

Telafar and Surrounding Areas - Rapid Overview of Areas of Return (ROAR)

April 2018

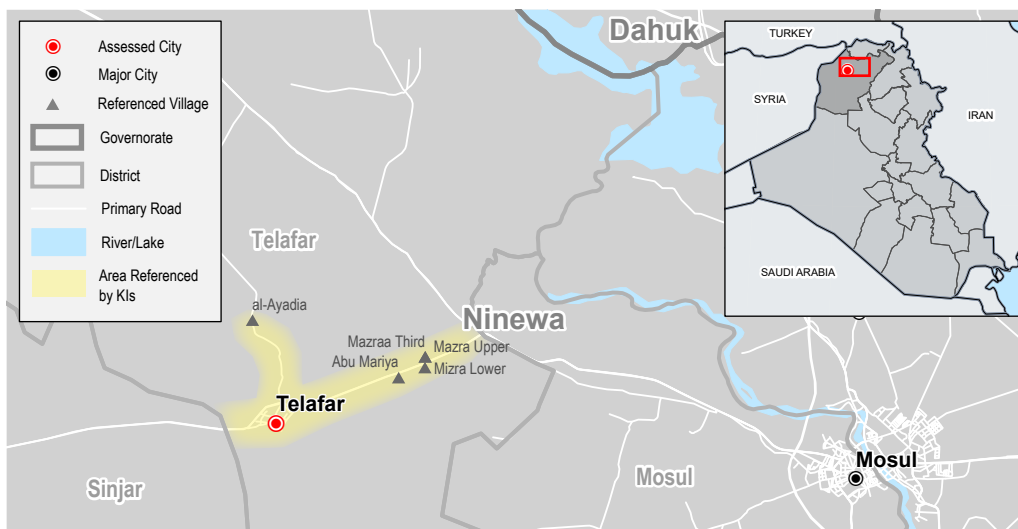
Overview

The Government of Iraq (GOI) re-established control of Telafar from the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in August 2017, after the city had been held by the group since June 2014.¹ At the time it was retaken, the city and surrounding areas had almost completely emptied of people.² Since then, approximately 60,000 – 80,000 residents have returned,³ which is estimated by local officials to be around 30-40% of the pre-June 2014 population.⁴

Strategically located on the main highway leading to the Syrian border, Telafar is the most significant urban centre to the west of Mosul in Ninewa governorate.⁵ As a result, residents come to the city from surrounding towns and villages to access services and other amenities. The city is predominantly home to ethnic Turkmen – the majority of whom are Shi'a, while the remainder are Sunni. The area is also home to notable Kurdish, Christian and Sunni Arab communities.⁶

To inform the humanitarian response to emergency needs in Telafar at the time of the military operation to retake the city, REACH carried out an [assessment](#) by interviewing residents who had recently fled. The findings indicated limited availability of healthcare services, minimal access to food, almost no access to safe drinking water and scarce livelihood opportunities. In addition, KIs reported that civilian children had not attended school for three years.⁷ As Telafar city is now under GOI control and has witnessed significant returns, REACH conducted a follow-up assessment aimed at informing the returns and recovery processes. The primary objectives of the assessment were to understand the motivations behind return, along with the current situation for livelihoods and the provision of services for the returnee population in Telafar city and surrounding areas. In addition, the assessment also addressed perceptions of safety among the returnee population.

📍 Telafar, Ninewa Governorate



Key Findings

Displacement and Returns, Safety and Livelihoods

- The main reason given for returnee residents coming back to the city was **improved security**. For residents who remain in displacement, their reasons for not returning included **their property being damaged, destroyed or stolen; their children attending school in their area of displacement; and a lack of job opportunities in Telafar**.
- **The city is perceived by KIs to be largely cleared of explosive hazards (mines/bombs/IEDs)**. However, **some surrounding villages and agricultural land are reportedly still not safe**. KIs reported several recent deaths caused by explosive hazards in these areas. No KIs living in the city reported restrictions on movement in the area.
- **There are few livelihood opportunities in the city, with the bulk of salaried work being provided by the government or the security services**. Agricultural land was generally said to not be re-cultivated due to fear of contamination by explosive hazards.

