

Situation Overview: Mosul Crisis - Intentions of Ethnic and Religious Minorities

April 2017

REACH Informing
more effective
humanitarian action

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2014, the incursion of non-state armed groups (AGs) into northwestern Iraq triggered the large-scale internal displacement of approximately 900,000 individuals who left from Sinjar, Talafar, Mosul

Methodology

Between 14-19 January 2017, REACH conducted a displacement and future intentions assessment with Christian, Yazidi, Shabak and Turkmen minority groups who previously displaced from Mosul and surrounding villages, Tel Afar and Sinjar between 2014 and 2016. Data was collected through Community Group Discussions (CGDs) and Key Informants (KI) interviews; where possible findings have been triangulated with existing secondary data. In total, REACH collected in-depth data from 113 IDPs living in the KRI and six KIs.

Due to the purposive nature of data collection, findings should be considered as indicative only. Further because of access restrictions REACH could not access certain Turkmen communities living outside of the KRI, which were contacted instead through remote KI interviews. Their compiled responses are summarized in the following pages.

city and the Ninewa Plains.¹ Prior to the arrival of AGs, these areas hosted large populations of ethnic and religious minorities, including Christians, Yazidis, Turkmen and Shabak. This initial phase of displacement in 2014 saw many of these populations – particularly Christians, Yazidis, and Shi'a Turkmen and Shabak – leave their areas of origin for the perceived safety of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), as well as central and southern areas of the country farther from the conflict.

Over two years later, on 17 October 2016, Iraqi and Kurdish forces launched a military operation to retake the city of Mosul and its surrounding regions from AG control, **triggering a new wave of internal displacement of more than 441,720 individuals as of 27 April 2017.**² This also included the displacement of populations of ethnic minorities, primarily Sunni Shabak and Turkmen who remained following the AG takeover of the area in 2014, but who have now fled their areas of origin in the face of intensifying conflict between government forces and AGs.

Since the start of the offensive, large swathes of territory have been retaken from AG control – particularly to the east and north of the city. As a result, access to these retaken areas has increased, initiating an increasing trend of returnees. **As of 27 April, approximately 105,432 individuals who moved to safer areas during the most recent offensive were estimated to have returned to their**

Figure 1: Profile of IDPs Interviewed⁴

Minority Group	Main Area of Origin	Current Residence: Camp	Current Residence: Out of Camp	Total No. of Participants and Key Informants
Yazidi	Sinjar, Bashiqa, Bahzani	Sheikhan Camp	Lalish Village, Sheikhan Town	24
Turkmen	Telafar, Najaf, Mosul City	Harshm and Hasansham M2 Camps	Turaaq	24
Shabak	Mosul City, surrounding villages	Bardarash and Zelikan Camps	Bardarash and Sheikhan Towns	32
Christian	Mosul City, Bartalla, Qaraqosh	Ainkawa 2 Camp	Ainkawa	39

areas of origin.³ With rapidly evolving dynamics of displacement and return, it is important for humanitarians to track them and to understand intentions in order to support displaced and returnee populations.

This Situation Overview provides a summary of the displacement context of four key minority groups – Christians, Yazidis, Shabak, and Turkmen – covering the period from AG arrival in 2014 until mid-January 2017, with specific focus on their displacement patterns, the conditions these individuals face in their areas of displacement – in both camp and non-camp settings – and the future intentions to return, as well as existing barriers to return.

PHASES OF DISPLACEMENT

PHASE I: PRIMARY DISPLACEMENT FROM MOSUL CITY AND TEL AFAR, 10 JUNE 2014 – AUGUST 2014

General displacement, including large numbers of minority groups,⁵ reportedly began from Mosul City following the arrival of AGs on 10 June 2014,⁶ after which Christians, and Shi'a Shabak and Turkmen minorities fled to villages and cities north (e.g. Tilkaif) and east (e.g. Qaraqosh and Bartalla) of the city and to the KRI. Later in June, some of these Christians and Shabaks chose to return to Mosul reporting that they saw no

initial threat in the first weeks following the arrival AGs. However, following reports that AGs had begun to target minorities within the city, the vast majority of Christian and Shi'a Shabak fled back to the villages by the end of July 2014. In the meantime many displaced Christian and Shabak families had chosen to remain in villages until early August 2014, when further displacement was triggered (see below).

