



## I. POPULATION DISPLACEMENT IN IRAQ

### 2.8 million internally displaced Iraqis struggle for adequate shelter, food, employment, and basic services.

During the first half of 2008, trends of decreased violence and a declining rate of displacement continued throughout the country. Yet the deteriorating conditions facing the 2.8 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), as well as the limited returnee population, remain one of the most serious humanitarian crises in the world. In addition, over two million Iraqis are refugees, mostly in neighboring Syria and Jordan, resulting in a total of 5 million internally and externally displaced.

On 22 February 2006, the bombing of the Al-Askari Mosque in Samarra triggered escalating sectarian violence that drastically changed the cause and scale of displacement in Iraq. Although military operations, crime, and general insecurity remained factors, sectarian violence became the primary driver for population displacement. Since February 2006, almost 1,600,000<sup>1</sup> Iraqis have been displaced. Of these, IOM's assessments cover 179,595 families throughout Iraq (an estimated 1,077,570 individuals).<sup>2</sup>

Although the rate of newly displaced Iraqis has slowed during the past year, the number of displaced in Iraq remains high. It is estimated that approximately 20% of the country's population are internally or externally displaced. In addition, many displaced families are facing secondary displacement from eviction threats.



In general, returnees and IDPs face similar problems, including lack of potable water, PDS rations, and other basic services such as health care, education, and electricity. Many cannot immediately transfer their documents home, creating problems with PDS delivery and children's school exams.

As one of the most vulnerable populations in a conflict-torn country, Iraqi IDPs flee their homes out of fear and quickly lose easy access to food, water, health care, and other basic services. Some face constantly increasing rent prices, while others squat in public buildings fearing eviction, depend on relatives, or live in simple mud huts.

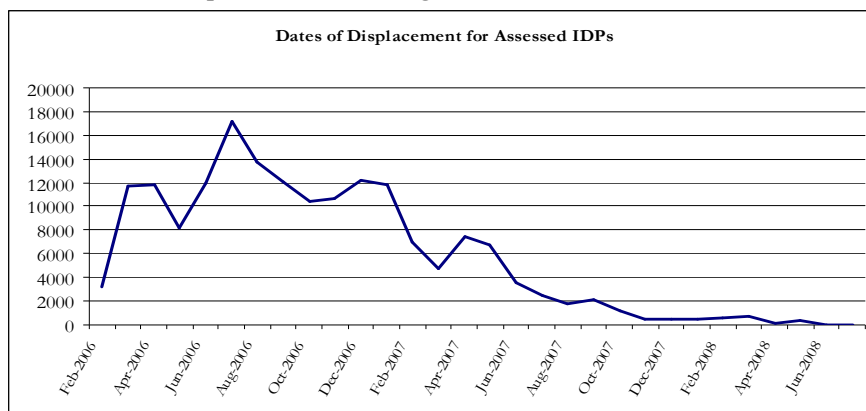
Entering and registering as IDPs in a different governorate is a challenge, particularly if IDPs are not able to transfer their documents. IDP children have difficulties integrating into often overcrowded schools, and few sources of employment means a constant financial struggle. More than 60% of IDPs assessed by IOM wish to return home, although 41% say their property is occupied or destroyed, while another 40% do not yet know. These IDPs are faced with few viable options, and the instability of their lives takes a toll on them both physically and psychologically.

<sup>1</sup> As per figures from the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) for the three northern governorates and the Iraqi Ministry of Displacement Migration (MoDM) for the 15 central and southern governorates. See the IDP Working Group Internally Displaced Persons in Iraq Update (June 2008) for figures per governorate.

<sup>2</sup> For information on IOM's monitoring methodology, see "IOM Monitoring Needs Assessments Methodology" available at [www.iom-iraq.net/library.html#IDP](http://www.iom-iraq.net/library.html#IDP)

## IDP Displacement Rate

The majority (71%) of IDPs assessed by IOM were displaced during 2006. According to analysis of IOM date of displacement data from 2006 through the first half of 2008, there is a trend of significant decline in new displacements, starting in 2007:

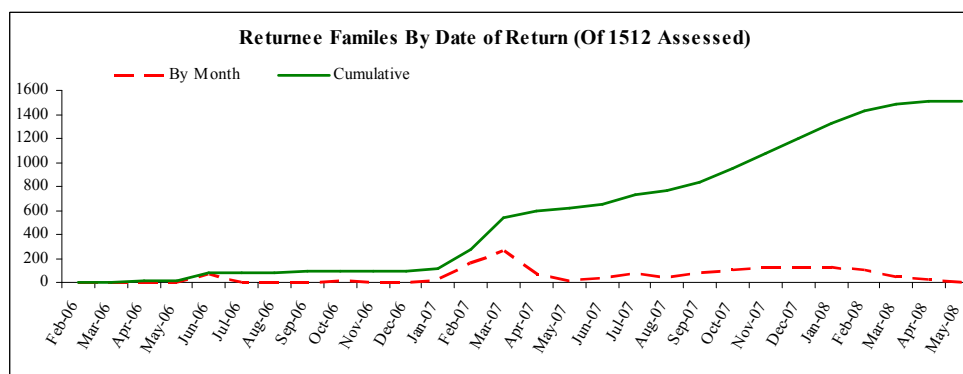


The March 2007 displacement spike represents a large number of IDPs arriving to Wassit from Baghdad and Diyala due to increased violence and military operations in these governorates. The overall decrease in new displacements may result from a combination of improved security and the homogenization of previously mixed neighborhoods due to sectarian violence.

## IDP and Refugee Returns Through Mid-2008

Some Iraqis have returned home due to improved security, deterioration of conditions in places of displacement, and illegal status in neighboring countries. IOM Monitors have identified 16,848 returnee<sup>3</sup> families (101,088 persons) in 325 locations in Iraq.<sup>4</sup> Of these, the majority (9,699 families, or 58%) have returned to Baghdad, and in addition over 3,000 families have been identified as returning to Anbar. 14,119 families (84%) have returned from internal displacement, and the remaining 2,729 families (16%) have returned from abroad.

IDP and refugee returns to Iraq have been gradually increasing throughout 2007 and the beginning of 2008, with small spikes from March – April 2007 and late 2007 – early 2008, as seen below:



<sup>3</sup> According to IOM and MoDM, a returnee is someone who has returned to his original neighborhood or home. If someone has returned to the same city or village but is not able to return to his/her original neighborhood or home, the person is considered secondarily displaced, not a returnee.

<sup>4</sup> The number of returnee families presented in this report is not the total number of returnees in Iraq, but the summary number of returnee families for locations (villages and neighborhoods) assessed as of the reporting date. With an increased number of sources and wider coverage of assessments, it is expected that this number will change in subsequent reports.

While the rate of return appears to be gradually accelerating, particularly in recent months, the number of returnees in comparison to IDPs remains quite small. Local authorities and MoDM are working to support and encourage such returns, especially in Baghdad, the place of origin of the majority of displaced. According to MoDM, all IDP returnees and refugees who have spent eight to twelve months outside the country will now receive one million Iraqi dinars (approximately \$835 USD) from MoDM. MoDM will also start registering and providing benefits to returnees throughout the country, not just in Baghdad.

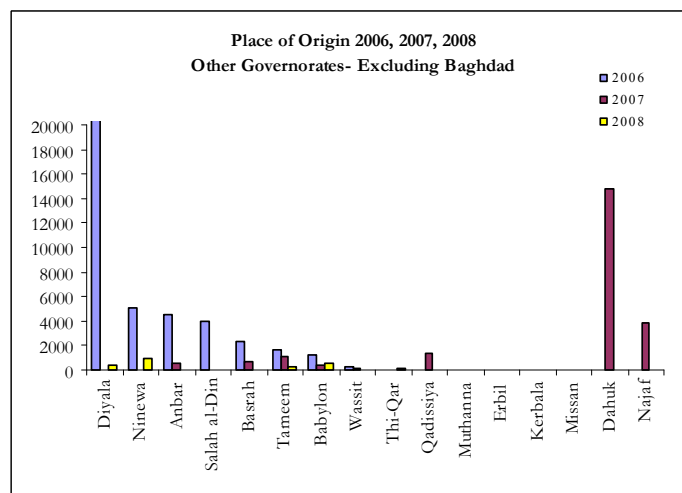
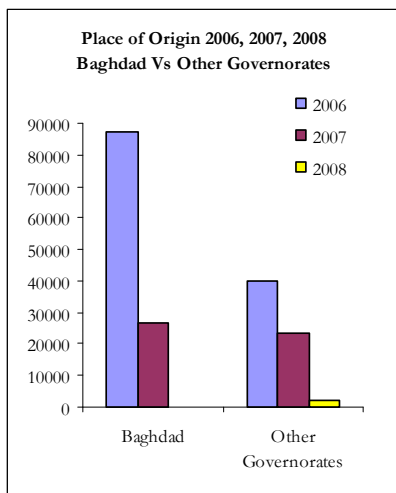
Many returnees come home to find their property destroyed or in use. Of returnees assessed by IOM regarding property status, 56% of returnee property is accessible and in good condition, 26% is partially destroyed, 9% is completely destroyed, and 8% is occupied by others (this does not include Iraqis who were unable to return to their own home or neighborhood, who are considered secondarily displaced). Some families leave one person behind to prevent further damage or occupancy while the rest return to the place of displacement. Others remain with their property during the day and spend the night with relatives or friends. Many are requesting compensation or aid in order to rebuild.