Access to Services

- **Water and solid waste disposal services are available but do not cover the entire area**. A piped water system provides water to over half the neighbourhoods in the city, but residents in the areas not covered are relying on water tanks that are refilled periodically. Waste disposal services do not cover outlying parts of the city and the surrounding area. Residents who do not have this service are disposing of waste themselves. **There were some reports of illness attributed to unclean water as well as health problems caused by large quantities of undisposed waste remaining in the city**.
- Most residents are reportedly connected to the government electrical grid, although supply was said to vary considerably with some outlying villages not connected. Expert KIs warned that the grid would be placed under increased strain as returns continued.
- **Schools were reported to have reopened across the city, and children are attending classes**. However, there was said to be a shortage of teachers, educational materials and classroom equipment.
- **There is one functioning public hospital and one functioning public clinic**. At the hospital, there is an Emergency Room as well as the capacity to perform emergency surgery and provide basic maternity services. The number of doctors was said to be insufficient. There were reported to be no mental-health services available.
- **There is a functioning government court with judges and lawyers available**. There is also a functioning office for the renewal of legal documentation, including birth, marriage and death certificates as well as property deeds. Common legal grievances among the returnee population include **looted or damaged property and the loss of legal documentation**.

Methodology

REACH collected data from 23 male key informants (KIs) and one female key informant, including six returnee residents, five residents who remain in displacement⁸ and 13 subject matter experts (SMEs), who were knowledgeable about one or more of the areas covered by the assessment (see figure 1). In some cases, the same KI was classed as an expert in more than one subject area. KIs were identified through existing REACH networks and through contacts provided by an International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) working in the area. Data collection took place between 28 March and 1 April 2018 through remote telephone interviews conducted by REACH enumerators.

Limitations

Findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than statistically generalisable to the assessed area. Furthermore, KIs often provided estimates rather than exact figures, which should also be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings.

Figure 1: Number and profession of SME KIs

SME type	Number	Profession(s)
KIs knowledgeable about safety	2	Local official and INGO worker
Livelihoods	1	Local official
Water	3	Two engineers and one INGO worker
Electricity	3	Two municipal workers and one engineer
Solid Waste Disposal	3	Three municipal workers
Education	3	One teacher, one municipal worker and one INGO worker
Healthcare	3	One doctor and one INGO worker
Legal Services	1	Local official

Displacement and Return

Historical Overview and Current Trends

Initial movements of populations out of Telafar district began in June 2014, after ISIL took control of the area from the GOI. The first stage saw large-scale displacement from Telafar and surrounding areas. Many Shi'a Turkmen went to Shi'a majority areas of Central and Southern Iraq – such as Najaf and Karbala – as well as abroad, while Sunni Turkmen generally resettled in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, Kirkuk and abroad.⁹ Following the beginning of the offensive to retake Mosul city in October 2016, another stage of displacement began, which gathered pace as the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) neared the city ahead of the military operation to regain control of Telafar. Many of these Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) moved to the formal camps around Mosul.¹⁰

After the offensive to retake the city in August 2017, returns first started to the villages surrounding the city, with few residents returning to the city itself due to the continued presence of explosive

hazards and the lack of services. However, after the city was partially cleared and some services resumed, more residents began to return.¹¹

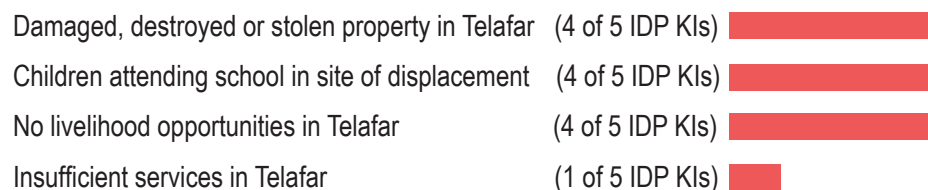
KIs interviewed for this assessment indicated that many of those who returned have a source of livelihood or savings they can use to support themselves. Residents without a means to provide for themselves were said to be far less likely to have returned. In terms of the sectarian dynamic of displacement and return, KIs – both expert and returnee – indicated that some Sunni residents were not returning due to fear of reprisals from other members of the community, or arrest by the authorities. KIs suggested that a disproportionate amount of Shi'a residents had returned to the city as it was said to be less complicated for them to do so.¹²

In addition, several expert KIs noted that they are expecting to see an increase in returns once the school year is complete. After returning, families are expected to enrol their children in the local education system in time for the next school year. Expert KIs also noted that this increase in the population, combined with the heat of summer, will place additional strain on services. Thus, it is possible that in the coming months the city and its surrounding area could see a reduction in the quality of services due to the volume of new arrivals.

