

## Hatra

Ninewa Governorate, Iraq - June 2019

### Overview

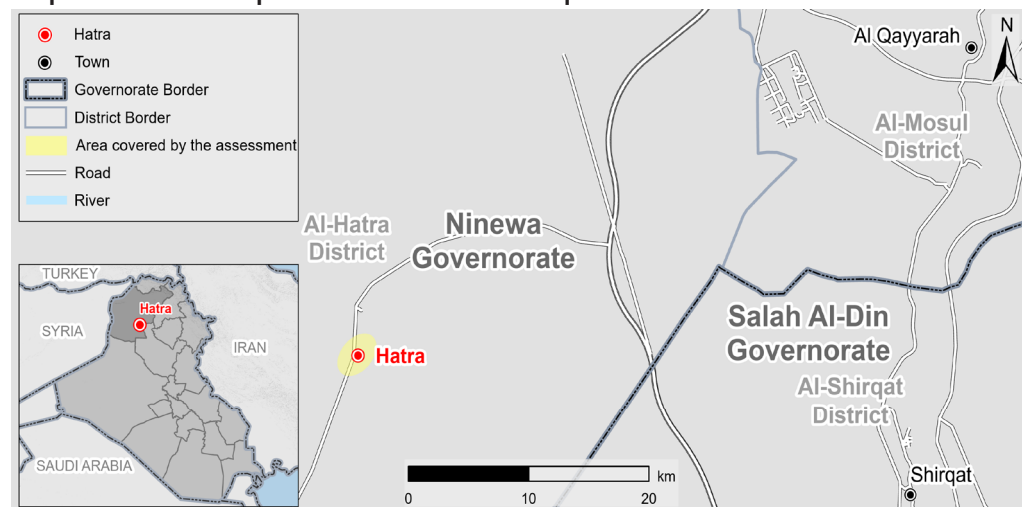
Hatra town is located in Hatra district, a sparsely populated and remote area within Ninewa governorate, and it is popularly known for the ruins of the ancient city of Hatra.<sup>1</sup> In relation to nearest urban centres, Hatra is located 115 kilometres south of Mosul, and 80 kilometres west of Al Qayyarah, yet it is located within the same governorate. Hatra town is the southernmost populated area in Ninewa governorate, bordered by the desert commonly known as al-Jazeera.<sup>2</sup>

Ninewa Governorate has been strategically important for insurgent military groups throughout Iraq's history, and became a stronghold for the so-called 'Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant' (ISIL) from 2014 onwards.<sup>3,4</sup> Due to its predominantly desert surroundings and proximity to the Syrian border, Hatra district and town were taken by ISIL in June 2014, and formed a base from which the group launched their offensive to capture Mosul and other surrounding areas.<sup>3</sup> During the offensive, the town witnessed intense fighting, with Government of Iraq (GoI) forces declaring the area to be retaken on 26 April 2017. However, the town experiences ongoing insecurity due to asymmetric attacks, as well as reports of the continued presence of ISIL cells.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, Hatra had been largely isolated from humanitarian assistance and reconstruction efforts, with limited information available about the needs of the population.

Official numbers on Hatra's population both before and after the ISIL occupation are scarce. However, in 2010 the population of Hatra district was estimated to consist of 56,221 people,<sup>5</sup> the majority of whom were Sunni Arab.<sup>6</sup> During the data collection for this assessment, key informants (KIs) reported that approximately 2,000 families lived in Hatra town before ISIL's occupation. As indicated by IOM DTM figures, by the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2019, an estimated 274 internally displaced (IDP) families – 1,644 individuals – had returned to Hatra town.<sup>7,8</sup>

Given the limited information available regarding displacement from and returns to Hatra, REACH, in partnership with the Returns Working Group (RWG), launched a Rapid Overview of Areas of Return (ROAR) assessment in June 2019 in Hatra town. The aim of the assessment was to inform the recovery process in order to support durable and safe returns to the area. The ROAR assessment looks at the motivations behind return, along with the current context related to protection issues, livelihoods, and the provision of basic services in areas of Iraq that are experiencing returns.

Map 1: Reference map of Hatra in relation to Iraq



### Priority Needs

Community leaders from Hatra were asked what their priority needs were and reported that they **most urgently required**:

- **Food assistance** or food rations from the Iraq Public Distribution System (PDS),<sup>9</sup>
- **Access to clean water,**
- **Shelter repairs,**
- **Job opportunities,** and
- **Healthcare,** particularly more doctors and treatment.

<sup>1</sup> OXFAM. Hatra report. 10 July 2018. Available from the [link](#).