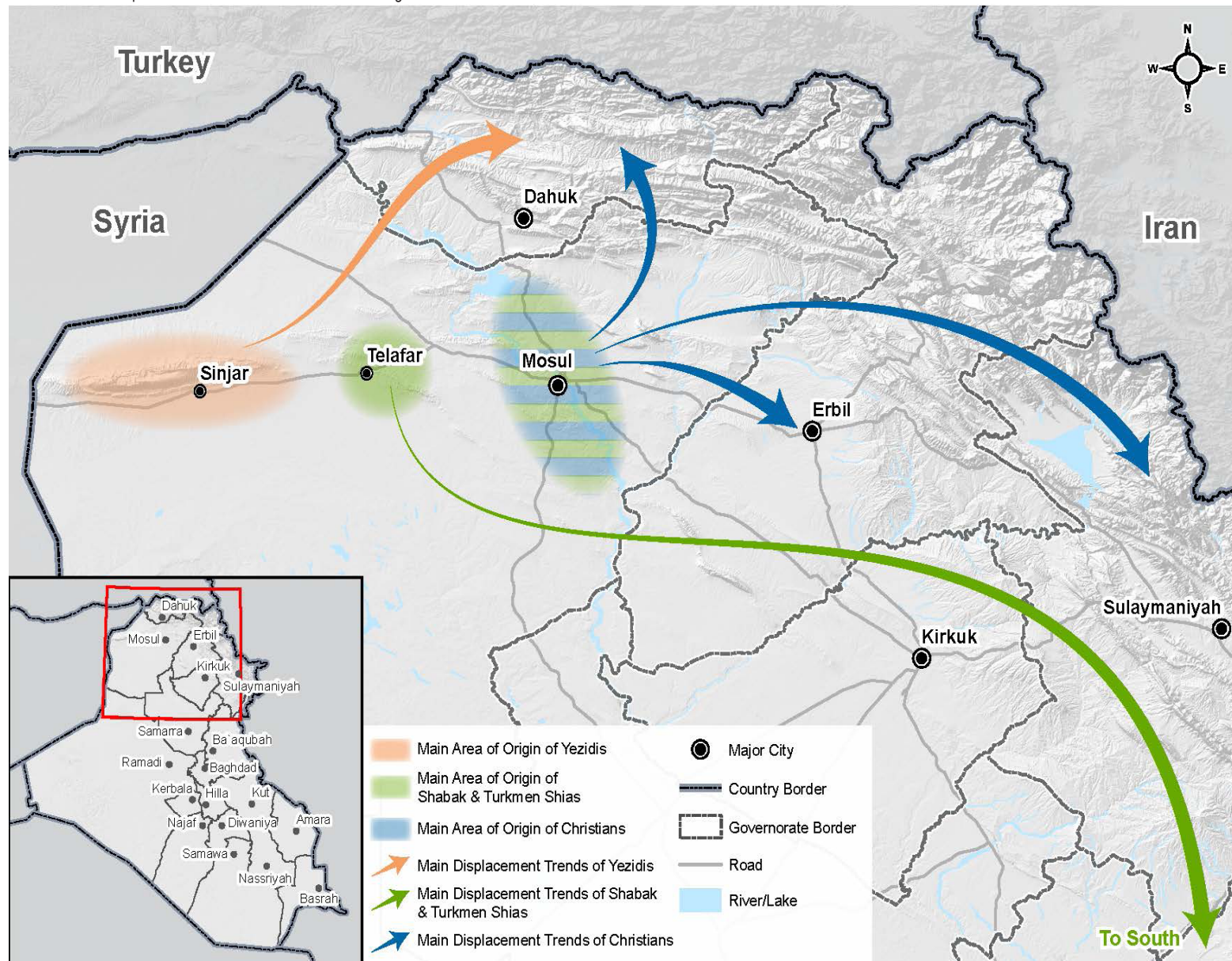
Approximately two weeks after displacement began from Mosul City, the arrival of AGs to Talafar triggered displacement of predominantly Shi'a Turkmen from the city, with most moving to Sinjar, Zummar and surrounding areas.

