

IRAQ

IN SHORT



Main Objectives

- Provide international protection and actively search for lasting solutions for refugees in Iraq, including voluntary repatriation and resettlement of eligible cases to third countries.
- Provide complementary assistance to Turkish refugees of Kurdish origin in the north of Iraq. Give special attention to refugee women and children's needs.
- Provide basic complementary assistance to Iranian refugees of Kurdish origin in the north and central parts of Iraq.
- Liaise with the relevant authorities in Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran to facilitate agreement on the voluntary repatriation of their respective refugees.
- Train government authorities and local NGOs on refugee law and promote the Government's accession to the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol.

Planning Figures

Population	Jan. 2000	Dec. 2000
Iranian Refugees	29,000	25,000
Turkish Refugees	12,000	10,000
Palestinian Refugees	62,600	62,600
Mixed Nationalities (Urban Refugees)	1,100	1,100
Total	104,700	98,700

**Total Requirements
USD 3,292,701**



WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Recent Developments

There are some 104,000 refugees in Iraq, of whom approximately 32,000 are assisted by UNHCR. This includes some 15,800 Iranian refugees of Kurdish origin in the Al-Tash Refugee Camp and approximately 3,200 Iranian refugees of Kurdish origin residing in urban areas in Erbil and Suleimaniya in the north of the country. There are, moreover about 9,000 Turkish refugees of Kurdish origin residing in the Makhmour Refugee Camp, located in territory controlled by the Government of Iraq, and 2,800 Turkish refugees of Kurdish origin residing in five local settlements in the Dohuk Governorate in the north of the country. Another 1,100 urban refugees of various nationalities (including Somalis and Sudanese) reside in Baghdad.

In addition to these groups, Iraq hosts approximately 62,000 Palestinian refugees, who seek UNHCR's protection and assistance on an individual basis.

In June 1999, the Government of Iraq issued a decree that Iraqis who had left the country illegally be exempt from prosecution. This announcement was followed by the issuance by the Iraqi embassy in Teheran of travel documentation to Iraqis wishing to return to their country of origin. In this connection, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Government of Iraq sought UNHCR's assistance to facilitate the return of Iraqis who fall within this category. During the period August to October 1999, some 870 Iraqi Arabs returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran with UNHCR's assistance. UNHCR's role in an organised return is being considered. Similarly, the decree may have contributed to an increase in the rate of spontaneous returns of refugees from the Rafha Camp in northern Saudi Arabia, as about 60 people voluntarily returned from this camp during the first months after the announcement of the decree.

In 1999, UNHCR assisted approximately 100 Turkish refugees of Kurdish origin to return from Iraq to their country of origin. Meanwhile, as of mid-October 1999, some 11,400 Iraqi Kurds have reportedly left their places of residence in the Islamic Republic of Iran and returned spontaneously to the north of Iraq.

UNHCR plans to launch a programme in 2000 to train Iraqi government and national NGO offi-

cial on refugee law and the implications of accession to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

Constraints

Overall political instability in the region, as well as factional conflicts in northern Iraq, are affecting UNHCR's capacity to carry out its assistance and protection activities. In addition, the current economic situation in Iraq has caused hardship and shortages of general commodities for the Iraqi civilian population in general, and for refugees in particular. It has also increased the number of Iraqis leaving the country in search of better economic opportunities and employment outside their country.

STRATEGY

Iranian Refugees

Among the 104,000 refugees in Iraq, UNHCR is assisting 15,800 Iranian refugees of Kurdish origin in the Al-Tash Refugee Camp and approximately 3,200 in urban areas in Erbil and Suleimaniya in the north. Moreover, in August 1999, the Government of Iraq approached UNHCR seeking its support and assistance for a group of some 10,000 Iranian Ahwazi refugees in Misan, Wasit, and Basrah Governorates in the south of Iraq. UNHCR is in the process of assessing the material needs of this group of refugees, in particular those of refugee women and children.

