

Camp Closure Community-based Assessment - Salah al-Din

RWG - September 2024

Objective and Methodology

Following the formal closure of the Tazade and Ashti camps in Sulaymaniyah governorate, most households returned to the Balad and Al-Firas districts in Salah al-Din governorate. To better understand the community's situation and needs, IOM conducted a community-based post-arrival assessment in August 2024 in the areas with the highest return rates in Salah al-Din.

Data collection:

1. **Key informant interviews (KIIs):** Interviews with different levels of the community key informants to provide an understanding of available services, community needs and challenges.
2. **focus group discussions (FGD):** To better understand the community's perception and the Impact of the high number of returns. FGDs were conducted with members within returnee and host community populations disaggregated by sex (female and male).

Assessment Coverage

- Ten KIIs were conducted with both Yathrib and Al-Dujeel subdistrict mayors and directorates (water, electricity, health and education).
- Twenty FGDs were conducted in the Al-Dujail and Yathrib subdistricts of Salah Al-Din governorate.
- Number of FGD Participants: 193 individuals (88 female and 105 male).

Community	KIIs	FGDs
Yathrib	5	4
Al-Shahabi	5	4
Al-Ajeelya		4
Rifaaya		4
Canal 43		4

Coverage map



Return

- The KIs reported that after January 2024, around 1,450 households returned to Al-Dujeel and Yathrib (1,100 HH Al-Dujeel, and 350 HH Yathrib). Almost all households returned from Ashti camp in Sulaymaniyah. One KI reported that one family was displaced again after returning because of family member's perceived affiliation.
- The returnee FGD participants reported they mainly returned from Ashti camp, with some also returning from Laylan camp, Markaz Al-Dujail, and Baghdad.

Reasons for return reported by returnee FGDs:

- The primary reason for returning was the closure of Ashti camp following the Government of Iraq's decision in January 2024 to close the IDP camps in KRI.
- Improved safety and stability in AoR.
- Desire to resume agriculture.
- Female FGD participants highlighted psychological distress caused by displacement, a strong desire to return home, and poor living conditions in the camps. Meanwhile, male returnees in Rifaaya highlighted a sense of stability.

Safety and Security

Safety: In general, both locations reportedly are safe (75% to 90% Dujeel and 100% Yathrib)(2 KIs).

- Two KIs reported there has not been an increase in security related incidents in the area with the new arrivals. However, the Yathrib KI reported that there was some tension between the clans because of the elections where they prioritize services.
- **Access:** KIs reported no movement restriction during the day or night in their areas in the past month preceding data collection.
- One KI reported there are returnee individuals who are still detained, either wanted or have similar names to wanted persons. Two KIs reported that some people in this community are not allowed to return because of perceived affiliation.

Community development: Al-Dujeel KI reported that Canal 34 community still has high levels of displacement. Yathrib KI reported Dur abu Al-hushma as high level of displacement.

- One KI reported newly established informal settlements in Ajeelyah (families living in tents).

Challenges After Return

- **Housing:** The majority of houses are damaged or destroyed (10 out of 10 returnee FGDs).
- **Limited access to basic services** including water, electricity and education.

Male returnees in Al-Shahabi FGD *"water distribution network cover only 50 houses, while the remaining 300 houses rely on well water, which is not suitable for drinking. And electricity supply is inconsistent and of low capacity."*

- **Lack of job opportunities:** Some families considering returning to displacement areas. Canal 34 (female FGD).
- **Agricultural:** Restrictions on bringing fertilizers into the area, forcing residents to give their land to other families. Al-Ajeelya (male and female FGDs).
- **Female Heads of Households:** Both female and male returnee FGD participants agreed that living conditions are particularly difficult for female heads of households. They reported that it is challenging to find a stable income to secure households' economic situation.

