



## **Iraq • Taza Bombing Situation Report 30 June 2009**

*This report was issued by the OCHA and UNAMI Iraq country offices and covers the period from 20 to 30 June.*

### **I. HIGHLIGHTS/KEY PRIORITIES**

On 20 June, more than 1000kg of explosives detonated in Taza, a town 20 km south of Kirkuk, killing up to 85 people and wounding over 170.

### **II. Situation Overview**

The deadliest attack in Iraq for more than one year occurred on 20 June, when a suicide truck bomber detonated over 1000kg of explosives close to the Al Rasoul mosque in Taza, a Shia Turkmen town 20 km south of Kirkuk, killing up to 85 people and wounding over 170.

Ninety five homes were completely destroyed by the blast with a further 100 homes suffering over 40% damage levels. Registration of the homeless by the Taza sub district authorities remains ongoing, however it is believed that up to 600 people have been affected by this incident.

Humanitarian needs are currently being met in Taza due to the swift response of both national and international organisations in the immediate aftermath of the bombing. The immediate area around the bomb site has been cleared of rubble meaning that reconstruction and repair work should be able to commence once a comprehensive needs assessments has taken place. The quick disposal of the rubble however now precludes the possibility of forensic examination of the crime scene.

### **III. Humanitarian Needs and Response**

#### **Emergency Shelter**

Shelter remains the critical issue with hundreds of people made homeless on 20 June. The targeted area consisted of housing structures built of heavy timber blocks. The houses were multiple level in many cases and closely concentrated together thus contributing to the high casualty rates and large numbers of homeless.

The homeless have moved into extended family homes which in some instances will have meant moving to adjacent villages and towns. This pattern of dispersal will increase the difficulty in tracking down potential beneficiaries for the purpose of the needs assessment.

Up to 40 tents provided by the Turkish Red Crescent have been erected on a playing field in Taza. The Mayor has had differing opinions on the desirability of such an arrangement however more recently he has endorsed the concept if homeless families are in agreement. Some families do now appear to be considering this as a temporary option not least due to concerns over lack of space at the homes of the host families. Overall however, there seems to be reluctance on the part of many families to take up this offer due to concerns over inadequate essential service provision to support the tents, cultural norms plus fear of losing their land. Also, there is the worry that that new homes may not be built and that the tents become the long term solution. The

Mayor informed UNAMI on 30 June that around 30 families would like to move to the camp however there is currently insufficient numbers of toilets & showers in place.

The provision of prefabricated houses have also been raised in the last week with the need for an estimated 200 units. The costs of such a solution look prohibitively high however, with one overseas company that was contacted quoting \$22,500 per unit while there would also be lead times of several months before delivery.

UNHCR has committed itself to reconstruction and repair of the homes pending the outcome of a damage assessment that will be conducted through a local implementing partner. USAID through the Commander's Emergency Response Programme (CERP) has a surplus of funds available for 2009. While CERP can not be used directly to finance the construction of new homes it can however pay for the materials and supplies required and possibly be used for the purchase of toilets and showers for the camp.

### **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene**

The blast totally destroyed the water and electrical networks in the vicinity of the explosion. Both water and electrical supplies were immediately switched off in adjacent areas of Old Taza to prevent flooding and open electrical circuits. The area did not have a sewage network thus there has been no potential for cross contamination with the water network that could have had implications for the spread of communicable diseases.

Families are currently relying on water hand outs with supplies coming from among others MNF-I, Mercy Corps as an implementing partner of USAID and FUAD. MNF-I has also provided a number of small power generators and lighting rigs.

The Directorates of Water and Electricity continue to work on restoring power and water to those homes that are adjacent to the blast site. No additional installations will take place until reconstruction begins of the new homes. The Iraqi government has reportedly pledged funding to upgrade and modernise the town's water supply depot.