<sup>2</sup> IOM. Iraq DTM. Return Index Briefing Round 1 Findings. 30 September 2018. Available from the following [link](#).

<sup>3</sup> Julie Ahn, Maeve Campbell and Pete Knoetgen. The Politics of Security in Ninewa: Preventing an ISIS Resurgence in Northern Iraq. Harvard Kennedy School. Policy Analysis Exercise. 7 May 2018. Available from the [link](#)

<sup>4</sup> Maher Chmaytelli "Iraqi paamilitaries shut more Islamic State escape routes to Syria border". Reuters. 27 April 2017. Available from the [link](#).

<sup>5</sup> Inter-Agency information Unit (IAU). Ninewa Governorate Profile. 30 November 2010. Available from the [link](#).

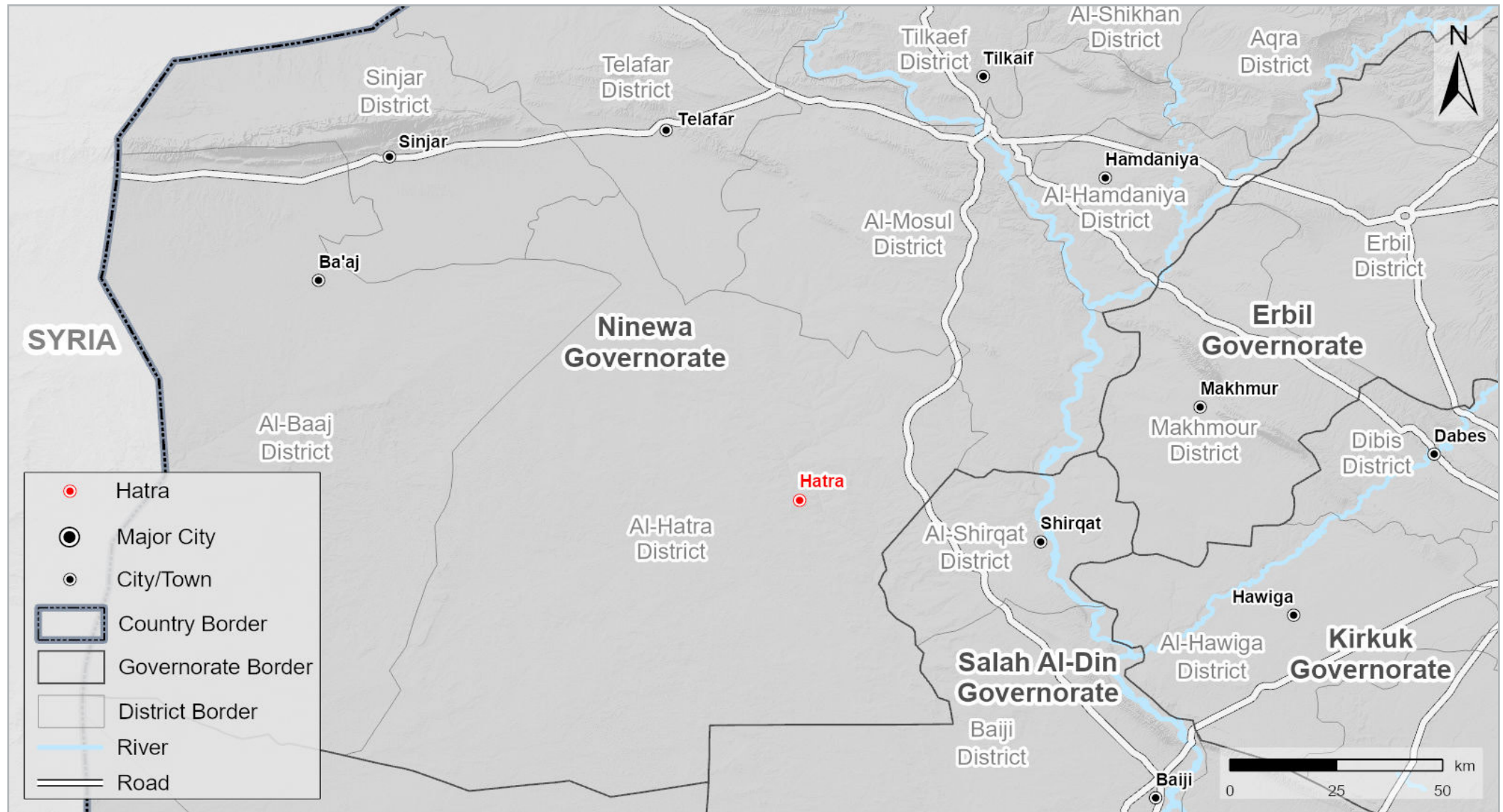
<sup>6</sup> ALSHAHID. Ethnic makeup of Nineveh and ISIS' impact on it. 20 October 2016. Available from the [link](#).