As the conflict spread throughout the summer of 2014, a second wave of displacement was triggered that started on 3 August 2014 when Christian, Yazidi, and Shabak and Turkmen Shi'a minorities fled from villages north and south of Mosul to the KRI and central and southern Iraq - primarily Najaf and Baghdad. Many remaining Sunni Shabak and Turkman families also fled from Mosul and surrounding villages during this time, especially those that could be specifically targeted by AGs due to their employment, in particular members of the security forces or police.

In parallel, starting on 3 August 2014, clashes near Sinjar triggered an initial wave of displacement of Yazidis to Dohuk governorate. As this escape route quickly became inaccessible, approximately 130,000 Yazidi IDPs displaced to Sinjar Mountain where they

Map 1: Population Density of Minority Groups Displaced from Mosul and Surrounding Areas, June - August 2014

The data for this map was collected between 6 June and 18 August 2014



remained stranded with little food and water in addition to ongoing attacks from AGs. With the establishment of an evacuation route, the majority were eventually able to travel between 9-13 August through Syria and to the KRI.⁷

Following their initial displacement from Ninewa governorate, the majority of IDPs lived in temporary shelter situations with family and friends, camps (e.g. Khazer transit site) or in informal settlements such as schools, mosques and churches for up to six months. Afterwards, those who could afford to began to look for longer term living options such as renting, while others awaited the opening of new camps across the KRI in Sheikhan, Akre and Erbil towns.

PHASE II: SECONDARY DISPLACEMENT AND RESETTLEMENT OF IDPS INITIALLY DISPLACED IN SUMMER 2014

After the large-scale displacement triggered in the summer of 2014, secondary displacement of minorities within and outside of the KRI has continued. According to Christian KI participants, since the end of 2014 between 60-80% of the IDPs who had initially displaced to Dohuk moved to Erbil, drawn by the strong church presence within the city. In addition, roughly 680 Yazidi families from Sinjar who were initially displaced to the holy village of Lalish were reportedly transferred after six months to live in IDP camps (e.g. Sheikhan IDP camp) or amongst the host community primarily in Dohuk governorate, where they

largely remain until today. Lastly, according to KIs, many of the Shabak families who displaced to central and southern Iraq have since reportedly returned to the KRI, drawn to the proximity of the KRI to their area of origin in addition to cultural ties with the Kurdish community.

PHASE III: RENEWED DISPLACEMENT DURING THE MOSUL OFFENSIVE

On 17 October 2016, Iraqi and Kurdish forces launched a major military offensive to retake Mosul and its surrounding areas from non-state armed groups. Between 18 October 2016 and 27 April 2017, 441,720 individuals have been displaced by the offensive – including significant numbers of primarily Sunni Shabak and Turkmen. Of the total displaced population, 336,288 remain displaced, while 105,432 have returned to their areas of origin.⁸ Given current developments in the military operation to retake Mosul city, there is increasing opportunity for minority communities to return to their areas of origin as they come back under the control of government forces.

DISPLACEMENT TRENDS

CHRISTIANS

Prior to the summer of 2014, the estimated population of Iraqi Christians was 350,000.⁹ In Mosul city and the surrounding region, the Christian populations was primarily concentrated in the city itself, as well as in the Ninewa plains area to the east of the

city – particularly in the towns of Bartalla and Qaraqosh. With the incursion of AGs into these areas in the **summer of 2014, approximately 200,000 Christians¹⁰ moved to the KRI, particularly to the city of Erbil, and abroad.**

DISPLACEMENT SUMMARY

The vast majority of all Christians living in and around Mosul city displaced in 2014 after the initial arrival of AGs followed by a period of secondary displacement between September 2014 and October 2017. Initially the majority of displaced Christians moved to Dohuk and Erbil governorates due to family and religious ties, **with an estimated 130,000 moving to Erbil and an estimated 70,000 moving to Dohuk.**¹¹ However, after a period of initial displacement from their area of origins, some IDPs moved from their original destination to secondary destinations within the KRI as well as abroad.

