-held Territory

- All civilians in IS areas face grave ongoing protection concerns. The armed group's documented strategies for territorial consolidation include mass executions of political opponents, suspected spies, or whoever does not meet its standards of behaviour, widespread detention and torture, and child recruitment (ISW 07/2014, Amnesty 19/12/2103, Daily Star 28/04/2014). IS in Iraq is already reported to have executed 12 civilians for allegedly giving information to the Government (ISW 25/08/2014).

- Further attempts at territorial expansion would expose more civilians to already widespread ethnic cleansing, mass abduction, rape, and trafficking that characterised IS's push into northern Ninewa in August (UNICEF 23/08/2014, UNSC 15/08/2014, UN 25/08/2014, AFP 16/08/2014, NYT 16/08/2014, UN 12/08/2014, NYT 16/08/2014, Guardian 15/08/2014, IraqiNews 05/008/2014, UN 13/08/2014).

Food Security

- 1.5 million are in need of food assistance: 400,000 in Anbar and Diyala alone. Host communities are experiencing rising food prices and loss of livelihoods (OCHA 28/08/2014, OCHA 22/08/2014).
- UN agencies report a “desperate” need for food assistance in areas under siege by armed groups, particularly in Anbar and Salah al Din, where WFP has little access (WFP 27/08/2014).
- Though much of the humanitarian community's attention is focused on shelter, the majority of recent IDPs consider their priority needs to be daily necessities: food (78%), and NFIs (77%). Only 29% listed shelter or financial assistance as the top priority (IOM 28/08/2014).
- The increasing number of IDPs in informal shelters raises serious food security worries, as previous assessment have indicated more than 90% of IDPs in such shelters have insufficient access to food, as opposed to 50% of those with host families, or renting apartments or hotel rooms (IOM 07/08/2014). One assessment in northern Iraq found 58% of IDPs reported reducing the size and frequency of meals to cope with limited food supplies (REACH 12/07/2014).
- Throughout Iraq, the interruption of normal supply routes due to insecurity, damage to roads and bridges, and checkpoints continues to impact food transport, particularly grain from government warehouses, which affects food prices and availability. Water, fuel and electricity shortages affect local food production, especially bakeries. The Public Distribution System, upon which many Iraqis rely for basic staples, remains disrupted, and the effect of conflict and water supply shortages on agricultural areas continues to pose a long-term risk to the country's food security (WHO 14/08/2014, OCHA 16/08/2014, WFP 22/07/14, NCCI 23/07/2014).

Shelter

- Shelter is a high priority for the most recent IDPs: nearly 70% of those displaced in August are living in insecure shelters, including mosques, schools, parks, and abandoned buildings (IOM 28/08/2014). 52,000 IDPs living in more than 2,000 schools urgently need alternative shelter. Minorities without established links with host communities are particularly vulnerable (STC 26/08/2014, OCHA 22/08/2014).

- As of 27 August, four camps were operating in KR-I (Baharka in Erbil, and Bajet-Kandala, Khanke, and Derabon in Dohuk), sheltering nearly 20,000 people (OCHA 29/08/2014). In addition, several camps exist in close proximity to disputed areas, including Garmawa on the Dohuk/Ninewa border, Aiden and Bahari Tazi in Diyala, and Kurdistan camp, outside Khanaqin on the Diyala/Sulaymaniyah border.
- Other sites are in the process of being identified and built, both by the KRG with the assistance of humanitarian organisations, and by the Turkish Government. The number and locations are unconfirmed, but it appears KRG is planning approximately 20 new camps, with a projected capacity of between 190,000 and 240,000 IDPs (OCHA 29/08/2014, PI 01/09/2014, USAID 28/08/2014).
- OCHA says current resources available to the KR-I Authorities are insufficient to complete these camps, and alternative solutions, including camps built by the private sector or even military actors are being considered (OCHA 29/08/2014).
- On 23 August, Basra's governor opened a camp for IDPs in an unfinished market building. The new camp, for 500 families, is situated in the five-mile area of Basra (IOM 23/08/2014).
- Kurdish authorities have indicated that IDPs in schools should be relocated to camps as soon as possible to prepare schools for the new term (USAID 28/08/2014 STC 26/08/2014, PI 21/08/2014). The disruption to education caused by large numbers of IDPs taking shelter in schools is a major concern, both for the education sector and because it necessitates the development of immediate shelter solutions to avoid negative consequences and an increase in host community-IDP tensions.