<sup>7</sup> IOM Iraq. DTM. Returnee Master List. 30 June 2019. Available from the [link](#).

<sup>8</sup> Whilst this indicates that a small fraction of the population has returned from displacement, over time the number of returns has slowly increased (274 returnee families compared to 140 on 30 June 2018).

<sup>9</sup> Social protection. [Iraq Public Distribution System \(PDS Ration Cards\)](#).

Map 2: Hatra in relation to other cities



## Methodology

REACH enumerators collected data from 57 KIs (four of them female), all from Hatra town with the exception of two legal subject-matter experts (SMEs), where Hatra returnees accessed to legal services. In the case of Hatra, many internally displaced persons (IDPs) had not returned, and a significant proportion of returnees were reportedly re-displaced. For this reason, REACH decided to include additional questions in this assessment round, for those who were re-displaced after returning to their area of origin (AoO). The 57 KIs interviewed were: community leaders,<sup>9</sup> returnees, re-displaced persons, IDPs, and subject-matter expert KIs.

Respondents were identified through existing REACH KI networks and partner organisations. Data collection took place between 9 and 20 June 2019 through remote KI interviews.

### Limitations

- Findings from KIs should be interpreted as indicative only and are not statistically representative of the entire population.
- Population figures are provided as estimates rather than exact figures, and are based on the perception of KIs.
- The vast majority of KIs were male which may lead to a gender imbalance in reporting.

## Key Findings

### Displacement and Return, Protection Concerns

- The main reported barriers for IDP and re-displaced KIs to return to Hatra were the lack of services (especially water) and livelihood opportunities in the area.
- KIs highlighted that security outside the town was also an issue. Residents were reportedly afraid to leave town or farm the surrounding lands, due to continued threat of ISIL attacks.
- Regarding legal services, the local court was not functioning and people had to attend the court in Al Qayyarah for legal issues, which is more than an hour away by car. This reportedly added the challenges of needing security clearances and travel costs.

### Livelihoods

- Livelihood opportunities were said to be very limited, most of the KIs estimated that at least half of the returnee families depended on government salaries, and the rest on daily work. Shepherd and farming were the most common sectors for employment. Households also depended on support from family and friends working or receiving humanitarian assistance outside of Hatra.

### Access to Basic Services

- Healthcare services were reportedly limited, with only access to first aid and basic treatment in Hatra town. Limitations were mainly due to the lack of doctors – who had not returned to Hatra –, damage to the public healthcare centre, and a lack of equipment due to looting during the ISIL occupation. Residents had to travel to Mosul for specialised and quality healthcare, creating additional challenges as the city is approximately one hour and a half to two hours away from Hatra by private car. Pregnant women had to rely on midwives, or travel to Al Qayyarah or Mosul.
- Education services were mostly affected by a lack of returns and a lack of qualified teachers. As a consequence, only three schools out of seven were partially functioning, and classrooms were overcrowded. Residents faced additional financial barriers to access education.
- Access to clean drinking water was reported as the most urgent issue. Due to limited access to clean piped water, people from Hatra relied on water tanks. However, the tanks were reportedly not clean enough, with experts reporting prevalence of illnesses such as kidney diseases, inflammation of the urinary tract, and other digestive diseases.
- The Municipality was responsible for the waste collection, which was reported to be sufficient. KIs also reported the municipal waste collection services having a positive impact on livelihoods since the municipality had reportedly employed new workers into the waste collection services.

## Movement Intentions

### Current Trends

- Community leader KIs estimated that the population counted approximately 2,000 families (around 9,000 individuals) before ISIL occupation. During ISIL control and following military operations from Gol, the majority of families reportedly displaced from Hatra town. Four KIs reported that there were approximately 400 families that were remaining in Hatra when ISIL arrived; they had reportedly all since displaced and were not allowed to return. However, information regarding their decision to remain was conflicting: one KI reported that those families did not have the financial means to displace when ISIL arrived, and another reported the remainees were commonly perceived to be affiliated with ISIL.
- At the time of data collection, the majority of the population was reportedly still displaced. Similarly to the IOM DTM figures, community leaders estimated at the time of the assessment that between 200 and 300 families had returned, approximately a tenth of the original number of families living in Hatra based on KI estimates.