### **Food and non-food items**

Food and NFIs were available on the ground almost immediately and came from a number of sources including Turkmen NGOs and Civil Society Organisations. A local Turkmen satellite channel launched an appeal to support the victims. Five pallets of relief items consisting of tents, medicines and food arrived on the Turkish medevac on 22 June.

The supply of non-food items have focused on mattresses, blankets, jerry cans, tents, hygiene kits, clothes and plastic sheeting contributed by ICRC, Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS), UNHCR, IOM, Kirkuk Chamber of Commerce, Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MODM) and the Turkmen Civil Society.

The World Food Programme is committed to providing support for two months to those directly affected by the bombing and will implement through a local partner, the United Foundation for Relief and Abiding Development (FUAD). The Turkmen Civil Society was busy distributing food in the aftermath of the incident and distributed 150 food parcels comprising 50 kg bags of rice and wheat flour and 10 litres of vegetable oil.

Cash is important for those who have literally lost everything and on 28 June the Taza Mayor's office started distributing money on behalf of the Iraqi government with two million Iraqi dinars going to families of the deceased and half that amount to those who have been injured. The Iraqi Government has pledged five million dollars to Taza although it is still not entirely where the focus of this money will go. The Iraqi Government is supposed to send an evaluation team from Baghdad to assess the situation in Taza. To date there is no indication when the team will arrive.

### **Health**

The death and injury of so many people put a strain on the local capacity of health service providers. A primary health care centre in Taza became the focus for immediate triage and the less seriously wounded, while more serious cases were referred to Azadi hospital and the general hospital in Kirkuk. The most serious cases required transfers outside the governorate with three patients referred to Erbil and five more to Sulaymaniyah. On 22 June, 11 patients were flown out of FOB Warrior in Kirkuk for onward treatment in Turkey.

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There are currently no obvious needs in the health sector. ICRC replenished depleted supplies of medicines, consumables and equipment at both the Taza PHC and the hospitals in Kirkuk as part of an ongoing support programme. UNICEF offered similar support to the Health Directorate however they were declined in the wake of ICRC's intervention.

#### IV. Coordination

The first coordination meeting took place on 20 June, six hours after the incident and was chaired by MNF-I on FOB Warrior in Kirkuk. Meetings then took place each evening over the course of the coming week with regular attendance from UNAMI, OCHA, USAID and PRT members. The fact that MNF-I and the PRT were able to visit Taza each day was a valuable source of real time information to UN international staff given the internal security restrictions that prevent visits at short notice.

UN national staff were present on the ground from the first day and included UNHCR, WFP implementing partners, IOM and UNAMI. OCHA also sent their Field Coordination officer from the IFC in Sulaymaniyah to Taza in order to monitor the situation, meet the Mayor and local officials and to provide timely humanitarian updates.

OCHA participated in the UN-NGO Taza coordination meeting at the Kirkuk Governor's Building on 23 June and also joined UNAMI in a meeting with the Governor later that day. OCHA had the opportunity to highlight the potential value of a Governorate Emergency Cell (GEC) in responding to a situation such as Taza and found the Governor to be amenable to this proposition. Previously there had been opposition at certain levels of the Provincial Council to such an entity. OCHA is now following up with UNHCR and the Danish Refugee Council who have been closely involved with the GECs to take advantage of this window of opportunity.

Daily contact was kept with the UN in Erbil so that agencies were aware of what was taking place in Kirkuk and also given the chance to offer resources and services if so required. OCHA was also in close touch with its office in Amman in relation to the Expanded Humanitarian Response Fund (ERF) and the interest of a number of local NGOs in accessing these funds.

A committee has been established by the Mayor of Taza and includes representatives from the Directorates of Municipalities, Water, Electrical Supply, Civil Defence and Health. This committee is in the process of registering the affected house and families. Furthermore an initiative was taken by some local NGOs to conduct a needs assessment targeting 178 households to identify the most urgent needs. The final report is pending. The local Taza committee will be shadowed at the provincial level by a Task Force that is being assembled by the Kirkuk Governor, Mr. Abdul Rahman Mustafa

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