While some locations have become ethno-religiously homogenous, other previously mixed neighborhoods are reintegrating as returns occur. For example, in Al-Saheroon and Al-A'aboos neighbourhoods of Madaen district, Baghdad, Sunni and Shia neighbors are returning to live together.

## II. POST FEBRUARY 2006 IDP POPULATION PROFILE

### Places of Origin and Reasons for Displacement

The majority (64%) of IDPs assessed by IOM were displaced either from or within Baghdad governorate. The two graphs below show IDP origins in Baghdad compared with the rest of the country and then a breakdown of the remaining IDPs' origins (36%) in all governorates excluding Baghdad:



IDPs have fled their homes for a variety of reasons, all related to security. The most commonly cited reasons for displacement among those assessed are direct threats to life (37%) and generalized violence (23%):

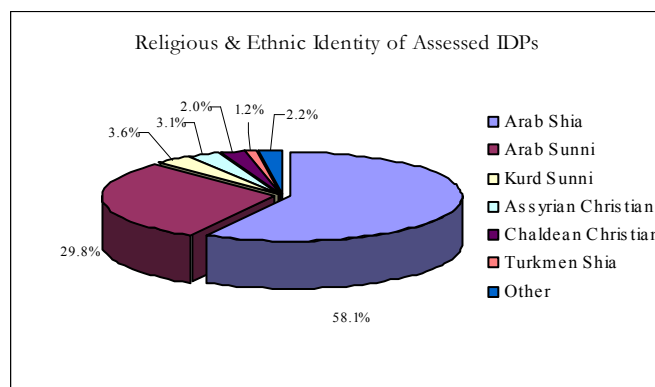
REASON FOR DISPLACEMENT	% of assessed IDPs
Direct threats of life	36.8%
Generalized violence	23.0%
Forced displacement from property	18.0%
Left out of fear	14.1%
Armed conflict	7.4%
Other	0.7%

When asked why they were targeted, 85% of those assessed attributed it to their sectarian identity. Another 10% said that they did not feel specifically targeted, while 6% cited political opinion and 4% cited ethnic identity. Answers do not vary significantly among those displaced in 2006, 2007, and 2008.

### Religion and Ethnicity

The majority of the displaced (58%) are Shia Arab, followed by Sunni Arab (30%), along with small but significant numbers of Sunni Kurds, Assyrian Christians, Chaldean Christians, Turkmen, and others. The following chart and graph show the religious and ethnic profile of the IDP population:

RELIGION AND ETHNICITY	% of Assessed IDPs
Arab Shia	58.1%
Arab Sunni	29.8%
Kurd Sunni	3.6%
Assyrian Christian	3.1%
Chaldean Christian	2.0%
Turkmen Shia	1.2%
Other	2.2%



### Intentions

The majority (61%) of assessed IDPs intend to return to their place of origin, while 21% intend to integrate locally, and 17% plan to resettle in a third location.

Specifically, IDPs displaced close to their place of origin are more interested in returning home than those who fled to a different governorate. 82% of IDPs displaced within their home governorate intend to return to their original location, compared with 50% of those displaced to another governorate who wish to do the same:

IDP INTENTIONS	Of total assessed	Of those displaced within the same governorate	Of those displaced to another governorate
Return to place of origin	61.2%	81.8%	50.3%
Integrate in the current location	20.5%	5.0%	28.7%
Resettle in a third location	16.9%	12.7%	19.1%
Undecided	1.4%	0.5%	1.9%

### III. IDP HUMANITARIAN ASSESSMENT

For brevity's sake, this report summarizes the IDP situation in the security, shelter, food, water/sanitation, and health sectors. More in-depth information and data on additional sectors is available at <http://www.iom-iraq.net/idp.html>. IOM's recently released *June 2008 Governorate Profiles* contain detailed area-specific analysis and comparison on displacement throughout Iraq.