<sup>9</sup> Community leaders (or mukhtars), are appointed by the local councils in each neighbourhood. They represent the most local level of governance and act as a primary intermediary between residents and government service providers within

their area of responsibility. The mukhtar keeps records of the households living within his neighbourhood, addresses the community concerns to the relevant authorities, and assigns households to PDS.



- Furthermore, KIs reported that additional households had returned but since re-displaced; the number of re-displaced was reported to be approximately 30 families (approximately 10% of those reported to have returned). They had reportedly displaced to camps or elsewhere in Ninewa. Neither IDP nor re-displaced KIs expressed an intention to return to their area of origin (AoO) in the 12 months following the assessment.

### Why are IDPs not returning?

- The most frequently reported primary reason for not returning for IDP KIs was bad access to services in Hatra, especially water, and better access to basic services in their AoD. This was followed by the availability of humanitarian assistance (food, and non-food items or 'NFI's') in their AoD (6 out of 10), and the perceived volatile security situation in Hatra (1 out of 10 KIs).
- Twenty-one (21) KIs reported that IDPs with perceived ISIL affiliation were not allowed to return. Additional barriers to return included fear of ISIL (two KIs), and financial barriers to pay the costs related to moving and shelter repairs (one KI).
- The majority of IDP KIs reported receiving the information about Hatra from family members that had already returned to the town (8 out of 10), or friends and neighbours living there (2 out of 10).

**Figure 1: Number of KI IDPs reporting the reasons for not returning to Hatra (out of 10 KIs)**



**Figure 2: Number of KI returnees reporting the reasons for returning to Hatra (out of 18 KIs)**



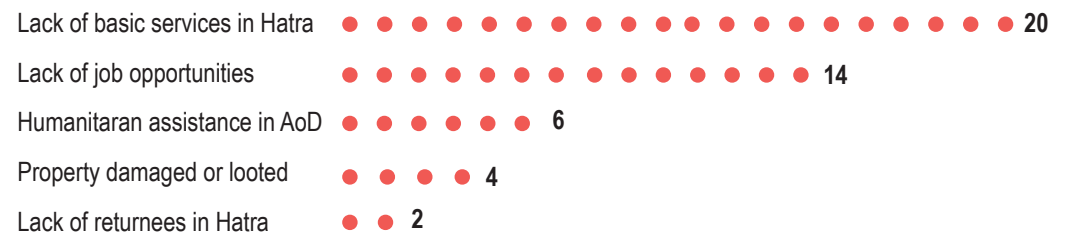
### Why have people returned?

- When asked about what influenced their decision to return, over half of the returnee and re-displaced KIs reported that they did so to claim their property (10 out of 18 KIs).<sup>10</sup> This was closely followed by: finding employment opportunities in Hatra (7 out of 18 KIs), the security situation having improved (7 out of 18 KIs), and emotional desire to return (6 out of 18 KIs).
- According to KIs, most of the households had returned between 2017 and 2018, with very few returns in 2019, supporting the indicative trends from IOM DTM data. All returnee KIs reported that in order to return, they had needed and had been able to get both security clearance from security forces, and a letter from their community leader, to return. The majority reported returning by hiring a truck, with costs varying between 10,000 to 100,00 IQD.<sup>12</sup>

### Why were people re-displaced?

- Reportedly, 20 to 30 families were re-displaced from Hatra town. The most frequently reported reasons that influenced their decision to re-displace was insufficient or no access to basic services (20 out of 24 KIs),<sup>13</sup> with 10 citing the lack of drinkable water specifically. This was followed by the lack of job opportunities (14 out of 24 KIs), humanitarian assistance available in the camps (6 out of 24 KIs), property being damaged and/or looted (4 out of 24 KIs), and the lack of other returnees (2 out of 24 KIs).
- Re-displaced KIs reported that to enable return in the following 12 months, they needed: improvement of basic services (6 out of 6 KIs), security (4 out of 6), jobs opportunities (4 out of 6), and more returnees (3 out of 6).
- Re-displaced KIs were also asked if they had plans to displace again or return in the following 12 months: four out of six intended to stay in their areas of displacement (AoD), and two out of six reported they would only come back if services in Hatra improved.

**Figure 3: Reported reasons that households re-displaced from Hatra (out of 24 KIs)**



<sup>10</sup> KIs include returnees and re-displaced.

<sup>12</sup> Approximately 8 to 84 USD (Price converted using [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com) on 07 July 2019).

<sup>13</sup> KIs include returnees, IDPs and community leaders.