According to KIs, the primary movement of Christian during this time was from Dohuk to Erbil – within one and a half to six months of arrival in Dohuk – **when between 60-80% of Christian IDPs moved to Erbil City drawn by the large Christian community residing in the city**, which also provided enhanced aid delivery through religious and community assistance networks. Smaller movements of Christian IDPs were seen from Sulaymaniyah to Erbil. This movement was mostly comprised of IDPs who had originally thought Erbil to be overcrowded with IDPs, but later determined that there would be space for them. In addition, a number of **Christian IDPs have moved abroad, with community leaders putting**

the figure at between 10-20% of all IDPs from the 2014 wave of displacement.¹² The primary locations mentioned were Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Europe, the United States and Canada.

CURRENT CONTEXT

The vast majority – reportedly 90-95% – of Christian IDPs from Mosul and the surrounding region lived outside of camps at the time of assessment, primarily in Erbil. There is an especially high concentration of Christian IDPs in the Ainkawa neighbourhood of Erbil, primarily drawn by the indigenous Christian community and associated church groups that provide assistance to Christian IDPs. Those who do live in camp settings are concentrated primarily in the Ainkawa 2 camp in Erbil City, the only camp primarily populated by Christian IDPs. There were discrepancies among group participants as to the profile of those living in camps versus those who reside out of camps: some reported that the poorer IDPs resided in the camps, while others said that the camps had simply become full and that **because those living outside the camps have to rent their accommodation, they are often more vulnerable.**

Christian IDPs reported access to assistance through well-established community networks, many of which centered on churches, as well as through international aid groups. Christian IDPs have reportedly received relatively regular aid throughout their displacement – including Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA), food

Key Livelihoods: Christian IDPs

Out of Camp	Gov't Employment
	Security Positions
	Pensions
In-Camp	Aid
	Gov't Employment
	Pensions

vouchers, rent subsidies and direct food aid. In Ainkawa 2 camp, IDPs reported a variety of livelihoods sources. Camp management indicated that 90% of IDP families in the camp have at least one member with some form of employment while the assessed individuals put the figure at 80%. Families were also relying on Iraqi government pensions for the remainder of their livelihood needs. Of the two Focus Groups conducted, one indicated that aid was their primary source of livelihoods, with the other indicating government employment and security positions.

For Christian IDPs residing out of camps, the main source of livelihood is Iraqi government employment; some government workers were able to transfer their original jobs to positions in Erbil; or at least continue collecting salaries. For young men, the primary source of livelihoods was reportedly employment in security positions.¹³ As in camps, IDPs out of

camps indicated that pensions were also an important source of livelihoods, as well as aid.

For all Christian IDPs interviewed, the primary barrier to employment was a lack of available jobs, as well as difficulties with language barriers, as most Christians do not speak the Sorani Kurdish that is indigenous to Erbil. Due to limited employment opportunities and the cost of rent, specifically for those out of camps, IDPs reported having spent significant amounts of their savings in the course of their displacement.

FUTURE INTENTIONS

At the time of assessment, there was no indication that any major Christian IDP populations had permanently returned to their areas of origin. However, many had been back to visit recently retaken areas to survey their property, with many reporting significant levels of damage and looting. Some noted that permanent resettlement to these areas was not yet possible, as they were still designated military zones by the government.

Overall, assessed IDPs indicated that very few displaced Christians planned to return to their areas of origin. However, some mentioned that they may be compelled to return if their employment is transferred back to their areas of origin. Many indicated having exhausted their savings in the course of their displacement, meaning that they have no means to support themselves in the event that their livelihood opportunities were relocated. **Respondents expressed a severe lack of**

trust of the security situation and conveyed fears that similar conflict could happen again in the future. Most also noted that the lack of infrastructure and basic services was a disincentive to return, while some said there was hesitation to invest in the reconstruction of their property and neighbourhoods as they do not due to fear of losing their investment in case of a resurgence of AGs in their area. A number of Christian IDPs indicated that they would return if there were domestic or international actors able to ensure their safety; however, the vast majority believed that no such actors exist currently.