Why are residents not returning?

IDP KIs were asked what factors have caused them to remain in displacement. The most frequently reported factors (all reported by four of five IDP KIs) were damaged, destroyed or stolen property; not wanting to remove their children from school in their area of displacement; and there being limited livelihood opportunities in Telafar. In addition, one KI indicated that services were insufficient compared to their displacement site. Notably, no IDP KIs mentioned a lack of security as a reason for them not returning.

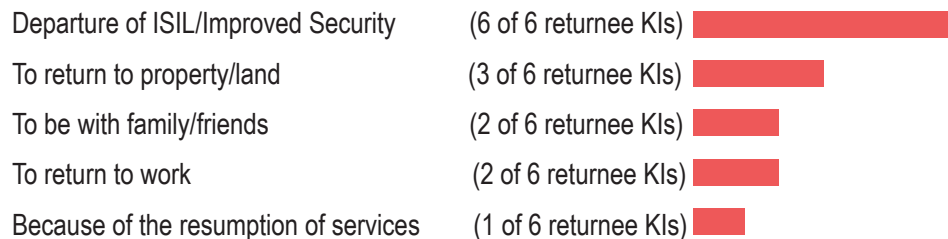
Figure 2: Reasons why IDP KIs are not returning to their area of origin



Why are residents returning?

All returnee KIs said that improved security in Telafar motivated them to return. Other frequently mentioned factors were the wish to return to property and/or land (three of six), to be with family and friends (two of six), to return to work (two of six) and the resumption of basic services in the city (one of six). In terms of travel, returnee KIs indicated that they hired vehicles to transport their belongings and themselves – if they did not own a car – from their site of displacement back to Telafar.

Figure 3: Reasons why returnee KIs came back to their area of origin



How are residents getting information?

In term of what information informed the decision to either remain in displacement or return to Telafar, the most common source of information among both IDPs and returnees was telephone calls with friends and family living in Telafar, followed by TV/other news media and visiting the area prior to making the decision to return.

Figure 4: Reported sources of information on their area of origin among IDP and returnee KIs

Information Source	IDP	Returnee	All
Telephone calls with friends and family living in Telafar	4 of 5 IDPs	3 of 6 returnees	7 of 11
TV/other news media	1 of 5 IDPs	3 of 6 returnees	4 of 11
Visiting area of origin	2 of 5 IDPs	1 of 6 returnees	3 of 11

Safety

- Telafar city was perceived by KIs to have been mostly cleared of explosive hazards. An INGO employee working in the city reported that 80 tons of explosives had been removed from the city to date. However, a resident was reportedly killed recently inside the city by explosive hazards. This indicates that some buildings within the city remain unsafe.
- Some villages - including al Ayadiya to the north of the city - and agricultural areas outside of the city have reportedly not been fully de-contaminated. Two returnee KIs mentioned that shepherds had recently been killed by explosive hazards, including a shepherd who was recently killed near the village Mulla Jassim located to the west of Telafar city. Returnee KIs also noted that there was little information on which areas were still unsafe due to explosive hazards.
- All returnee KIs reported that there are no restrictions on their movement in the city and surrounding villages at any time of day. However, there are many check points for which residents need the correct identification documentation in order to pass through.

- All returnee KIs reported feeling safe in the area. Moreover, four returnee KIs mentioned that the security situation was better now than before ISIL due to the increased presence of the ISF and the ability to move more freely in the governorate, including to Mosul.
- Aside from explosive hazards, the only security concern that returnee KIs reported was fear of attacks by remaining ISIL members or their affiliates who have thus far evaded capture by the authorities.

Livelihoods

- There are reportedly very few livelihood opportunities in the city. Before ISIL, KIs reported that those living in the city were mainly government employees or small business owners, while those living in villages surrounding the city relied on agriculture.¹³
- Currently, most of those households who are receiving an income have a member working in the government or for the security forces. Some residents have been able to reopen their small businesses such as shops, but there is a general lack of money and materials, to carry out repairs and replenish stocks.
- Farmers and shepherds are reportedly hesitant to return to their agricultural or grazing lands due to fear of explosive hazards, which means that some land is not being re-cultivated. There is also reportedly a lack of farming equipment, irrigation infrastructure and seeds.
- KIs reported that wages were lower than the pre-ISIL period. The cost of living is also reportedly lower than before ISIL, but most residents have little disposable income to spend on goods such as food and non-food items (NFIs).
- For those households not receiving a regular income, reported coping mechanisms were daily labour or finding work elsewhere – mostly in Mosul or Baghdad – and sending money back home to their families. In addition, for those struggling due to having no source of income, financial and in-kind support is provided by the community.
- The lack of livelihood opportunities was cited as a major reason why the majority of the city’s population (pre-2014) have not returned. Those who have returned mainly have a source of income to return to or savings to rely on, according to KIs.