\* KIs reported to find job opportunities for shepherding, teaching, a shop owner, municipalities worker, and government worker.

## Protection Concerns

### Perceptions of Safety and Security

- All 21 KIs<sup>14</sup> reported feeling safe inside the town due to the presence of military security forces. However, KIs added that they did not feel safe outside of Hatra town; two KIs reported that the volatile security situation outside of the town had resulted in the death of some residents who had traveled outside of Hatra. KIs specified surrounding villages and the desert strip between Hatra and the Syrian border, known as Al-Jazeera, to be of particular concern. The perceived insecurity in this area was due to reports that ISIL was still active in the area. News sources support this, reporting ongoing military operations by the GoI in the area to capture sleeper cells.<sup>15</sup>

### Freedom of Movement

- Residents reportedly had no curfews and there were no restrictions of movement by security forces inside the town. However, multiple KIs reported that they personally avoided leaving the town due to security concerns in the surrounding areas, especially at night; three KIs reported that even during the day people avoided leaving the town due to such concerns.
- According to KIs, residents did need security clearance from community leaders and security forces to travel to places such as Al Qayyarah, which adds additional challenges to accessing services.

### Legal Concerns

- Whilst there had been a functioning court in Hatra pre-ISIL, KIs reported that it was currently closed. In order to access legal services, residents had to go to Al Qayyarah, which is 70 kilometres away from the town, and required additional security clearance to travel. The time of processing criminal complaints in Al Qayyarah's court was relatively short, with the majority of KIs<sup>16</sup> reporting complaints being processed the very same day, while two reported it varied by case.
- All KIs<sup>16</sup> reported that there were informal mechanisms of justice such as tribal leaders and community leaders for cases of family disputes. Three of them reported that the usage of these informal mechanism had increased.
- Seven (7) out of 20 KIs<sup>17</sup> reported barriers to accessing civil documentation, mainly due to the fact that a security clearance was needed to go to the court in Al Qayyarah. This reportedly caused issues at checkpoints, and one KI added that it created challenges for children trying

to attend school. The groups that faced the biggest barriers to civil documentation were those families and individuals with perceived affiliation to ISIL.

#### Improvements Suggested by KIs

To improve legal services the court in Hatra needed to be restored to alleviate the reliance on the court in Al Qayyarah.

### Housing, Land and Property (HLP)

- According to local officials, most of the governmental institutes had been severely damaged.
- In addition, a community leader indicated that private property had been damaged during and after ISIL's presence in the town. During ISIL's control of the town, around 40 houses from families related to members of the security forces had been destroyed. Also, 15 out of 20 KIs<sup>17</sup> reported that all houses had been looted and damaged inside, and that all families had lost their valuables. According to one KI, further destruction to private property had been done after Iraqi security forces took control of the town in April 2017.
- Many of the families were reportedly sharing a living space between two families, in part because of the looting of property during the ISIL-led period.
- All KIs<sup>17</sup> reported that there had not been any government compensation for lost property. In order to receive compensation, KIs reported having to go to Al Qayyarah court. However, the process of applying for government compensation in the court was reportedly very long and costly (according to seven KIs). A number of KIs reported that the lack of government compensation for lost or damaged property was a reason that IDPs from Hatra remained in displacement.

#### Actors providing services

Despite the perceived isolation of the town, governmental and humanitarian actors — both local and international — were reported to have been providing assistance.

- The ministry of Education had repaired the schools' facilities.
- A local NGO had done some repairs to the public clinic.
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP) was undertaking repairs to the public clinic at the time of data collection.
- The Directorate of Water and an international NGO were undertaking repairs to the water treatment plant (WTP) at the time of data collection.
- A local NGO ran a mobile health unit to assist the surrounding villages.

<sup>14</sup> KIs include returnees, community leaders, and protection experts.

<sup>15</sup> Diyaruna. Intensive operations target ISIS remnants in Ninawa. 28 December 2018. Available from the [link](#).

<sup>16</sup> KIs include community leaders and legal experts.

<sup>17</sup> KIs include returnees, community leaders, and legal experts.