#### Security/Protection

Continuing the trend from 2007, violence appears to have decreased overall throughout the country during the first half of 2008. As the Iraqi army and police play a more prominent role in security operations, they are also suffering an increase in casualties. In addition, several governorates, including Baghdad, Basrah, Ninewa, and Missan, saw brief increases in instability and violence during military operations launched over the past few months by the Multi-National Forces in Iraq and Iraqi Forces (MNF-I/IF) against local insurgents. In these cases Improvised Explosive Device (IED) explosions, artillery exchanges, inter-tribal fighting, search-and-arrest campaigns, and curfews erupted, though were generally followed by a period of calmer security and did not result in large-scale displacement.

In recent months, "awakening forces" (sahwa) or inter-tribal, local power-sharing coalitions, have aided stability and security in several governorates, namely Anbar, Diyala, and Salah al-Din, with plans to continue reproducing this model elsewhere in the country. However, power disputes among the awakening forces and other political parties in Anbar have been the cause of a recent spike in violence there. Security in Anbar was supposed to be transferred to the IF in late June after a progressive MNF-I handover, however this has been postponed.

The three northern governorates of Kurdistan continue to be significantly more stable than the rest of the country with the exception of those areas bordering both Turkey and Iran. Bombings and land incursions in border villages by Turkish forces continue, and there is periodic Iranian cross-border shelling along the edges of Sulaymaniyah.

#### Restrictions on IDP Entry and Registration

Governorate-level authorities across the country restrict IDP entry and registration due to security, economic, and even demographic concerns. In general, IDPs must go through a great deal of bureaucracy to register, sometimes traveling to five different offices. A varying selection of documents are required in each governorate, including the original residence card, PDS card, the national ID, and a letter of approval from city council members, the mayor, local police, and/or MoDM. Registration is tightly restricted in areas with high levels of ethno-religious tensions, such as Kirkuk. In addition, proper documentation is often difficult to obtain from the governorate of origin, and sometimes registration is restricted to those with an advanced degree or professional qualifications. Many are not allowed to bring furniture with them, if they are allowed to enter.

In Babylon and Kerbala, only IDPs with origins or relatives from the governorate may enter. In Basrah, Missan, and Wassit, IDPs can enter but are not allowed to register and remain unless they are displaced from "hot spots," or particularly dangerous and volatile areas, in Iraq. In Salah al-Din, the governor has ordered that IDPs from Samarra district and Anbar and Diyala governorates leave the governorate due to concern that they are security risks.

IDPs who do not originate from Dahuk, Erbil, or Sulaymaniyah must be sponsored by a resident from these governorates. The borders of Dahuk, Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah continue to be tightly

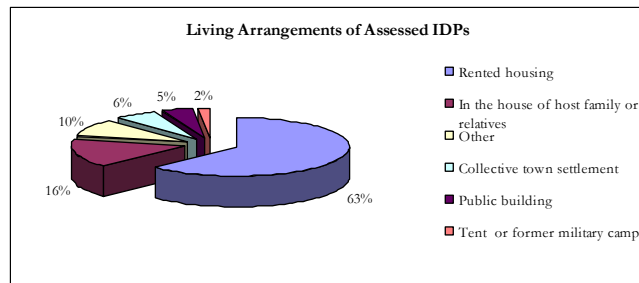
controlled to maintain the relatively high level of stable security in the region. In some cases IDPs may be turned away, and they are generally not permitted to bring furniture into Dahuk with them.

### Shelter

Shelter is consistently among the highest-priority needs cited by IDPs, and eviction threats coupled with rapidly rising rental prices have created an even more precarious housing situation in recent months. Earlier this year the Government of Iraq (GoI) issued an eviction order for all IDPs squatting in public buildings. Although the Iraqi Parliament later voted to postpone the order until other housing arrangements could be made for IDPs that would be again displaced, individual governorates are in some cases continuing with threats and even actual evictions. For example, 150 families were recently forced to leave public land in Farah village of Kerbala governorate.

Stifling summer temperatures of up to 45 degrees worsen already-difficult living conditions during the summer months. Many IDP families do not have the funds for generators nor fuel. 35% of assessed IDPs report not having access to fuel due to unavailability or financial constraints.

