

Humanitarian Update

Iraq

No.6 April 2009

HIGHLIGHTS

UNHCR Narrows Eligibility Criteria for Granting Iraqis Refugee Status, but 'Conditions still not suitable to promote massive returns'

UNHCR has revised the eligibility criteria for Iraqi asylum seekers for the first time since 2007. The new eligibility criteria, which took effect on 24 April, recommend that asylum seekers from Anbar and southern governorates should be individually assessed. UNHCR underlines that conditions in Iraq are still not sufficiently improved to promote massive returns or general cessation of refugee status for Iraqis.

UN Iraq Photo Bank

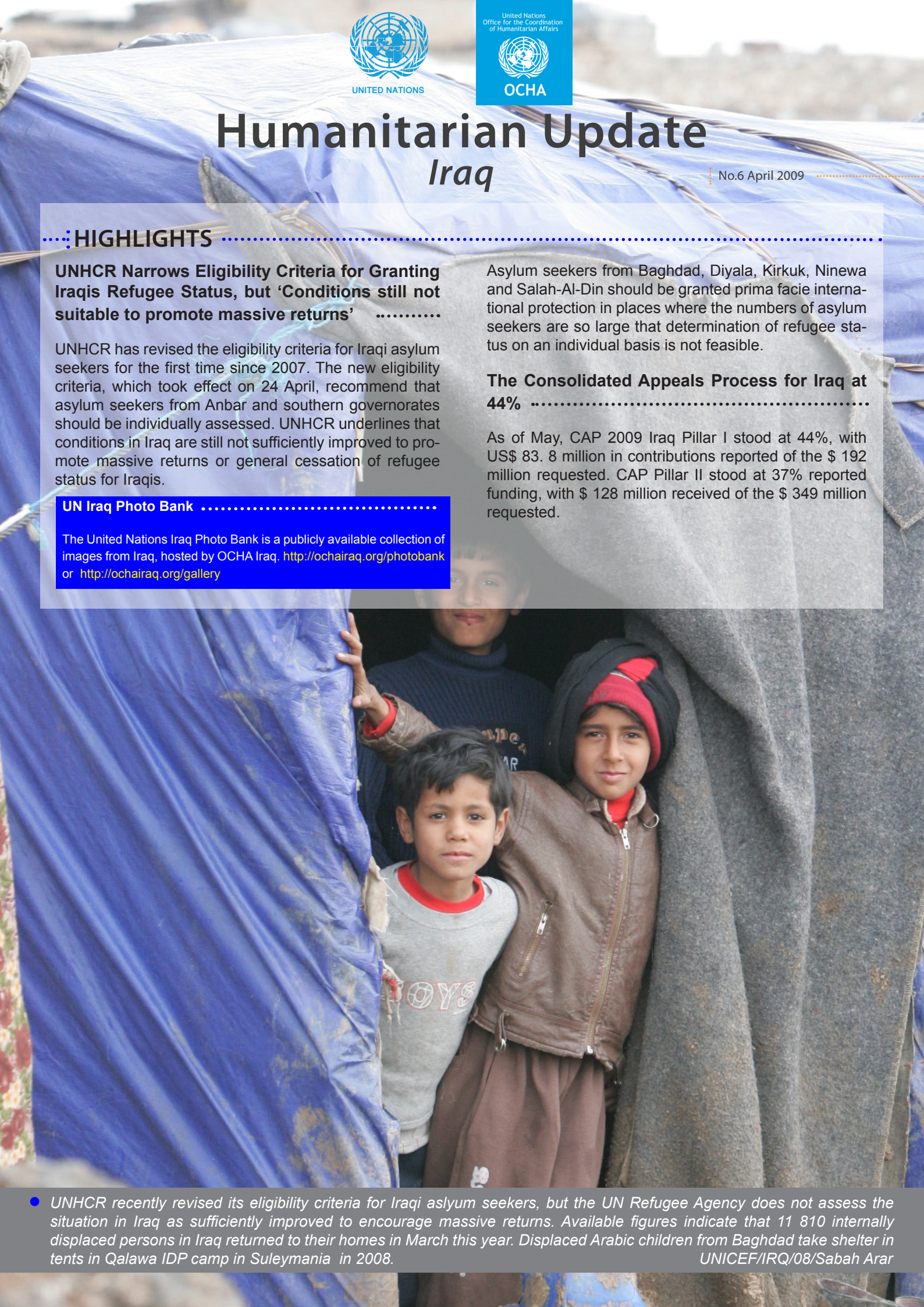
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Asylum seekers from Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah-Al-Din should be granted prima facie international protection in places where the numbers of asylum seekers are so large that determination of refugee status on an individual basis is not feasible.