WASH

- WASH facilities are a critical need for IDPs, particularly the recently displaced, many of whom are living in communal or informal shelters. Prevalence of waterborne diseases is on the rise mostly due to limited access to safe water and adequate sanitation (OCHA 29/08/2014). Humanitarian safety audits in Erbil suggest collective or informal shelters may have insufficient water points, showers and latrines, and latrines may be used for bathing and laundry. IDPs sheltering in schools may not have showers at all. Latrines and showers in some informal shelters are not separated by gender, lighted, or lockable, raising privacy and safety concerns for females (NRC Safety Audits 08/2014).
- Dohuk governorate has identified Zakho, Khanke, Shariya, Dohuk City and Batel as priority areas for WASH interventions. In addition, OCHA has highlighted Basra, Kerbala, Sulaymaniyah, Qadisiyah (Diwaniyah city), and Shekhan and Akre districts on the Ninewa plain. UNICEF also singled out Erbil (Ainkawa and Baharka, Khanaqin in Diyala and Al Nanahrawan camp in Baghdad as priority areas (OCHA 22/08/2014, UNICEF 18/08/2014).

- The construction and expansion of camps will also require rapid preparation of new WASH facilities. Dohuk authorities have requested scaled-up services for Khanke and Bajet Kandala IDP camps, and for planned camps in Shariya and elsewhere (OCHA 29/08/2014).
- With many camps planned to be built by governments rather than humanitarian organisations, support will be important to ensure minimum SPHERE standards are met.
- Water infrastructure continues to be targeted and water access exploited for military objectives (Shafaq News 26/08/14, ISW 26/08/14, ISW 02/09/14, AINA 18/06/2014, CrossMap 07/2014). Fuel shortages and disruptions to transport continue to impact water availability countrywide, particularly in and around conflict areas (OCHA 16/08/2014).
- According to an Iraqi government report, civilians returning to Makhmour, which was taken by IS then re-taken by Peshmerga, face shortages in drinking water as well as electricity, the latter caused by damage to plants (Gol 02/09/2014). Similar issues may be expected if civilians attempt return to other recent conflict areas.

Health

- KR-I's health system is under strain owing to the number of IDPs, Syrian refugees, wounded Peshmerga fighters, a lack of drugs, and salaries unpaid by Baghdad because of the dispute over Kurdish oil sales (AJE 17/08/2014).
- A primary healthcare clinic in Sharia, Dohuk, reports a 50% increase in consultations, with 40% of patients complaining of diarrhoea and vomiting (OCHA 29/08/2014). It is believed the rising illness levels are caused by poor WASH access.
- Shortages of medicines, supplies, staff, and equipment in hard-to-reach localities and contested areas within the disputed zone (OCHA 22/08/2014).
- The displacement of over 80,000 IDPs towards the southern areas of Najaf, Kerbala, Babil, and Qadisiyah is placing a huge burden on health facilities, especially since the rates of both chronic conditions and communicable diseases are higher among new arrivals (chicken pox, diarrhoea and measles) (OCHA 22/08/2014).
- Violence continues to affect health facilities in conflict areas in both northern and southern Iraq. In Anbar, Fallujah's general hospital has come under fire again: three aid workers died and five patients were injured, in addition to heavy damage to infrastructure (WHO 14/08/2014, AL-Monitor 03/08/2014). More than 50% of health facilities in Anbar are under control of armed groups (OCHA 25/08/2014). In Tel Kaif and Makhmour (Ninewa), only three of 21 health facilities are functional (OCHA 29/08/2014).