YAZIDIS

Prior to the summer of 2014, the Yazidi population of Iraq was estimated to be around 700,000 individuals.¹⁴ This population was primarily concentrated to the north and west of Mosul, especially in the city of Sinjar – west of Talafar, as well as the towns of Bashiqa and Bahzani, to the northeast of Mosul. Following the incursion of AGs into their areas, the majority of Yazidis moved to Dohuk governorate or abroad.¹⁵

DISPLACEMENT SUMMARY

As with Christian IDPs, all interviewed Yazidis left their areas of origin in the summer of 2014 – specifically in early August, primarily displacing toward Dohuk governorate. **There has reportedly been little secondary displacement of Yazidi IDP populations, with the majority still living in Dohuk and Shikhan governorates, as they are**

close to their areas of origin.¹⁶ There were also individuals who transitioned from temporary displacement shelter – such as informal settlements and staying with friends and relatives – to more permanent shelter through renting. In addition, some focus groups reported that 5,000 individuals (1,000 families) are still living on Sinjar mountain, north of Sinjar city. There were varying figures concerning the number of Yazidis that had moved abroad based on their area of origin, with reports of 3% from Sinjar, 20-30% from Bashiqa, and 10% from Bahzani – however, no recent displacement abroad was noted. **Overall, FGD participants reported that very few families, if any, had returned to Sinjar.**¹⁷

CURRENT CONTEXT

The vast majority – 80-90% – of Yazidi IDPs from Sinjar live in camps, while the figure was 50% for Bashiqa, and 10% for Bahzani. These camps are primarily spread throughout Dohuk and Shikhan. Those living outside of camps were said to be either renting or living

Percent of Yazidis in Camps Area of Origin

Sinjar	80-90%
Bashiqa	50%
Bahzani	10%

in unfinished structures – though no figures were given for these individuals. Those who are renting were said to be living with multiple families per home – as many as five – to help split costs.

For livelihoods, the majority of those interviewed indicated that they had difficulty meeting the needs of their households. The primary source of livelihoods in camps was assistance, followed by work as day labourers. For those living outside of camp settings in Shikhan, the main sources of livelihoods were daily work, government positions and aid. In terms of assistance received, those in camps and in Shikhan reportedly received monthly food boxes, as well as some items through the Public Distribution System (PDS) – no cash assistance was reported. **For all respondents, a lack of available job opportunities was identified as the primary barrier to employment,** with some also reporting that they believed they were paid less than host community members for the same work.

FUTURE INTENTIONS

Individuals from Bashiqa and Bahzani generally agreed that the majority of Yazidi IDPs intend to return to their areas of origin. However, they did note that they would not return in the near future, as they do not believe it to be safe, and basic services have not yet been restored. **Few IDPs from these areas were reported to have returned, though people are able to visit to check on property.** Individuals from Sinjar expressed mixed views on

whether they would return in the near future. One FGD indicated that they would return if there were some force that could guarantee security, even if that actor were the Iraqi or Kurdish governments. The second group was more skeptical and expressed doubt that any domestic actor could provide such security, indicating that they would feel most secure if the United Nations or another international actor were ensuring their safety. As in Bashiqa and Bahzani, those who did wish to return reported they would not return at present as it is not safe, and basic services have not been restored. **All groups indicated significant damage and looting in their areas of origin.**

SHABAK

DISPLACEMENT SUMMARY

Before the summer of 2014, the Shabak community was estimated to be between 200,000-500,000 individuals.¹⁸ These populations were primarily located in Mosul city, as well as villages to the north and the Ninewa plains to the east. One group estimated that 50-60% of these IDPs now live in the KRI, with an additional 30-40% residing in central and southern Iraq. However, this

Area of Displacement: Shia Shabak IDPs	
KRI	50-60%
Southern Iraq	30-40%

group was unsure of the numbers residing in the center-south region, as some Shabak had returned to the north to be closer to their areas of origin. The initial displacement of Shabak IDPs occurred in the summer of 2014, both from Mosul city and the surrounding villages. Very few Shabak were reported to have gone abroad, largely because they do not have the means to do so.