For Iranian asylum-seekers in northern Iraq, UNHCR will continue to carry out refugee status determination and provide protection and lasting solutions for those who qualify as refugees. UNHCR will also seek resettlement to third countries for Iranian refugees who meet the criteria. During 1999, the spontaneous return of Iranian refugees from the Al-Tash camp to their country of origin continued as in previous years. UNHCR will facilitate the voluntary repatriation of those opting to return.

In general, all refugees in Iraq receive a food ration from the Government equal to that provided to Iraqi citizens under UN Security Council Resolution 986 "Oil for Food Programme". In addition to the basic health, water, sanitation and education services provided by the Government of Iraq, the 15,800 Iranian refugees living in the Al-Tash camp also receive help from UNHCR, in the form of additional drugs for the clinics, supplies for primary school classrooms, and maintenance

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of the water and sanitation system in the camp. In order to promote self-sufficiency for women, three income-generation projects will continue to be supported and refugee women aged 14-45 will be supplied with re-usable sanitary kits.

UNHCR will continue to assist the 3,200 Iranian refugees of Kurdish origin who are living in the northern urban areas of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah Governorates with one-off cash assistance in the course of 2000.

Turkish Refugees

UNHCR will continue to provide international protection and complementary assistance to some 11,800 Turkish refugees of Kurdish origin, of whom some 9,000 reside in the Makhmour Refugee Camp and 2,800 in local settlements in Dohuk Governorate in the north of Iraq. In this regard UNHCR will facilitate voluntary repatriation as a lasting solution for those refugees who seek to return to their country of origin.

Assistance provided to Turkish refugees is similar to that for Iranians with food rations from the Government under the UN Oil for Food Programme. UNHCR supplements this with kerosene for all families and other items for selected vulnerable families, such as utensils, blankets and jerry cans. The assistance provided to those living in the local settlements in Dohuk will be gradually reduced over the year 2000, as they become self-sufficient.

For the 9,000 refugees living in the Makhmour refugee camp, UNHCR will complement the stocks of medicines provided by the Government for the camp clinic. Schools for refugee children will be supported materially and financially, and refugee women will receive re-usable sanitary kits. In addition, community workers will introduce income-generating activities for refugee women to promote self-sufficiency. UNHCR will also assist the Government by providing supplementary assistance with water and sanitation in the camp.

Palestinian Refugees

Palestinian refugees are normally assisted by UNRWA. However, as Iraq does not fall under UNRWA's area of operations, Palestinian refugees in need of protection (for example, needing renewal of their travel documents) and assistance normally approach UNHCR. After an individual needs assessment, UNHCR decides on the most appropriate type of assistance to provide.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management Structure

The country operation is managed by the Office of the Chief of Mission in Baghdad, assisted by four Field Offices in Dohuk, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Makhmour. There is a total of 11 international staff, one Junior Professional Officer and 22 national staff. UNHCR plans to consolidate its operation in the north of Iraq and to address protection and assistance needs for the Ahwazi refugees in the south and the centre of the country.

Coordination

UNHCR is constantly updating its contingency plans with other UN agencies such as OCHA and UNICEF to respond, if needed, to new population movements within or outside the country. Regular meetings are also held between the UN agencies and other partners to update the UN contingency plan and share all relevant data and information.

Offices

Baghdad	Dohuk	Erbil
Makhmour	Sulaymaniyah	

Budget (USD)

Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	1,031,375
Community Services	14,625
Domestic Needs/ Household Support	142,000
Education	61,000
Food	9,375
Health/Nutrition	100,862
Income Generation	5,000
Legal Assistance	7,625
Operational Support (to Agencies)	79,300
Sanitation	10,625
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	173,000
Transport/Logistics	292,113
Water (non-agricultural)	60,375
Total Operations	1,987,275
Programme Support	1,305,426
Total	3,292,701