Improvements Suggested by KIs: KIs suggested that financial support should be provided to help rebuild businesses, replace equipment and buy materials, which will in turn create more jobs in the city.

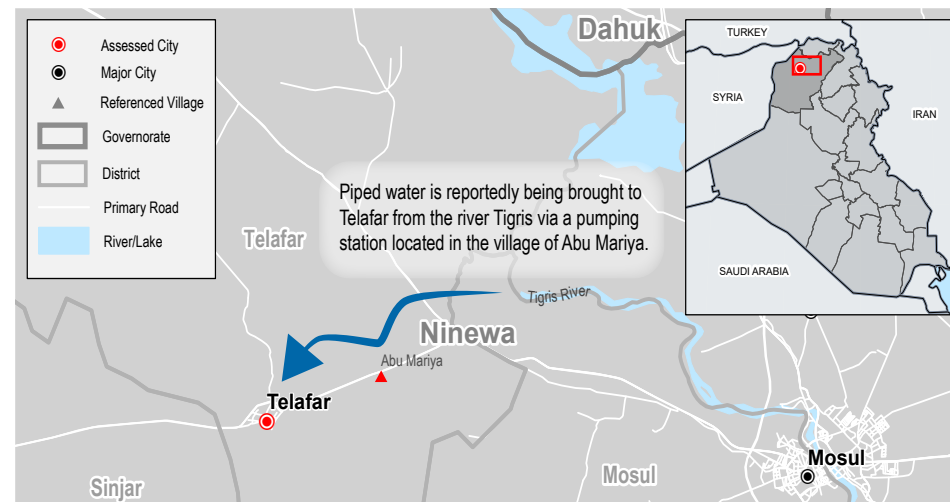
Public Utility Services: Water, Electricity and Solid Waste Disposal

Water

- Before ISIL, expert KIs stated that the pipe network covered the whole city and the water supply was clean to drink.
- Currently, the majority of residents are receiving water from the city's piped water network, which was said to be safe to drink. However, a water expert KI stated that of the city's 21 neighbourhoods, only 12 – mostly central – neighbourhoods have complete coverage from the pipe network. This service is currently free, with the hours of availability largely depending on location, ranging from being available for 10 or more hours a day to only being available on alternate days.
- Water expert KIs reported that the piped water is coming from the Tigris river and is pumped to Telafar city via a station in the village of Abu Mariya (see map opposite). Although the piping system is still capable of carrying water to the city, the pumping system was reported to have suffered damage and is in need of repair. Due to damage sustained during the fighting and a lack of maintenance, the pipe network is broken in several places leading to the water being contaminated in some areas. The organisation Terre des Hommes (TdH) is supporting the municipality in fixing the piping system and other water infrastructure.
- There is also a functioning water treatment facility, where the water is cleaned using chemicals. However, an expert KI reported that water is not as clean as it was during the period before ISIL.
- The neighbourhoods that are not connected to the pipe network are relying on communal water tanks that are refilled periodically. This water reportedly comes from Mosul. KIs reported that some poorer residents in outlying areas are relying on bore holes, which do not provide potable water.
- Two returnee KIs and one expert KI reported that residents were becoming ill from drinking unclean water with symptoms such as diarrhoea.
- This situation is a notable improvement from August 2017, when it was reported that there was no access to piped water and that residents were having to drink unclean water from bore holes or springs.¹⁴

Improvements Suggested by KIs: Expert KIs stated that they need more pumps and more generators to power them, drills to dig bore holes, tools to fix the pipe network and technical staff to provide support to the municipality.