These initial IDPs were primarily Shi'a Shabak, many of whom moved to central and southern Iraq, as well as Sunnis who held positions that would make them targets for AGs. Following the start of the October 2016 offensive on Mosul, a second wave of Sunni Shabak IDPs displaced, mainly from villages north of Mosul – such as Derik, Chanchi and Khorsebad – and either moved to Qaymawa camp in the KRI or locally displaced to nearby villages.¹⁹ A smaller number of Sunni Shabak from villages southeast of Mosul have displaced to Khazer and Hasansham IDP camps in the KRI. Moreover, Sunni Shabak from neighbourhoods in northern Mosul have primarily displaced to Orta Kharab village and then on to camps in the KRI. From eastern Mosul neighbourhoods, Shabak families have reportedly moved to Khazer and Hasansham camps. As they have not been allowed to continue past emergency camps – as other recent IDPs – all Shabak IDPs from 2016 live in camp settings.

CURRENT CONTEXT

While only some Shabak who were displaced in 2014 live in camp settings – specifically Bardarash camp – all Shabak who were

displaced by the recent offensive in October 2016 remain in emergency camps, especially Qaymawa camp. Among the 2014 IDP population, those living outside of camps are primarily renting or living in unfinished buildings. Those living inside camps were described as having fewer resources than those outside of camps, as they cannot afford to rent homes.

Livelihood sources differ between Shabak IDPs from 2014 versus those from 2016. For example, Shabak IDPs from 2014 living in camps cited assistance as their primary source of livelihoods, alongside daily work and retirement pensions, while IDPs from 2016 – who are all living in camps – are entirely reliant on assistance, as they cannot leave the camp to work. Shabak IDPs from 2014 living outside of camps named daily work, government jobs and assistance as their top sources of livelihoods – with 70% of families reportedly having at least one employed member. However, many indicated that the daily work was largely seasonal and unreliable.

In general, Shabak IDPs inside and outside of camps reported struggling to meet their household needs, despite some income and assistance. IDPs from 2014 in camps reported receiving one food box per month, and NFI items every two months. However, they reportedly received no cash assistance to supplement inconsistent salaries from daily work. Those out of camps reported receiving food assistance every two-three months, but they indicated that the aid did not always

reach the most vulnerable households due to poor organization.

According to one Shi'a Shabak KI in the southern Thi Qar governorate, less than 30% Shabak of IDP families in the area had a family member with employment, with the remaining 70% relying on assistance for their livelihoods.

FUTURE INTENTIONS

Overall, no Shabak IDPs from 2014 have reportedly returned to their areas of origin, though some reported having visited to check on property. Interviewed IDPs indicated that the majority intend to return permanently, but that they would only do so when security, livelihoods and basic services had been restored to the area.

On the other hand, Shabak IDPs from 2016 have already begun to return to their areas of origin from camps and many of those who remain indicated that they will return as soon as they are allowed to do so. However, some expressed a preference to delay their return, as they are still unsure whether the area is safe. **In addition, some Shi'a Shabak who originally moved to central and southern Iraq have begun moving to areas in the north in order to be closer to their areas of origin – however no timeline was offered for return.**

Some Shabak IDPs who displaced in 2014 reported that members of their community did not wish to return, noting a lack of trust that they would be safe, and a fear of a repeat of the events of 2014. In addition,

they noted that their areas of origin were tied to memories of trauma, which served as a disincentive to return. **Overall, Shabak IDPs from 2016 were more likely to express an immediate desire to return, as they felt restricted in the emergency camps and had no opportunities for livelihoods.** Those IDPs from 2014 had more access to livelihood opportunities – though as noted previously, these were reported to be limited – and therefore were more likely to wait to return to their areas of origin until basic services were restored and livelihood opportunities had returned. They were also hesitant because officially changing their residency to their area of origin would make it difficult to return to the KRI if the situation in their area of origin did not improve once they relocated.

A Shi'a Shabak KI in the southern Thi Qar governorate indicated that 90% of the Shabak in the area wished to return to their areas of origin, stating that they would likely wait until the end of the ongoing school term. While it was noted that basic services and livelihood opportunities have not been restored in their areas of origin, the KI reported that the livelihood opportunities were also extremely limited in Thi Qar and that it was better to attempt to rebuild in their area of origin rather than remaining reliant on the community in the south.