## Livelihoods

- KI reports on the number of households not receiving income varied notably, the most common answer being between 20 and 30 families (9 out of 21 KIs):<sup>19</sup> less than 10% of the estimated total number of households living in Hatra town. However, some KIs indicated slightly higher numbers (30 to 40). The proportion of households without income was said to be relatively low because almost half of returnee households were receiving government salaries; the remaining households depended on daily work and livestock.
- The availability of employment opportunities across all professions was reported to have decreased compared to the pre-ISIL period. KIs indicated that the professions that had suffered the most were agriculture (11 out of 21 KIs), shepherding or livestock (7 out of 21), security forces (4 out of 21), and daily work (3 out of 21).
- The reported reasons for a decrease in agriculture were: fear of ISIL attacks, a lack of support from the government, farmers still being in displacement, several years of (relative) drought, and sulphuric water from the wells, high prices of seeds, a lack of farming equipment and fertilisers, and rising salinity of the soil (Figure 4).
- All KIs reported that government salaries stayed the same but that daily workers' salaries had decreased. Only people with government salaries were reportedly able to meet their basic needs.
- Consequently, there was an estimated increase in the use of coping strategies, with many families having to rely on their relatives' or neighbour's assistance (14 out of 21 KIs). It was further explained that this assistance was often sent from relatives who received humanitarian assistance in the camps. Other KIs reported taking on debt (7 out of 21), and cutting daily costs (3 out of 21).

### Improvements Suggested by KIs

KIs with livelihoods expert knowledge suggested livelihoods could be improved by: providing support for farmers, giving compensation to returnees, providing business grants, providing cash and food support by the government such as PDS, or from NGOs, creating new employment opportunities, and rehabilitating the public and private buildings in Hatra.

Figure 4: Number of KI reporting the reasons behind the decrease of agriculture (out of 21 KIs)<sup>19</sup>



## Basic Services

### Electricity

- All electricity expert KIs reported that all households in Hatra had access to public grid every day for roughly 24 hours during the spring months. Reportedly, this was due to there being the same amount of electricity as there was pre-ISIL, but shared across fewer households that were spread out across the neighbourhoods.
- Electricity from the public grid had been for free up to the moment of the survey, but expert KIs confirmed they were planning to start billing according to the meter.
- Still, electricity experts indicated that the power plant in Hatra was in need of repairs, such as coolers for the transformers, new circuit breakers, repairs in the Directorate of Electricity's office, and new transformers since Hatra used to have 129 transformers but now only had 30.

At the time of data collection, all 21 KIs<sup>20</sup> reported there were no community generators as the community generators in Hatra had reportedly been stolen by ISIL, and returnees could not afford to replace them. However, the public network was said to be sufficient since it was only supporting a fraction of the original pre-ISIL population. Meanwhile, only a few families (less than 5% according to KIs) had access to private generators.

### Improvements suggested by KIs

Electricity experts suggested that to improve electricity services, which would be needed if returns were to increase, they needed more transformers and community generators, as well as the installation of power transmission lines directly to Hatra instead of via Al Qayyarah an Tal Abto.

<sup>19</sup> KIs include: returnees, community leaders, and livelihood experts.

<sup>20</sup> KIs include: returnees, community leaders, and health experts.

<sup>21</sup> 0.84-1.68 USD (Price converted using [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com) on 07 July 2019.)

## Water

- The water treatment plant (WTP) in Hatra was reportedly not functioning due to a malfunction of the electric transformer. Thus, Hatra depended on the WTP from Al Shirqat, which pumped clean water across 45 kilometres to Hatra through a main pipe. One KI expert in water services reported that other villages drew water from this same pipe, which often broke, causing problems in the water provision. An international NGO and the Directorate of Water had ongoing repairs to fix some issues with the generator and the pipes at the time of the assessment.
- Water from Al Shirqat was treated with chlorine, but five KIs<sup>25</sup> indicated that the drinking water was of poor quality, with one claiming that it came unfiltered with residue of sand and plants. This reportedly led to many households using their own filters and chlorine to purify the water. Nine (9) out of 21 KIs reported that people were getting ill from the water, including instances of diarrhoea, and other digestive and kidney problems.
- Piped water was reportedly scarce, with the majority of residents receiving water for only a few hours once every 10 to 15 days, although reported amounts did vary. The difference in responses was largely due to the irregularity of piped water availability over time and across different neighbourhoods. Certain neighbourhoods, such as Al Madares (insufficient water pressure and old pipes) and Al-Hawasem (new infrastructure was not yet connected to water network), had no access to piped water at all. Other KIs in Al-Askari neighbourhood confirmed receiving piped water daily since their houses were in the vicinity of the main pipe.
- Due to the irregularity of access to piped water and its low quality, KIs reported having to use private water tanks that they needed to purchase from the Directorate of Water. Most of KIs indicated that it costed 5,000 IQD<sup>26</sup> for 1,000 litres. However, water experts reported it costing 3,000 IQD<sup>27</sup> for 1,200 litres. Some KIs also reported using rain water to fill their tanks.
- Water services were the most important need in Hatra according to five community leaders; three IDP KIs, and four redisplaced KIs saw limited water access as a major barrier to return.