The Consolidated Appeals Process for Iraq at 44%

As of May, CAP 2009 Iraq Pillar I stood at 44%, with US\$ 83.8 million in contributions reported of the \$ 192 million requested. CAP Pillar II stood at 37% reported funding, with \$ 128 million received of the \$ 349 million requested.

• UNHCR recently revised its eligibility criteria for Iraqi asylum seekers, but the UN Refugee Agency does not assess the situation in Iraq as sufficiently improved to encourage massive returns. Available figures indicate that 11 810 internally displaced persons in Iraq returned to their homes in March this year. Displaced Arabic children from Baghdad take shelter in tents in Qalawa IDP camp in Suleymania in 2008. UNICEF/IRQ/08/Sabah Arar



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POPULATION MOVEMENT

UNHCR Narrows Eligibility Criteria for Granting Iraqis Refugee Status, but 'Conditions still not suitable to promote massive returns'

The improved security situation in Iraq has allowed UNHCR, the UN's refugee agency, to revise its eligibility criteria for Iraqi asylum seekers for the first time since 2007. The new eligibility criteria, effective from April 24 2009, now recommend that asylum seekers from Anbar and Southern governorates should be individually assessed. Previously, UNHCR recommended that all asylum seekers from these areas should be granted *prima facie* refugee status under the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

However, UNHCR cautions that individuals or groups in these governorates may nevertheless remain under threat of persecution, and could thus be eligible for international protection. These individuals or groups include, among others: 'members of religious and ethnic minorities; public officials; Iraqis perceived as opposing armed groups or political factions; Iraqis affiliated with the multinational forces or foreign companies; certain professionals; media workers; UN and NGO workers; human rights activists; and homosexuals.'¹

UNHCR underlines that the conditions in Iraq have still not improved sufficiently to promote or encourage mass returns or general cessation of refugee status for Iraqis.

Due to continuing violence and human rights violations, UNHCR's position remains unchanged for the central governorates of Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah-Al-Din. All asylum seekers from these areas should be granted international protection under the Refugee Convention on a *prima facie* basis in places where the numbers of asylum seekers are so large that determination of individual refugee status is not feasible. For the Northern governorates, the refugee agency's positions remains that refugee status should be granted based on individual assessment.

16,960 displaced Iraqis returned in March, MoDM Minister Upbeat

A total of 16,960 displaced Iraqis (internally displaced persons and refugees) returned in March 2009 according to UNHCR estimates.² Of these, 11,810 individuals were IDPs (1970 families) from within the country and 5,150 (1,240 families) were refugees who returned from abroad. In total 3,210 families returned in March. The returns in March mark an increase on the 4,600 and 10,170 returnees registered in January and February 2009. In total, 31,730 individuals (6,080 families) have returned in 2009, including 22,940 IDPs and 8,790 refugees.

Baghdad accounts for 70% of the total returnees in 2009 with 22,220 individuals registered, 12,670 of whom returned in March alone. Ninewa accounts for 1,150 returnees in March with 540 returning to Diyala, 460 to Babylon and 450 to Basrah. The March returns are nearly double the 10,170 returnees (IDPs and refugees) registered in February.

The total number of IDP returns in the first quarter of 2009 was 22,940 individuals compared to 8,790 refugees during the same period. The total number of returnees for the first three months of the year stands at 31,730. A total of 221,260 IDP and refugees (39,280 families) returned to their places of origin in Iraq in 2008 – 25,370 (6,360 families) refugees and 195,890 (32,920 families) IDPs. Overall, Baghdad and Diyala accounted for most of the returns at 53% and 30% respectively. So far in 2009, Baghdad continues to account for most of the returns (70% in the first quarter) with Ninewa accounting for 8% of all returns. Five per cent of all returnees have gone back to their places of origin in Diyala while Basra and Babylon account for 3% of all returns thus far in 2009.

Corrigendum:

OCHA Iraq would like to clarify that all return statistics presented in the March Humanitarian Update were those recorded by UNHCR for the month of February 2009 **and not for March 2009**, as some of the figures erroneously stated.