The majority of IDPs (63%) are renting, which means that the increase in rental costs across the country badly affects the dwindling finances of IDP families, the majority of whom have no source of income. In Babylon, for example, rental costs have risen more than 50% since the beginning of 2006.



Of those IDPs assessed by IOM monitors, almost 26% say that their property is occupied, controlled, or claimed by private citizens, and 15% say their property is destroyed. Another 40% do not know the status of their property. Recently, the GoI announced that it will provide 300,000 ID per month for six months (a total of \$1500) to any IDP family squatting in another IDP family's home, enabling the house owner's return and providing rent costs for the family who has to leave. The problem of occupied and destroyed housing, occupied public buildings, and increased evictions is a great challenge facing the Iraqi Government.

The camp situation in Iraq is unique, as less than 1% of displaced live in tent camps. This is primarily due to the fact that camps are set up in desolate areas, have very few services, and are considered a last resort due to cultural concerns which make people reluctant to live among unfamiliar families.

### Food/Public Distribution System (PDS)

IDP families who do receive their PDS rations find that they are insufficient, late, and missing key items. Many IDPs complain that the transferring of PDS ration cards to the location of displacement continues to be difficult because of lacking or lost documents and a slow bureaucratic process.

Only 29% of assessed IDPs reported consistent access to PDS rations. Most families receive food rations only intermittently or not at all: 49% of assessed IDPs sometimes receive their PDS rations, while 21% report no access. Insecurity of transportation routes and trouble transferring the necessary documents for PDS registration in places of displacement are the most commonly cited reasons for non-delivery.

41% of IDPs have received food assistance from other sources, mostly humanitarian organizations or religious charities.

## Health Care

Substandard living conditions, the stress of long periods of displacement, financial problems, insufficient diet, and poor sanitation are constant sources of health complications for IDPs. Disease is more common among IDPs who live in these conditions, and once present, it spreads more quickly. It is common for IDPs to suffer from diseases such as hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, skin and intestinal infections, and anemia, along with ailments due to malnutrition. These problems have a higher occurrence in women and children. In addition, due to witnessing violence and conflict, displaced children often suffer psychological trauma. Yet, there are few programs which assist with these problems, creating a new generation of Iraqis who suffer from unaddressed psychosocial stresses.

Because many IDPs live in poor or rural neighborhoods, access to health care is particularly difficult to attain. The number of health care centers is often insufficient, and the ones that are present are not equipped with necessary equipment and medicine. 14% of IDPs reported that they had no access to health care services, and 30% cannot access the medications they need. Non-access to health care services is worst in Kirkuk (71%), followed by Diyala (30%), Muthanna (22%), and Salah al-Din (21%). Those who cannot access health care report financial constraints and unavailability of services as the most common reasons for non-access.

In addition, there is a serious need for women's health care and health awareness education to avert miscarriages and pregnancy complications among IDPs. Because it is often difficult for women to travel, especially at night, it is harder for them to obtain proper care, and specialized health care is unavailable.

Access to health care is somewhat better in the three northern governorates, especially in cities.

## Water and Sanitation

Access to potable water is often at the root of serious health problems among IDP populations who are already more likely to live in poor quality housing with few or no basic services.

Although 80% of IDPs assessed by IOM reported access to water, this does not guarantee that this water is clean enough to use or drink. IDPs obtain their water from multiples sources, the most common being municipal pipe networks (90%), nearby rivers, lakes, and streams (53%), and an open or broken pipe (52%).



Even when there is some infrastructure available, water is often mixed with dirt and even sewage. In some locations sewage runs through the streets. In other towns, trash dumps contaminate the water and living environment, causing diseases such as typhoid and cholera.

Although water provision is relatively better in the three northern governorates, the recent drought in this area is forcing some farmers and herders to relocate in search of water.

## Education

IDP children across the reporting area are disproportionately absent from school for a variety of reasons, including economic difficulties, travel distance to school, staying home to care for the family while parents work, having to work themselves due to no family income, and lack of proper documents. Many host community schools are ill-equipped, lacking reading materials, furniture, and teaching staff. In locations with high concentrations of IDP families, schools are often doing three to four shifts in order to accommodate as many displaced children as possible.

The IDP children who do attend school often have difficulties resolving social and cultural differences, such as the move from urban to rural or moderate to conservative areas. In the three northern governorates, many IDP children lack education opportunities because there are few Arabic-language schools.