### Improvements Suggested by KIs

Water expert KIs suggested to improve water services by providing more generators and equipment to the WTP in Hatra, in addition to repairing the pipes, and the construction of a dam in Al Tharthar river which would help to provide water for drinking and farming.

## Waste Disposal Services

- The Municipality was reportedly responsible for the waste collection which happened free of charge. Waste was collected from the houses twice a week in each neighbourhood. However, six returnee KIs reported that sometimes waste was collected only once a week. This led to people throwing and burning their waste in empty lands that were in the vicinity of the town, according to two KIs from Al-Hawasim neighbourhood.
- There reportedly was one communal container for each five houses, from where the Municipality workers collected the waste. Expert KIs also reported that the Municipality had to collect the waste from the nearby lands and dispose all the rubbish in the landfill.
- Over half of KIs stated that the situation had stayed the same (12 KIs out of 21),<sup>29</sup> or had improved (8 KIs out of 21) in the 12 months prior data collection. Only one KI stated the situation had worsened because of a perceived carelessness of the staff collecting the waste, and because the frequency with which waste was collected was not sufficient.
- According to the expert KIs the situation had improved in the previous 12 months to data collection because the municipality reportedly had started to employ daily workers (creating new employment opportunities), and an NGO had provided the town with trucks and waste containers.

### Improvements suggested by KIs

KIs with expert knowledge on waste disposal services suggested that to improve waste services, the Municipality needed financial support to hire more workers and to increase the number of trucks and containers.

<sup>22</sup> Schools for accelerate learning follow the Accelerate Learning Program (ALP) addressed to children who have missed months or years of school and cannot enroll on the national education system. More information about the ALP from the following [link](#).

<sup>23</sup> KIs include: returnees, community leaders, and education experts.

<sup>24</sup> REACH. ROAR Al Abassy. May-June 2019. (Pending publication)

<sup>25</sup> KIs include: returnees, community leaders, and water service experts.

<sup>26</sup> 4.2 USD (Price converted using [www.xe.com](#) on 10 July 2019.)

<sup>27</sup> 2.5 USD (Price converted using [www.xe.com](#) on 10 July 2019.)



## Healthcare

- Health expert KIs<sup>20</sup> reported that two clinics were operational in Hatra: a public clinic, which had been damaged during the conflict, and a free healthcare point serviced by a local NGO that provides assistance mainly to security forces, but also assists civilians. In the public clinic the price for the service was between 1,000-2,000 IQD<sup>21</sup> depending on the treatment.
- However, there were only four medical staff in the public clinic according to one expert KI. There were reportedly no female doctors, nor private doctors or surgeons. One returnee noted that before the arrival of ISIL, there had been 36 medical staff. Furthermore, according to the health expert KIs, the health facilities had been looted and needed new equipment. The most urgently needed equipment was reported to be X-ray, sonar, electrocardiography (ECG), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), and microscopes.
- In both clinics, only first aid and basic treatment were available. For maternity care, women depended on the midwives, but if women in labour needed caesarean delivery or other surgical procedures, they had to go to Al Qayyarah. Similarly, for emergency services, patients were taken to Al Qayyarah or Mosul. There was reported to be an ambulance to transport patients.
- Overall, 10 out of 21 KIs<sup>20</sup> reported the community having to travel to Mosul or Al Qayyarah for treatment, presenting a financial barrier for people with low or no income.
- KIs reported that there were no functional pharmacies operating in Hatra, and residents depended on the medicines provided for free by the local NGO, and from the ambulance driver who also worked as a nurse. The majority of KIs (19 out of 21 KIs)<sup>20</sup> stated that almost all medicines were unavailable or in short supply, especially for chronic diseases. Furthermore, prices for medication were reported to either be the same or higher compared to pre-ISIL times.
- Health expert KIs reported that the public health centre was in need of repair. A local NGO had already conducted some partial repairs, and more repairs were ongoing by the UNDP.
- The most urgent healthcare needs were reported to be maternity services (17 out of 21 KIs) and surgery (17 out of 21 KIs), but also treatment for chronic diseases, X-ray machines, laboratories, and more doctors and medicines. However, four KIs did report that the situation had improved in the previous 12 months prior data collection, mostly due to the local NGO.

### Improvements Suggested by KIs

KIs with expert knowledge in health reported that there was a need for more medical personnel and equipment. In addition, they reported that the healthcare centre would have to be repaired.