¹ UNHCR statement 12 May 2009

² UNHCR return update March 2009, based on figures according to MoDM, DDM, City Councils and UNHCR Protection and Assistance Centres.

The Minister for Displacement and Migration, Mr. Abdul-Samad Rahman Sultan said in a press conference in late April that 65,000 displaced families have returned to their places of origin since early 2008 as a result of improved security.³

Commenting on the returnee figures, the Minister said that 2,070 families had returned from outside Iraq, and the numbers reflect only those who were registered with the Ministry to receive financial and non-financial aid. The Government is making efforts to register other returnees.

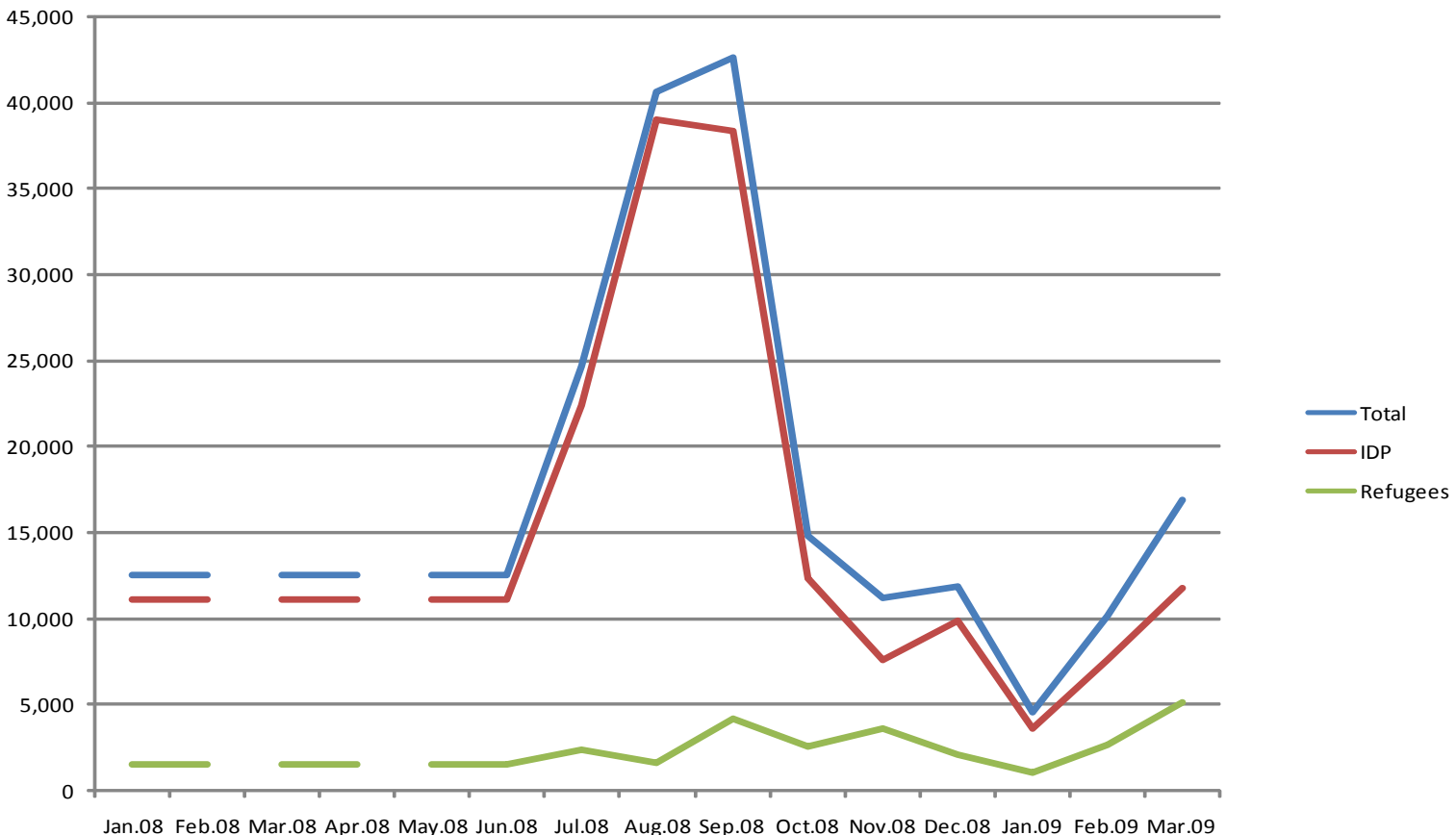
According to the Minister, an estimated 254,000 families had been displaced since 22 February 2006. Of the 104,000 displaced families in Baghdad during that period, some 32,000 had returned to their original homes. The Minister dismissed concerns that the recent increase in bombings will lead to a new wave of population displacement and slow the rate of return. The Government is expecting an increase in the number of returning displaced families this summer from both inside and outside Iraq.