Monitors observe that when boys leave school, it is often to help the family's financial situation, while girls are often absent from school because of a lack of emphasis upon female education in conservative communities. Other children lack documents from their place of origin and cannot register for school. Of assessed families with male and female children, only one third (33%) report that all of their boys are in school, and only 22% report that all of their girls are in school.

## Employment

Access to work is consistently listed as the top priority need of assessed IDPs. The need for employment is high for all Iraqis but affects IDPs even more, as they leave behind their sources of income and move to areas where their skills might not be marketable. In addition, some host communities discriminate against IDPs, either thinking they are not trustworthy to hire or hiring them for reduced salaries. Those IDPs who do locate work often hold day-labor jobs that pay poorly and are temporary. In the three northern governorates, employees usually require Kurdish speakers. 66% of assessed IDP families do not have any members employed. Access to a steady income could assuage the problems many IDPs face, enabling them to pay for rent, food, health care, and school expenses.

## **IV. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE**

Iraq continues to be one of the most dangerous places in the world for humanitarian agencies to work. Humanitarian access is limited by armed conflict, general insecurity and crime, restrictions on movement, and in some cases obstruction by authorities. Humanitarian workers must operate cautiously, as in many cases they are deliberately targeted by armed groups. The situation is complicated by a blurring of roles between military and humanitarian actors. As a result, humanitarian actors in some locations adopt a "low-profile" approach, hiding their identity as international or humanitarian organizations. The three northern governorates are the exception; humanitarian organizations usually can operate freely there.

The majority (62%) of assessed IDPs reported that they had received some form of humanitarian assistance. The most frequently-reported source was host communities, which provided assistance to 28% of the assessed. Other sources were MoDM (27%), relatives of IDPs (27%), the Iraqi Red Crescent (24%), religious groups (24%), and humanitarian organizations (19%).

Despite insecurity and limited funding, IOM continues to provide humanitarian assistance to displaced populations and vulnerable host communities throughout Iraq. In 2007, IOM conducted 16 Emergency Distributions, which provided food and non-food items such as blankets,

mattresses, fuel, and kitchen sets to more than 47,000 IDP families and their host communities. During the first half of 2008, IOM Emergency Distributions have aided and continue to aid more than 28,000 IDP families with 12 distributions to date.

In 2007, IOM also implemented 38 Community Assistance Projects, improving basic services in the water, sanitation, health, education, and livelihood sectors and benefiting more than 570,000 individuals. These programs continued and expanded in the first half of 2008; in 2008 IOM implemented 43 Community Assistance Projects benefiting approximately 285,000 IDPs. These programs continue along with operations to monitor, assess, and assist IDP populations returning to their places of origin. However, despite a clear need and ongoing efforts, only 35% of IOM's \$85 million proposal to assist IDPs and other vulnerable groups has been funded.

## V. CONCLUSION

While the rate of displacement has slowed to a trickle and returns are increasing, Iraq's approximately 2.8 million internally displaced continue to face deteriorating living conditions with poor access to shelter, food, health care, water, and other basic services. 70% of those IDPs assessed by IOM report intermittent or no access to PDS rations, 14% have no access to health care, and 30% cannot access the medications they need.

IDPs cite shelter, employment, and food as their priority needs. Currently, eviction from public buildings and lands is a major concern for squatting IDPs. In addition, skyrocketing food and rent prices and little hope of employment exacerbate their already difficult situations.

61% of assessed IDPs wish to return home, and that figure grows to 82% when IDPs were displaced within the same governorate. 26% of assessed IDPs say that their property is occupied, 15% say it is destroyed, and 43% of assessed returnees have found their property in use or partially or completely destroyed upon returning home. Some returnees may begin to reintegrate neighborhoods once homogenized by sectarian violence, especially in Baghdad, other IDPs have been killed upon returning home, and still others refuse to come back for fear of violent reprisals. However, the GoI is working to improve security and assist Iraqis to return home.

Despite limited funding and insecurity, IOM continues to assist the displaced, returning Iraqis, and host communities with emergency food, water and household item distributions, community assistance projects, and advocacy. However, overall assistance to these vulnerable communities remains inadequate. Until long-term stability is realized, rule of law improved and basic services restored, internal displacement in Iraq will remain a serious humanitarian crisis that calls for urgent assistance.

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# IOM IRAQ – ATLAS

## IDP AND RETURNEE LOCATIONS, JUNE 2008