Water Pipe Route, Telafar District



Electricity

- In the city, residents currently have access to the public grid, although the supply varies considerably depending on location. Some returnee KIs reported that electricity is available 24 hours a day in their area, while others reported that electricity is available for less than ten hours a day. Currently this service is free and is transferred from power plants near Mosul.
- An expert KI reported that some surrounding villages do not have access to electricity, which is a reason why residents are not returning to those villages.
- Expert KIs emphasized that the network would be placed under greater strain as more residents return and the heat of summer causes residents to increase their electricity usage to power air conditioners and fans.
- Returnee KIs reported that they are not using generators at the moment, but that they expect to start using them in the summer months. A lot of generators were reportedly stolen or damaged over the course of the recent crisis.
- In terms of damage to the electrical infrastructure, electrical wires, poles and transformers were damaged during the recent crisis.

Improvements Suggested by KIs: Expert KIs reported that although the municipality has started to repair parts of the electricity network, they still need transformers, electrical cranes, electrical wires, poles and electrical engineers to provide support.

Solid Waste Disposal

- Before ISIL, expert KIs reported that waste was collected daily by the municipality from outside residents' houses and taken to a landfill 7 km outside of the city where it was buried.
- Currently, waste is only collected in some areas by the municipality, which are located towards the centre of the city. Expert KIs stated that the municipality does not have the ability to cover the whole area and is operating at significantly reduced capacity. There are reportedly large quantities of solid waste on the streets that has not been removed by the authorities.
- In the areas where waste collection does take place, the municipality collects it with support provided by an INGO. For the residents who have this service, the municipality is said to collect waste from outside of their houses, or from unused land nearby, every one-to-three days and take it to a new disposal site 3-4 km away from the city.
- For KIs living on the outskirts of the city or in surrounding villages, they reportedly dispose of the waste themselves, either burning or burying it in unused land in the vicinity.
- Expert KIs warned that undisposed waste is causing health problems in the town, including leishmaniasis from sandflies feeding on the garbage.

Improvements Suggested by KIs: Expert KIs reported that they need a garbage compressor, specialized vehicles for transporting waste, waste containers and a sorting plant to allow for the recycling of waste.

Other Basic Services: Education and Healthcare

Education

- According to an education expert KI, in Telafar municipal area there are approximately 50 functioning primary schools and 19 functioning secondary or high schools that have reopened since residents began returning to the city. Overall, returnee KIs reported that a lower percentage of schools had reopened than expert KIs, which indicates that there is a concern about school capacity among the returnee population.
- Teachers are working, but there are not enough teachers for the educational needs of the population. Education expert KIs reported that classroom sizes have approximately doubled since before ISIL and that around one-quarter of pre-ISIL teachers are now working in the city and its surrounding villages.
- Education expert KIs stated that some teachers were working without being paid. This is in part due to issues with registering returnee teachers or new teachers who have recently

graduated from teacher-training college. However, TdH is providing support to help the local education authority with the registration of teachers and students.

- There was reported to be a lack of equipment such as chairs and desks, as well as materials such as books. The available educational materials and equipment have been pooled into the schools that have reopened. An INGO has also reportedly donated educational materials, including books.
- Nine schools were reportedly damaged during the recent crisis, but repairs have been carried out with the assistance of an INGO. Up to 10 schools in the area are reportedly destroyed.
- Some students have to travel long distances to attend high schools, especially those living in outlying villages – who either use cars or rent buses, which reportedly costs between 20,000-25,000 IQD (16.88-21.10 USD)¹⁵ per student on a monthly basis. The furthest reported distance children had to travel to school was 8-10 kilometres.
- Many children have missed up to three years of education, which means that they are behind in the curriculum. However, the current situation is a significant improvement from August 2017 when no children were attending school.¹⁶

Improvements Suggested by KIs: Expert KIs stated that the area needs more teachers to return or to be trained, more educational materials such as books or computers and more equipment such as desks and chairs. Support is also needed with registering returnee or newly-trained teachers.

Healthcare

- Returnee KIs reported having access to public healthcare. There is one public hospital and one public clinic, both of which are undamaged and located in the city itself. Costs are low, reportedly around 3-5,000 IQD (1.67-2.53 USD)¹⁵ for a consultation and most services are free.
- There is reportedly a shortage of doctors, including specialists. Returnee KIs stated that at public healthcare facilities there are one or more dentists, radiologists, surgeons, doctors for women, internal doctors and paediatricians. Several specialists are reported to visit periodically from hospitals in Mosul. Expert KIs indicated that there is a shortage of medicines in the public facilities, including some basic medicines and medicines for chronic diseases. However, the supply is generally good when compared to locations elsewhere in Ninewa governorate.
- In terms of medical services, the following information was gathered:

Emergency: There is an Emergency Room that is reportedly running and accepting most cases, although the triage system is not fully operational.¹⁷

Surgery: There is reportedly one functioning operating theatre in the hospital in which emergency surgery can be done. The hospital does not currently have the capacity to do non-emergency surgery.