Civil society groups have expressed concerns about the effectiveness and completeness of government assistance to returnees and are calling for speedy and fair compensation measures for those whose homes had been destroyed. However, the Minister warned that his Ministry's plans to help IDPs could be affected by budget cuts caused by low oil prices. The Ministry's 2009 aid programmes budget has been reduced to US\$ 44.8 million from a request estimated at US\$ 4.5 billion, and the Ministry's planned operational budget of an estimated \$ 18 million is likely to have been cut by 40 percent.

MONTH	TOTAL	IDP	REFUGEES
JAN.08	12,556	11,056	1,500
FEB.08	12,556	11,056	1,500
MAR.08	12,556	11,056	1,500
APR.08	12,556	11,056	1,500
MAY.08	12,556	11,056	1,500
JUN.08	12,556	11,056	1,500
JUL.08	24,690	22,380	2,310
AUG.08	40,610	39,040	1,570
SEP.08	42,610	38,39	4,220
OCT.08	14,840	12,300	2,540
NOV.08	11,260	7,620	3,640
DEC.08	11,910	9,820	2,090
JAN.09	4,600	3,590	1,010
FEB.09	10,170	7,540	2,630
MAR.09	16,960	11,810	5,150

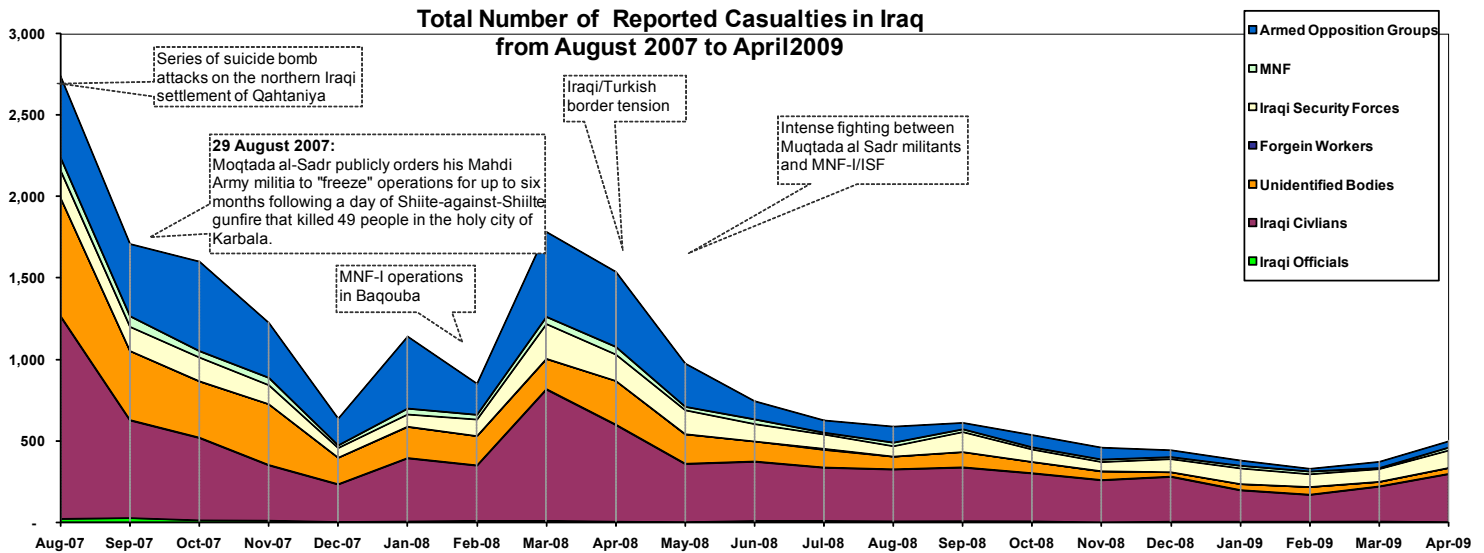
3 IRIN 4 May, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=84214>

Iraq Returns 2008-2009



Source: MoDM, DDM, City Councils and UNHCR Protection and Assistance Centres.

PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS



Source: Based on information provided by UNAMI Security Section in Iraq. The figures are collected from various sources, and the UN SSI cannot guarantee the accuracy of the collected information. These figures do not represent the view of the United Nations. The information provides a snapshot of the information available at the time, and should only be used as an indication of trends.

Civilian deaths rise in April

A total of 534 Iraqis were killed in Iraq in April, including 296 civilians, according to the UNAMI Security Section in Iraq (SSI) categorization and numbers. This is an increase on recorded fatalities in March, when 389 Iraqis were killed, including 214 civilians. In April, 32 members of the Civil Defence Forces and 3 Iraqi Officials were killed, and 37 unidentified bodies were recovered. In the same period, 110 members of the Iraqi Security Forces and 18 MNF-I troops were killed. Thirty eight opposition fighters were killed in action during this time.

The high numbers of those killed were mainly caused by mass-casualty attacks targeting civilians, particularly Shi'a pilgrims visiting holy shrines, making April the most fatal month for Iraqi civilians so far in 2009. Iraqi government officials have repeatedly stated that the spike in violence is not indicative of lack of capacity in the Iraqi security apparatus, but rather a result of perfidious assault techniques, especially the deployment of female suicide bombers, who are more difficult to detect and deter due to cultural sensitivities.

HEALTH

Half of Iraqi schools expose children to an unhealthy environment

Half of all schools in Iraq do not fulfill minimum standards to ensure a safe and healthy environment for students, and 63% do not have chlorine testing for drinking water, putting children at risk for waterborne diseases. The figures come from a survey conducted in 2007-2008 by the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and their KRG counterparts, in cooperation with World Health Organization (WHO).

The survey was based on a sample of 150 schools in 8 governorates.⁴

"WHO is very concerned about the current environment of Iraqi schools and for the health of the children who attend them especially the older students who demonstrate a higher prevalence of health problems," stated Dr Naeema Al-Gasseer, Representative of WHO in Iraq and acting Resident/ Humanitarian Coordinator.

Update on the Measles Outbreak

Measles remains a serious risk to children in Iraq. In 2008, 8,134 measles cases were reported in Iraq. In the first 18 weeks of 2009 alone, 23,336 cases have been reported in the country, nearly 3 times the total number of cases reported in 2008 and more than the number of cases in the rest of the Middle East and North African region put together. The central governorates including Baghdad, Babil, Wassit, Diwaniya, Kerbala and Diyala are most affected, representing over 80% of total reported cases. The recent rise is due to the low immunity of the population resulting from the relatively poor coverage of routine vaccinations from 2005-2008 due to insecurity. Encouragingly, reports from four consecutive weeks have now shown a down trend in the number of new measles cases in Iraq. To be sure, a fourth and potentially larger wave in the Northern provinces could be imminent without the ongoing emergency vaccination intervention.

The joint Ministry of Health (MoH) and United Nations-World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) intervention to pre-empt this fourth wave of the outbreak has now started. It is targeting 835,208 children identified as being at special risk in the

⁴ WHO press release 11 May, http://www.emro.who.int/iraq/pdf/sh_press_en.pdf

North. WHO and MoH have trained and deployed 947 vaccination teams, and provided logistical support, including 532 vehicles which have temporarily been pooled for the response. UNICEF, WHO and partner non-governmental organisations have assisted with warehouses, vaccines, sent experts for technical support and assisted with the cold chains. In addition, the UN agencies are providing one million syringes, supporting communication/social mobilization activities and assisting directorates of Health (DoHs) with planning and monitoring activities.

The response campaign is being supervised, monitored and evaluated by 270 field supervisors, monitors and experts from medical schools, WHO and the Iraq Red Crescent Society. Local support is key to the success of the campaign and the people assisting are providing critical support. In several areas, health workers and volunteers will hand-carry the vaccine from house-to-house despite the security risks. The door-to-door campaign started in Najaf on 10 May and was expected to be completed there around 24 May. The additional Northern governorates will follow in line thereafter. The teams and supervisors have received special training to assure that the intervention is timely, properly reported and that it is conducted in compliance with set standards. All vaccines and other essential equipment are now in place. The whole operation is supported by the Government of Iraq and money from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

A high level Joint Consultation Meeting was organized for 19-23 April by WHO Iraq in Amman, bringing together experts from MoH, WHO, the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) Atlanta and UNICEF. The consultations concluded that a new national campaign with the measles containing vaccine (MCV) is necessary to mitigate future outbreaks. This large undertaking is planned to take place in 15 additional district hospitals later in 2009.

