

IRAQ

INITIAL 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 southern Iraq, taking into consideration the special needs of refugee women and children.
- Provide basic complimentary assistance to Iranian refugees of Kurdish origin in northern and central Iraq.
- Liaise with the relevant authorities in Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran to facilitate agreements on the voluntary repatriation of their respective populations.
- Train government officials, national NGO staff and media representatives on refugee law, and promote Iraq's accession to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND CONSTRAINTS

At the beginning of the year, it was estimated that there were some 130,000 refugees in Iraq. During the first months of the year, UNHCR revised prior estimates of the number of refugees in the country, based on an assessment of those who were actually being assisted in camps and settlements, and individually in urban areas, or were registered to receive monthly food rations within the framework of the "Oil-for-Food" programme. The Government revised upwards its estimate of the number of Palestinian refugees from some 62,000 to 90,000.

By mid-June, UNHCR was protecting and providing complementary assistance to some

28,300 Iranian and Turkish refugees, out of a total refugee population of some 126,600. Among those assisted by UNHCR are some 11,150 Turkish refugees sheltered in Makhmour Camp and five refugee settlements in Dohuk, as well as some 17,300 Iranian refugees residing in Al-Tash Camp and five refugee settlements in southern and central Iraq. UNHCR also assisted some 40 Palestinian refugees out of an estimated total of 90,000 (Government estimate) and a fraction of the total number of urban refugees, composed of Somalis (313), Sudanese (220) and Eritreans (572).

Iranian Refugees

UNHCR continued consultations with the Government of Iraq and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to explore prospects for the voluntary repatriation of their nationals. Owing to unresolved humanitarian issues between both countries relating to refugees and prisoners of war (POW), no progress was achieved on voluntary repatriation of the Iranian refugees. The Government of Iraq reported, however, that some 5,000 refugees had returned spontaneously to the Islamic Republic of Iran. UNHCR hopes that the return of some 2,000 Iraqi POWs from Iran (April-June), combined with the desire of the Iraqi Government to participate in tripartite talks with the Iranian Government and UNHCR, will facilitate the Office's efforts to reach an agreement on voluntary repatriation of refugees from both countries.

During the first six months of the year, a total of 125 Iranian refugees departed from Iraq for resettlement in third countries. This included 95 Iranian refugees from Al-Tash Camp and 30 Iranian refugees from northern Iraq.

In Al-Tash Camp, priority was given to averting the chronic water shortage that plagues the camp in summer. UNHCR supported concerned government bodies by providing inputs for the water pumping system in hopes of increasing water supply and limiting the high

costs associated with trucking water to the camp. At the same time, UNHCR provided additional drugs for the clinics and supplies for primary school classrooms, while promoting the self-sufficiency of women through income-generation projects. Women also received reusable sanitary kits.

A total of 483 Iranian Kurd asylum-seekers applied for asylum in northern Iraq during the first six months of the year. During the same period, 440 were granted refugee status, including some that had lodged applications in 1999.

In April, UNHCR and government officials completed a mission aimed at assessing the needs of Iranian Ahwazi refugees living in southern and central Iraq. It was confirmed that the situation of this group of refugees had deteriorated seriously as a result of the difficult socio-economic situation plaguing the country owing to UN-imposed economic sanctions. UNHCR had been providing only limited complementary assistance to this group, but increased its assistance programme, with the aim of averting a further deterioration of their health situation, especially that of women and children. UNHCR is also making efforts to encourage the self-reliance of these refugees. The Government revised its estimate of the number of Ahwazi refugees from 10,000 at the beginning of the year to 6,900.

Turkish Refugees of Kurdish origin

UNHCR continued to protect and provide complementary assistance to Turkish Kurd refugees living in Makhmour Camp and five refugee settlements in northern Iraq, working in close co-operation with other UN agencies. The number of those being assisted was adjusted from 11,800 at the beginning of the year to 11,150. Within the framework of the "Oil-for-Food" programme, UNDP provided four generators to run water pumps for the refugee settlements, UNICEF funded the construction of a primary school in Daratoo and FAO installed a well in support of agricultural activities in Husseiniya. In Makhmour, UNHCR worked closely with the Iraqi Government to facilitate its campaign to issue identification

cards to the refugees. It also continued to provide regular complementary assistance to the camp residents, including kerosene, blankets, jerry cans, medicines and sanitary kits, with a special focus on women and children. Building materials and equipment were provided for the women's centre and refugee schools, which are funded by UNHCR. The Office also assisted the refugees to establish a communal farm in the camp to promote their self-reliance. As part of environment-related activities, UNHCR provided the refugees with some 6,000 olive trees to plant around the camp.

UNHCR also continued to provide complementary assistance to Turkish Kurd refugees in the Dohuk settlements and to facilitate the travel of those seeking to repatriate voluntarily. Through end June, UNHCR facilitated the travel of 132 refugees who opted to return from northern Iraq to Turkey.

Urban and Other Refugees

UNHCR continued to provide protection and complementary assistance to vulnerable urban refugees on an individual basis. This included legal counselling and material assistance to selected needy refugees (Palestinians, Somalis, and Sudanese) in central Iraq. Forty Palestinians and two refugees of other origins received such assistance in the first half of the year.

Refugee Law Promotion

In April, UNHCR organised a workshop on refugee law for government officials, national NGO staff and local media representatives. UNHCR plans to continue its refugee law promotion activities by organising further training and workshops for government officials and academics during the second half of the year, subject to the availability of funds for this activity.

REVISED OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR JULY - DECEMBER

The overall objectives for the country operation will remain unchanged, although priority will be given to increasing assistance for the Iranian Ahwazi refugees.

- Regarding Iranian refugees (Kurds and Ahwazis), redouble efforts to facilitate a dialogue on voluntary repatriation between Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran; meanwhile, pursue efforts to encourage refugee self-reliance activities pending voluntary repatriation.
- Continue to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Turkish refugees, in close cooperation with the Turkish and Iraqi Governments.
- Continue to provide legal advice and material assistance, on a case-by-case basis, to urban refugees in central Iraq.

FINANCIAL DATA (USD)

	Initial Budget	Revised Budget	Total Funds Available*	Total Funds Obligated
AB and TF	3,292,701	3,214,143	2,735,587	1,314,200

*Includes income from unrestricted contributions, income from contributions restricted to the region/country, opening balance and adjustments.