Maternity Care: There are midwives and there is the capacity to deliver normal births. However, if there are any complications with child birth, cases are being referred to Mosul.

Psychological Support: There is currently no psychological support provided in the public facilities, despite there reportedly being a significant need among the population.

- There are several small private clinics as well as private doctor's clinics located in the city. KIs indicated that the cost for a consultation is around 10,000 IQD. Only basic medical services are provided at these facilities.
- There are pharmacies located throughout the city. Most medicines are said to be available, although there are shortages of medicines for chronic diseases. Some returnee KIs found medicines to be more expensive and some KIs found them to be less expensive than the period before ISIL. One expert KI said that there was an issue with pharmacies not being officially registered and the supply of medicines not being properly monitored.

Improvements Suggested by KIs: Expert KIs said that there needs to be more doctors and staff (including the hiring and training of new staff), more medicines and improved procedures, such as a fully functioning triage system.

Legal Services

- There is a functioning court run by the government with four judges. Legal representation is also available, with lawyers being provided by the government. However, due to the volume of cases currently being dealt with there are reportedly long delays with legal processes in the city.
- In addition to the formal legal system, there are informal mechanisms for resolving civil disputes, headed by religious or community leaders. These are said to be more widely used now than in the period before ISIL.
- The most widely reported legal issues were looting of property, the loss of legal paperwork to prove ownership of property or land, the loss of identity documentation and the loss of Public Distribution System (PDS) ration cards. A legal expert KI noted that residents either lost their paperwork during displacement or had their paperwork destroyed while the town was occupied by ISIL. No KIs were able to give a clear indication of how widespread these issues were among residents.

- An expert KI stated that the municipality has the capacity to replace marriage, birth and death certificates as well as to renew property ownership documentation at a registration office in the city, but to replace national identity cards (which allow residents to move freely) or passports, residents must visit the Ninewa governorate office in Mosul.
- Returnees KIs reported that there are long delays to obtaining legal paperwork. For example, one KI reported that it took five months to get certification for the death of their father.

Improvements Suggested by KIs: Due to delays in legal process, more staff are needed in order to help manage the volume of cases received.

Endnotes

1. OCHA Iraq, "Telafar Flash Update", September 2017.
2. Ibid.
3. Figure is based on conversations with INGO workers currently living in the town and partially supported by the Iraq Protection Cluster, "Returns Overview: Ninewa", January 2018.
4. Based on conversations with local officials and INGO workers living in the town.
5. Gareth Stansfield, "The Looming Problem of Telafar", Wilson Centre: 2016.
6. The demographic details are also based on conversations with INGO workers living in the city currently. After 2003, Telafar experienced widespread sectarian violence between the different communities, and there was a destabilizing presence of armed groups in the city long before the arrival of ISIL. Dave van Zoonen and Khogir Wirya, "Turkmen in Telafar: Perceptions of Perceptions of Reconciliation and Conflict", Middle East Research Institute: July 2017.
7. REACH, "Humanitarian Overview: Telafar and its Surroundings", August 2017.
8. Internally Displaced Person (IDP) KIs came from Salamiyah and Haj Ali IDP camps located in Ninewa governorate as well as Mosul city, also in Ninewa, and Kut in Wasit governorate, south of Baghdad.
9. Dave van Zoonen and Khogir Wirya, "Turkmen in Telafar: Perceptions of Perceptions of Reconciliation and Conflict, Middle East Research Institute: July 2017.
10. REACH, "Humanitarian Overview: Telafar and its Surrounding Area", August 2017.
11. Rise Foundation, "Mosul and Telafar: Conflict Analysis", December 2017.
12. It should be noted that this information is based only on how KIs perceive the current situation and that no official figures on the demographics of current return were obtained during the data collection process.
13. This is supported by Rise Foundation, "Mosul and Telafar: Conflict Analysis", December 2017.
14. REACH, "Humanitarian Overview: Telafar City and Surrounding Areas", August 2017.
15. Price converted using www.xe.com on 16 April 2018.
16. REACH, "Humanitarian Overview: Telafar City and Surrounding Areas", August 2017.
17. A medical triage system is the evaluation and categorization of each case based on their level of need.

About REACH

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