TURKMEN

Prior to the summer of 2014, the Turkmen population of Iraq was estimated to be two million individuals,²⁰ with a population of

450,000 in Talafar, as well as significant populations in the Hay Bakr, Qadisiya and Rashadiya neighbourhoods of Mosul city. Displaced members of this population now live mainly in Erbil and Dohuk, as well as Kirkuk – primarily Sunni Turkmen – and the centre and southern regions of Iraq – primarily Shi'a Turkmen.

DISPLACEMENT SUMMARY

As with Shi'a Shabak, Shi'a Turkmen populations also left their areas of origin in Talafar and Mosul city in June 2014 with the initial advance of AGs for fear of persecution. For Turkmen IDPs from 2014, KIs estimated that 5% had displaced abroad, with another group giving a figure of 200,000 individuals. These IDPs have reportedly traveled to Turkey, with some then continuing on to Europe through the Balkans.

A number of Sunni Turkmen IDPs who had remained in Mosul city during the initial 2014 offensive²¹ have left Mosul during the recent 2016-2017 offensive. These new Turkmen IDPs primarily originated from neighbourhoods of eastern Mosul, leaving through the eastern Gogjali neighbourhood. During their displacement, they were screened by government forces at multiple sites near the village of Shaqooli, before being transported by Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to Hasansham M2 camp.

CURRENT CONTEXT

Turkmen IDPs from 2014 live in a variety of settings, though the vast majority

Shia Turkmen IDPs

Out of Camp - Erbil

80% Sharing Accommodation

3-4 Families Per House

live outside of camps in Erbil and the surrounding areas. Camps with Turkmen IDP populations from the 2014 wave of displacement include Garmawa and Shikhan. For those living out of camps, the majority are renting. Those renting in Erbil were reportedly living in poor conditions due to a lack of livelihood opportunities, with 80% sharing accommodation, and up to four families sharing one home. Shi'a Turkmen IDPs living in Najaf were said to be in a better condition, with the majority living independently – reportedly due to support from religious leaders and the community.²² For Turkmen IDPs from 2014 living outside of camp settings in Erbil, livelihood opportunities were reported to be available but limited. The primary source of livelihoods is daily work, which provides a decent salary, but can be inconsistent. As with Christian IDPs in Erbil, Turkmen receive monthly food boxes, as well as monthly MPCA. For those in Najaf outside of camps, employment was reportedly more stable, as many transferred government jobs from their areas of origin. However, some were reportedly still relying on aid from charities and from the community.

In contrast, Turkmen families displaced

during the recent 2016-2017 offensive are not permitted to travel beyond the emergency camps where they currently reside. For these new IDPs, livelihood opportunities are severely limited, as they are not allowed to leave the camps. These individuals reported receiving food and NFI distributions, but no cash aid.

FUTURE INTENTIONS

No Turkmen IDPs from 2014 have reportedly returned to their areas of origin, while some IDPs from the most recent 2016-2017 displacement wave have already returned from the emergency camps – with the assessed groups reporting 25 families having returned to East Mosul city. For those from Talafar, no one had visited the city at the time of assessment as it is still under AG-control, and news concerning the situation there is limited. **Overall, Turkmen IDPs from the most recent wave of displacement were more likely to express a desire to return as soon as possible, as they felt restricted in the emergency camps, and wished to return to their property and assets.** As with Shabak IDPs, those Turkmen IDPs from 2014 were more hesitant to return to their areas of origin before the reestablishment of basic services and the return of livelihood opportunities – as they would not be permitted to reenter the KRI once they had officially changed their residence back to their areas of origin.

On long-term intentions to return, the opinion of Turkmen groups differed depending on their area of origin. Some from Mosul expressed a desire to return, but only once basic services

– such as water and electricity – had been restored and the area was considered safe. However, others reported that they did not trust that the emergence of AGs would not occur again in the future, which made them hesitant to resettle in the city.