- Disease tracking is a challenge, with severe limitations to reporting in Anbar, Diyala, and Kirkuk, and no reporting from Ninewa and Salah Al Din. Measles and other communicable diseases are a concern (WHO 14/08/2014). Despite conflict, UN agencies completed a mass polio vaccination campaign (WHO/UNICEF 02/09/2014).

Education

- In KR-I, local authorities have highlighted this as a first-level problem, particularly in Dohuk, where more than 50% of schools are hosting IDPs. The start of the school year for Kurdish children has already been delayed until October, and may have to be further delayed. All education in KR-I, including for IDPs and Syrian refugees, is on hold.

Access Constraints

- Humanitarian agencies have little access to Ninewa, Kirkuk, Salah al Din and Diyala, where the latest figures indicate at least 290,000 IDPs are displaced (IOM 28/08/2014, OCHA 28/08/2014). Assessments and media reports say displaced families in northern Diyala governorate are receiving little external assistance, with 75% of key informants in one assessment stating that nobody in their community had received any kind of assistance since being displaced (REACH 18/08/2014, CSM 28/08/2014).
- Media reports and Yazidi community leaders say that thousands, in particular the elderly, may still be stranded on Mt Sinjar, where humanitarian airlifts have now stopped (Guardian 27/08/2014, NYT 14/08/2014, NYT 14/08/2014).
- Blocked roads between Anbar governorate's cities and districts are hampering humanitarian efforts to provide basic needs of food, drinking water and health supplies (WHO 14/08/2014).
- Saudi Arabia recently offered USD 500 million for humanitarian operations in Iraq, quadrupling the available funding. However humanitarian organisations have said bureaucratic delays mean little of this money has been made available for operations (NCCI 21/08/2014).

Aggravating Factors

Ongoing Foreign Intervention

- US airstrikes have been considered key to rolling back IS advances, but the intervention risks being perceived through sectarian lenses, undermining attempts by the new Iraqi Government to draw disaffected Sunni Arabs out of IS's orbit (NYTimes 18/08/14, Foreign Affairs 08/08/14).

- In response to airstrikes, IS is likely to modify its tactics and shift from massed concentrations to greater force dispersion and urban warfare, a tactic which could further endanger civilians (Reuters 31/08/2014). Iraqi air bombardments directed at IS's urban positions have already incurred serious consequences for the civilian population.
- As IS has already shown its willingness to retaliate via the use of theatrical violence, both in governance and the beheading of two American journalists, a military offensive could also trigger retaliatory violence against civilians in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, or even beyond the region.

Potential Conflict in the Capital

- IS has managed to establish an operational presence along roughly half of Iraq's seven axes of approach to Baghdad, and continues to test the capital's defences (Almada 02/09/14). While its current priority appears to be internal consolidation (and some degree of institutionalisation) in the areas under its control, a ground incursion into greater Baghdad's built-up area remains a possibility in the foreseeable future.

Information Gaps

Livelihoods and Community Tensions

- Information is insufficient regarding livelihoods among the communities hosting IDPs, including in KR-I, and the extent of/gaps in existing service provision. Without this baseline, it is hard to gauge the impact of the influx on host communities, and the likelihood of increased community tensions due to competition for jobs, living quarters and state or international assistance.
- Some humanitarian actors have observed tensions between communities. It is unclear to what extent these are caused by the increasingly sectarian atmosphere, or by resentments over the impact of IDPs. The presence of two drivers of communal discontent heightens the risk of negative consequences, and assessments will be important to determine if disparities in international assistance among IDPs, refugees, and host communities risk inflaming tensions further.

Psychosocial Support

- There has been limited attention paid so far to the psychosocial consequences of the extreme violence many recent IDPs have faced, and its likely effects on both individuals and communities in the short, medium, and long term.