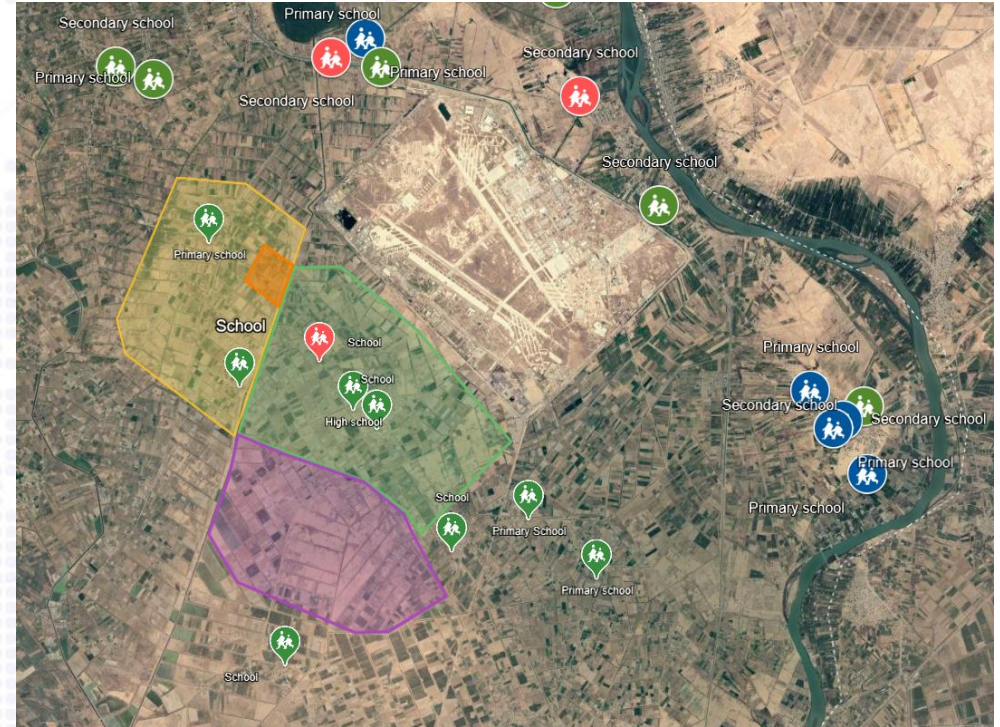
Male returnee FGDs in Al-Shahabi and Chanal 34: *"People have to go to cities or larger towns to find job opportunities, which is more difficult for women."*

Access to Education

- Both Education KIs reported schools are damaged or destroyed and most schools in the area are crowded.
- Al-Dujeel KI and Canal 34 returnee FGDs reported that **Canal 34 community has no schools** and students must go to the nearby community (Al- Shahabbi) to attend school.
- **Returnee FGDs in Yathrib:** Schools are overcrowded and lack teaching staff.
- **Host community FGDs:** Lack of schools in their community forces children to walk long distances to attend schools in nearby communities (3 to 5 kilometres). Children in Rafaaya have to go to Al-Ajeelya.

“The secondary school is far away, requiring a car for transportation. Due to financial constraints, many parents cannot afford to rent a car, forcing students to cross the street on foot, which has resulted in multiple accidents” Rafaaya female returnee FGD.

School location



Access to Water

- Water KIs reported that water infrastructure including water sources, water treatment plant, and water network is partially damaged. 50% of households in Al-Dujeel and 75% in Yathrib have sufficient water.
- Households rely on buying water for drinking and cooking through water trucks or bottled water. **Returnee FGDs.**
- Households rely on wells for agricultural, but these wells often provide salty water that is unsuitable for crops and livestock. **Returnee FGDs.**
- The existing water distribution network is covering only a limited number of households (e.g., 30-50 houses in Al-shahabi and Canal 34). **Returnee FGDs in Al-Shahabi and canal 34**
- The water supply through the distribution network is weak and not suitable for drinking due to a lack of filtration. **Returnee FGDs.**
- Water outages can last up to eight days, leading to challenges for the new returnees. **Al-Shahabi FGDs**

Housing

- KIs reported more than half of the houses are destroyed/damaged and there are families living in tents and makeshift shelters.
- Both KIs reported no disputes related to housing or illegal occupation. Housing ownership types reportedly are owned houses, renting and hosted.
- **All returnee FGD participants (male and female)** reported a lack of housing in these communities due to the high number of damaged, destroyed, or burned houses in the areas of return. The male returnee FGD participants in Yathrib reported that 90% of the houses are still damaged.

Livelihoods

All FGD participants reported a lack of job opportunities in AoR. Returnee participants mentioned that, as farmers, they wish to resume farming, but the lack of irrigation water and fertilizers makes it difficult for returnee households. *“It is forbidden for us to bring fertilizers to our area, and therefore we had to give our land to people from another area because they are allowed to bring in whatever they need.”* male FGD in Al-Al-Ajeelya.

This is not a law, but some tribes with high return rates have been back for a longer period and have established good connections with the local security forces. This allows them to transport goods more easily than newer returnees or those from tribes with a smaller population.

A world map composed of small white dots on a blue background with a grid of lines.

Questions?