Those from Talafar indicated a severe lack of trust in the security of their areas of origin, even were it to be freed from AG-control. As with other minority IDP groups, these individuals expressed fear that the AGs could return in the future, and again force displacement and loss of property. The lack of information from their areas of origin has also left many IDPs unsure of the status of their property or the state of infrastructure. Despite this, the majority reported wanting to return once security, basic services and livelihoods have been restored. **A minority – particularly from Mosul – indicated that they did not feel welcome as a minority community and would prefer to move to Turkey instead of returning.**

Some Turkmen IDPs living in Najaf presented a unique case, as many of these individuals had transferred their papers to Najaf, registered their children in schools there, and purchased property and assets.²³ A majority of these IDPs nonetheless desire to return, but only after security is ensured and infrastructure has been rebuilt. There was an expressed perception that these two conditions would take a significant amount of time to be met.

CONCLUSION

As Iraqi government forces continue to retake territory from AG control, increasing numbers of ethnic and religious minority IDPs will gain access to their areas of origin. However, as outlined above, the liberation of these areas is not, in and of itself, sufficient to incentivize many of these individuals to return. Many of these areas have been severely affected by conflict and years of AG rule, damaging basic services and limiting livelihoods opportunities. Though IDP communities – particularly Shabak and Turkmen – may wish to return home, the perceived barriers to reconstruction are a key obstacle to return.

Many IDPs from ethnic and religious minorities have also had their perceptions of security altered by the events leading to their displacement. In particular, many of these IDPs – especially Christians and Yazidis – doubt that their communities will be truly safe, even if services and livelihoods are restored. This perception poses a particularly difficult barrier to return, as basic reconstruction does not alleviate fears based on the trauma experienced by these groups when they were first driven from their homes. Overall, it is apparent that while the resumption of basic services and the return of livelihoods opportunities are central to incentivizing the return of minority IDPs, more complex, community-based approaches will be key to establishing the levels of trust necessary for long-term stability, reconstruction and the return of minority populations.

Endnotes:

¹ REACH Initiative, IDP Crisis Overview , 3-18 August 2014

² IOM DTM, Cumulative Figures as of 27 April, 2017.

³ Ibid.

⁴ IDPs with the following profiles could not be interviewed: Turkman displaced in 2016 living in camp from Tel Afar; Yazidi displaced in 2016; Shabak displaced in 2016 living out of camp; no Shabak from Mosul City displaced in 2014 living out of camp could be found; and Christians displaced in 2016 as all have been displaced in 2014.

⁵ Accurate figures on the ethnoreligious breakdown of the IDP population are generally not available.

⁶ REACH, Iraq IDP Crisis Overview, 3-18 August 2014.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ IOM DTM, Cumulative Figures as of 27 April 2017.

⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues on her Mission to Iraq (9 January 2017).

¹⁰ REACH, Iraq IDP Crisis Overview, 3-18 August 2014.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Some participants in the CGDs put the figure as high as 30-45%

¹³ These security positions, known as zerivani, are distinct to the Christian community. These individuals are hired to protect Christian sites such as churches and convents, as well as Christian businesses and homes.

¹⁴ UN Human Rights Council - Report of the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues on her Mission to Iraq (9 January 2017).

¹⁵ According to the REACH Iraq IDP Crisis Overview from 3-18 August 2014, up to 200,000 individuals left Sinjar in early August 2014, with the arrival of AGs.

¹⁶ One group of 680 Yazidi families was reported to have taken shelter in the holy site at Lalish for 6 months, before being transferred to Shikhan camp.

¹⁷ One group reported that 1-2% had returned, while two others reported that a single family had returned.

¹⁸ UN Human Rights Council - Report of the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues on her Mission to Iraq (9 January 2017).

¹⁹ REACH, Displacement overview's for: Zelikan IDP Camp (24 October 2016), Khazer MODM 1 (28 November 2016) , Hasansham (Khazer) MODM 2 (6 December 2016)

²⁰ UN Human Rights Council - Report of the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues on her Mission to Iraq (9 January 2017)

²¹ According to one groups of KIs, these remaining individuals represented 50% of the Turkmen population of Mosul

²² This information was provided by one Turkmen KI living in Najaf.

²³ This information was provided by one Turkmen KI living in Najaf.

About REACH Initiative

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.

For more information, you can write to our in-country office: iraq@reach-initiative.org. You can view all our reports, maps and factsheets on our resource centre: reachresourcecentre.info, visit our website at reach-initiative.org, and follow us @ [REACH_info](https://twitter.com/REACH_info).