

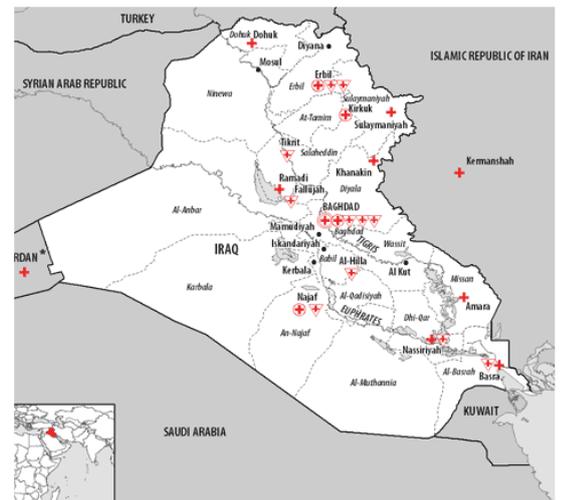


Iraq Crisis: Six Months On

Summary

More than six months have passed since fighting intensified in Iraq and the humanitarian crisis continues to escalate throughout the country. The current conflict has so far affected 17 million people, with 5.2 million in need of humanitarian assistance.

Since this escalation, entire communities have been torn apart and the violence has caused the deaths of thousands of Iraqis. An estimated two million internally displaced people have scattered across more than 2,000 locations as intense fighting continues to spread in the north, west and central parts of the country. Reaching these affected populations remains challenging and in some cases very dangerous, making it very difficult for aid agencies to provide assistance.



Map of Iraq. © ICRC

The huge displacement of people since January is beginning to drain community social capital, with existing resources being depleted and social cohesion becoming strained. Infrastructure is being overloaded by the huge influx of internally displaced people as families are forced to take shelter wherever they can. Poor sanitation and a lack of access to water heating is an issue, preventing many from maintaining a basic level of hygiene. In addition, while an estimated half of all people living in temporary shelters are in need of medical assistance, access to these facilities is limited.

As winter is upon us, preparing families and individuals for the cold weather is a major priority. Winter in Iraq can be very harsh with snow and frost particularly prevalent in the north of the country where a large proportion of refugees are currently sheltering. It is estimated that 1.26 million internally displaced people are in urgent need of assistance throughout the winter. Many displaced people live in inadequate shelters, unsuitable for the cold season which has already begun. There is, therefore, an immediate need for items including blankets, warm clothes, heating stoves, thermal floor mats and other items which give tents better resistance to the harsh winter conditions.

Refusing to ignore people in crisis

Response of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

The Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS), The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and other sister Red Crosses and Crescents from the region and beyond, including the British Red Cross, have been responding to the crisis since the outbreak of violence.

The Iraqi Red Crescent:

The IRCS has mobilised all of its resources to help those displaced by the fighting by providing essential food, water and supplies to affected families. 4,000 volunteers have been mobilised and have so far supported over 270,000 people. The priority has been the distribution of emergency rations mainly in the form of “on-the-road” assistance to first arrivals. The IRCS has often been the first humanitarian assistant to greet newly arrived displaced families with hot food and water. In addition, they have distributed food parcels and non-food items, such as blankets, mattresses and kitchen sets.



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IRCS has also overseen a polio vaccination campaign in Diyala Governorate, located between Baghdad and the Iranian border.

The International Committee of the Red Cross:



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The ICRC has been assisting more than 1.5 million people since the crisis started earlier this year. While its priority is disaster preparedness, logistics capacity building and assisting in humanitarian diplomacy and communications, it has also been continuously providing relief, livelihoods, emergency health and winter assistance.

So far, the ICRC has distributed one-month’s worth of food rations and other relief items to more than 400,000 displaced people and is delivering winter supplies to over 40,000 people. Essential medical equipment and medicine has been delivered to 66 health-care facilities in 10 cities and it has provided clean drinking water for nearly 920,000 people. In addition, the ICRC has been involved in livelihoods support work. It has distributed an estimated 1,800 metric tonnes of seed and fertiliser to over 5,000 farming families, and has just started supporting mobile health facilities.

The International Federation of the Red Cross:

The IFRC is currently working to support 36,000 families with winterised non-food items. So far, 2,880 families (17,300 people) have received their food parcels and non-food items while procurement for a further 9,600 families is underway. In addition, the IFRC is setting up a “cash for clothes” voucher scheme to assist with its winterisation support and ensure vulnerable people are given more dignity and choice in how to support themselves.

Since 12 July 2014, the IFRC has had a three person Field Assessment and Coordination Team (FACT) in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq. This has been on the ground supporting the coordination of the Dohuk branch of IRCS with the management of emergency appeal activities across six branches.

In September, the IFRC launched a health assessment supported by a doctor from the Japanese Red Cross who is a specialist in public health. This resulted in the deployment of two mobile health clinics led by the ICRC with support from the Canadian Red Cross Society.

Hadji Mahmoud's Story

“My hope?” asked Hadji Mahmoud, 52-year-old Iraqi father. “I want to return home with my family. We may have a tent roof over our heads here, but this not what we want.” Hadji Mahmoud is one of thousands of Iraqis who have been forced to leave their homes and belongings behind in the Mount Sinjar region of northern Iraq. He lives now in Khanke camp, in one tent with his wife and nine children. “The journey was very long and exhausting. We had to sleep in the open for one week as we walked from Sinjar to Dohuk. My 4-year-old son, Honar, was about to die from thirst,” Hadji Mahmoud said. He arrived in Dohuk mid-July after the Yazidi community became a target of violence.



Dohuk's population has grown by almost 50 per cent over the last year, putting a major strain on local resources including food security and the health care system in the governorate. People and authorities in Dohuk have opened schools and communal buildings to host families, but some are living under bridges and in unfinished buildings.

Water supplies have also deteriorated significantly in the last two weeks, exposing the lives of thousands to the threat of disease outbreak, especially in crowded shelters. According to World Health Organization (WHO) and local authorities in Dohuk, there is a high risk of polio.

“I don't know what we will do when the first winter rain falls on our tents. I think all the tents in this camp will be flooded... wiped out,” said Hadji Mahmoud. “At this moment, we can't bear the sun, and in a few weeks we won't be able to stand the cold weather.”

Response of the British Red Cross



The British Red Cross has launched an Iraq Crisis appeal to raise money to support the Red Cross response in Iraq. This appeal is helping to fund essential relief to people in Iraq who are in desperate need of food, blankets, shelter and hope.

In addition, the British Red Cross supported the wider Red Cross Movement by sending out two Field Assessment and Coordination Team (FACT) delegates who returned at the end of August and were

©IFRC key to the setup of the IFRC appeal operation, and further funded an

Australian Red Cross FACT delegate who returned in September.

In November, we launched the Iraq Winter Crisis Appeal to specifically assist with winterisation needs. We continue to engage closely with our colleagues in Iraq, through regular visits and distant communication, to explore efficient and effective ways of responding to urgent needs.

Thank you for your support.

The Iraq Crisis Appeal will cover **any** countries currently affected and those potentially affected in the future **by this crisis**. In the unlikely event that we raise more money than can be reasonably and efficiently spent, any surplus funds will be used to help us prepare for and respond to other humanitarian disasters anywhere in the world. For more information visit redcross.org.uk.

The British Red Cross Society, incorporated by Royal Charter 1908, is a charity registered in England and Wales (220949) and Scotland (SC037738)