Acute Watery Diarrhea and Cholera-Update

On the 30th of April, the Directorate of Health (DoH) in Basra reported the first cholera case in Iraq in 2009. The case was confirmed by the Central Public Health Laboratory (CPHL) in Baghdad as V.C. cholera of the *inaba* serotype. The case is from a 2 years old child from the Almedaina district who was admitted to hospital due to acute water diarrhea (AWD). The child has fully recovered and the cholera organism was not isolated from contacts. Cholera is endemic in Iraq and sporadic cases are not uncommon from time to time. For the week ending May 03, 18 out of the 19 Directorates of Health reported cases on a timely basis. 1,044 surveillance sites out of 1,062 sent the weekly diarrhea disease report on time, i.e. 98% completeness and timeliness.

Response

UNICEF, in partnership with government counterparts and in collaboration with NGO partners (International Medical Corps, Mercy Corps, Intersos and Relief International) has completed or is continuing investments in excess of US\$11.3 million in humanitarian interventions in 76 communities (with a catchment population of over 1.8 million people, or over 300,000 families) across the country. A significant number of these interventions are in the water and sanitation sector and seek to reinforce efforts being undertaken by the broader health sector to prevent recurrence of cholera outbreak in Iraq among other objectives. The scope and scale of this action continues to expand progressively as the assessment-response cycle continues. Recent responses include:

- Ongoing work on the water and sanitation systems at 3 educational facilities (used by 4 schools) in Abu Jeer, Slachia, and Jabha (Anbar);
- Ongoing rehabilitation and extension of water and sewage networks is ongoing to benefit 5000 individuals in Azizia, Anbar
- Hygiene awareness campaigns in four schools in Rawa, Anbar, and water and sewage system construction is ongoing
- Hygiene awareness campaign has been completed in Al Tasamoh primary school, Babil, reaching 529 students and 23,000 community members.
- Completion of rehabilitation of water and sewage systems at three school facilities benefiting 1,390 students in Baghdad and completion of the rehabilitation of sanitary facilities in 11 schools benefiting 2,035 students
- Rehabilitation of water and sanitation facilities, health and hygiene awareness campaigns ongoing 16 schools in Deraluk cluster's 16 schools, reaching about 3,000 students. Personal and environmental hygiene practices will be shared, supported by distribution of hygiene items
- Ongoing rehabilitation and expansion of the capacity of Deraluk East's water supply facilities is reaching 700 families; In collaboration with the Department of Water (DoW),
- Water Trucking: 138,000 people in four residential areas and five hospitals in Baghdad city were served with just over 13 million litres of potable water.

.....CAP 2009

CAP Pillar I at 44%

As of May, CAP 2009 Iraq Pillar I stood at 44%, with US\$ 83.8 million in contributions reported of the \$ 192 million requested. ⁵ CAP Pillar II stood at 37% reported funding, with \$28 million received of the \$ 349 million requested.

For CAP Pillar I, the breakdown of reported funding according to sectors is as follows:

Coordination and Support Services: 32%

Education: 13 %

Food: 92%

Health: 15%

⁵ Figures are based on information made available to OCHA Financial Tracking Service 28 May 2009, at http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/reports/daily/ocha_R32_A835__0905130205.pdf

Housing & Shelter: 34%

Protection: 31 %

Water and Sanitation: 21%

Funds not yet allocated to specific sector: US\$ 19.6 million

Source: OCHA Financial Tracking Service (FTS). All agencies and donors are encouraged to assist in to enhancing the accuracy by reporting humanitarian funding to the FTS. FTS figures are based on information made available to it by donors and recipients of funding.

For more information or inputs to the next update, please contact:

..... **Johnstone Oketch**, Reporting Officer, OCHA Iraq
+962 (0)797202513 oketch@un.org

..... **Eli Smette**, Advocacy and Public Information Officer, OCHA Iraq
+962 (0)797202511 smette@un.org

For all other issues, please contact

..... **Yasmine Rockenfeller**, Head of Office a.i., OCHA Iraq
+962 (0)799703120 rockenfeller@un.org

OCHA Iraq Website:
www.ochairaq.org