## Education

- Education expert KIs reported a total of seven schools in Hatra: one middle school for girls, one middle and secondary school for boys, two primary schools for girls, two primary schools for boys, and one school for accelerated learning (inside a primary school building).<sup>22</sup> At the time of the assessment, expert KIs indicated that only one primary school (now mixed), a middle school, and the accelerated learning school were functioning, because of the lack of students and teachers. For secondary education, students had to attend high school in Al Qayyarah.
- A number of KIs (3 out of 21)<sup>23</sup> noted that due to the lack of teachers, classrooms could often be crowded. This was especially the case in primary schools, where there were only three teachers and five volunteers and approximately 150 students. The middle school had two teachers and roughly 30 students.
- Teachers were reportedly receiving a salary. However, compared to reports from similar assessments in other areas where volunteers were paid by the families of the students, volunteers in Hatra reportedly did not receive any payment for their services.<sup>24</sup>
- In addition, 15 out of 21 KIs indicated that there were not enough school supplies, mainly books (many were outdated, and students had to share), desks, teaching materials, and blackboards.
- The main reported barriers to accessing formal education were for high school students, who had to go to Al Qayyarah or Mosul, often having to stay over in the town during the week. This also represented a financial barrier for many who could not afford the transport or student accommodation. Other barriers were the lack of qualified teachers, equipment, and teaching materials in all schools.
- Over the 12 months prior to data collection, expert KIs confirmed that schools had been repaired by the ministry of education, but that other issues affecting the quality of education (e.g.: a lack of teachers and quality staff, a lack of school supplies) had not been addressed.

### Improvements Suggested by KIs

Education expert KIs expressed the need for more books, more teachers, and the creation of incentives for IDPs to return (such as the creation of employment, the repair of basic services, cash assistance for food, and return grants).

<sup>28</sup> KIs include: returnees, community leaders, and electricity experts.

<sup>29</sup> KIs include: returnees, community leaders, and waste disposal experts.



## Conclusions

Two years after the GoI took control of ISIL occupied areas, returns of IDPs to their AoO have increased across Iraq (approximately 715,00 families as of 30 June 2019).<sup>7</sup> However, returns have not been occurring evenly across the country. Hatra town remains an area that has experienced very low numbers of returns and reportedly received limited support from aid actors. This assessment aimed at providing a better understanding of the needs and conditions in Hatra town to ensure durable solutions to returned populations, as well as to provide information to the communities that remain in displacement, to ultimately enable safe and voluntary returns.

Findings indicate that the majority of IDPs from Hatra were not returning due to the limited access to basic services in Hatra town, particularly the limited availability and quality of water. In addition, due to damage to public facilities and a lack of doctors, access to specialised healthcare was urgently needed. At the same time, while IDPs reportedly were not willing to return due to a lack of services, almost half of KIs (28), saw the lack of returns (both of households in general and of professionals in particular) as a main obstacle to the improvement of basic services. Consequently, improving conditions for sustainable returns in Hatra will require increased activity from government and aid actors to improve basic services, particularly water and healthcare.

Moreover, the town's geographic location and security situation further limited the possibility to return, particularly regarding livelihoods, since it presented obstacles to some of the area's main economic activities, such as farming and shepherding. KIs perceived that the security risks in the area restrained humanitarian access, hence limiting the possibilities for humanitarian assistance. This may also raise the possibility of continued protracted displacement for IDPs from the area, and therefore highlights the need for continued support to these households in their areas of displacement.

### About REACH

REACH facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. All REACH activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms.

All our reports, maps and factsheets are available on the REACH resource centre. For more information, visit our website at [www.reach-initiative.org](http://www.reach-initiative.org), follow us on Twitter: @REACH\_info and Facebook: [www.facebook.com/IMPACT.init](https://www.facebook.com/IMPACT.init) or write to [geneva@reach-initiative.org](mailto:geneva@reach-initiative.org)

### About the Returns Working Group (RWG) Iraq

The Returns Working Group (RWG) is an operational and multi-stakeholder platform on returns, which was established in line with Strategic Objective 3 of the 2016 Iraq HRP "to support voluntary, safe and dignified return"<sup>25</sup> of IDPs; to monitor and report on conditions in return areas, and determine to what extent durable solutions have been achieved- or progress made- for returnees.

The key objective of the group is to establish coherence of information, data and analysis, strengthen coordination and advocacy, give guidance on activities related to the key areas, and enhance complementary action among its partners with the overall goal of supporting and reinforcing the national response to Iraq's coming reintegration challenge.