

PROTRACTED DISPLACEMENT SULAYMANIYAH ASHTI CAMP



November 2023

METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVES

This report details the findings of Focus Group Discussions conducted in Ashti Camp, Sulaymaniyah to gain insights into the current circumstances of IDPs, both men and women, in their areas of displacement and to determine the level and types of risks that may be associated with returns to their areas of origin.

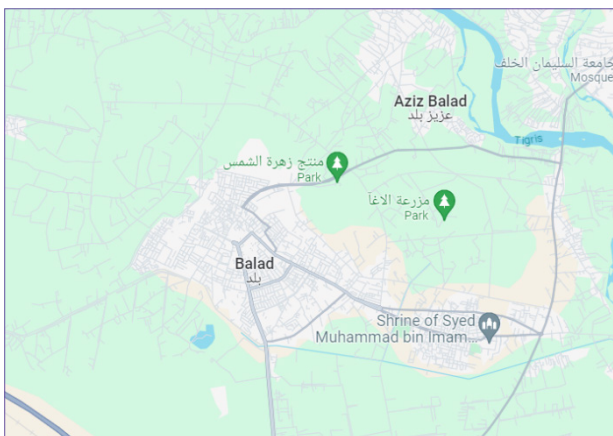
The information was gathered through conducting four separate FGDs for the men and women. The first FGDs were conducted with the Salah al-Din group, with approximately 6-10 individuals participating. The second FGDs that were conducted with the Yezidi group, the men group had approximately 6-10 participants however, only 2 Yezidi women participated in the female FGD.

Ashti camp was established in 2014 and currently has 1,678 HH (8,089 individuals). The camp also recently received residents from Arbat camp when the Sulaymaniyah camps were consolidated. The majority of HH in Ashti camp displaced to Sulaymaniyah in 2014 from various governorates including Ninewa, Salah Al-Din, Anbar, Diyala and Babylon. Overall, the majority of households in Ashti camp are from Salah Al-Din followed by Ninewa, Diyala and Babylon.

SALAH AL-DIN GROUP

DISPLACEMENT HISTORY

The IDPs, fled their homes due to the ISIL conflict in 2014 and are currently residing in Ashti Camp with the total number of households in the camp standing at 1,678 HHs (8,089 individuals). The IDPs, both men and women, initially fled to Arbat camp and later on displaced in Ashti camp. Their areas of origin are Salah al-Din, specifically Balad district and Yathrib subdistrict. Balad district has 12 subdistricts, with 5 subdistricts including Yathrib classified as high severity locations. Regarding displacement, the total number of families from Salah al-Din that remain displaced is 7,658 including 591 households from Balad district. According to the latest update, a total of 11,386 households have returned to Markaz Balad, while 6,278 families have returned to Yathrib subdistrict. Furthermore, the majority of the households have other family members from Yathrib displaced in different locations such as Kirkuk, Erbil and Garmian.



Yathrib Subdistrict Location



Balad District Location

CURRENT SITUATION AND CHALLENGES

According to the IDPs, including the female headed households, the main needs in the camp surround the school and the health facility in the camp. The school is operated by the Iraqi Federal Government and the health facility is funded by OCHA and Hevi NGO covers the costs. Furthermore, the IDPs have the freedom of movement, thus, should they require a specific need which is not available in the camp, they can access the health centers in the vicinity.

School

- School structure is inadequate with broken windows and no ACs.
- Overcrowded classrooms hinder the learning environment.
- Despite complaints by the IDPs, no actions have been taken by responsible parties.
- Out-of-camp IDPs depend on the in-camp school for education.
- Staffing is limited, impacting the school's functionality.
- English teachers are unavailable, affecting language education.

Health Facility

- Medicine shortage poses a challenge in the health facility.
- Gynecologist availability is limited to only two days per week.
- The absence of a 24/7 ambulance service adds to concerns.
- General prescriptions are given, neglecting specific medical needs.

Access to Services

The feedback from both men and women on their access to services in the camp was generally positive. They expressed that the WASH facilities in the camp surpass those in their areas of origin. The camp benefits from reliable electricity, and waste management is handled by Heartland Alliance NGO, visiting every four days. Furthermore, MoMD actively contributes to providing food baskets and gasoil.

Concerning legal services, most of the IDPs encounter no issues with their documentation, enabling visits to their areas of origin. Some IDPs visit their areas of origin to follow-up on their documentations that are granted by the PMF forces at a cost of IQD 500,000 per household. However, frequent visits are hindered by time-consuming procedures and expensive costs. Before returning, the IDPs need to secure a security clearance.

Moreover, the IDPs obtain their PDS items in their places of origin. Typically, families gather their items and hire a car to transport all the PDS items to the camp. In the initial two years of displacement, they used to receive these items in the camp, but currently, the items are transported to their areas of origin.

Access to Livelihoods

Some IDPs engage in daily work or tailoring, obtaining Asayish and camp management security clearance to freely pursue their jobs. Both Asayish and camp management maintain a list of daily workers, allowing unrestricted movement. According to the KIIs conducted, they stated that the availability of livelihoods in the camp surpass the areas of origin.

Safety

The participants, both men and women, reported no complaints regarding security and safety. They feel secure and comfortable within their host community, enjoying freedom of movement. However, a sense of insecurity prevails in their areas of origin due to the presence of PMF forces.

Access to information regarding Areas of Origin

The men and women IDPs rely on relatives to gather information on their areas of origin. Many IDPs have visited their houses in their AoO, seeking information on the status of the area and their homes.

The liberated status varies across areas as some areas are still under the control of PMF forces and some areas remain inaccessible due to tribal conflicts in addition to tensions with perceived ISIL-affiliated individuals. Specifically, the blocked areas include Khazraj, Tal Aldahab, and Jaafas.

Despite overall accessibility to services, the primary issue pertains to water services. There are two water sources: one designated for domestic use and the other for agriculture. While domestic water is available, the irrigation channels for agriculture are inactive due to PMF control over agricultural practices in Yathrib. This has led to disputes over water channels, mainly used for favored lands.

INTENTIONS AND OBSTACLES TO RETURN

Some individuals have returned solely because they are government employees. Some families have shown interest to return and have no security issues, though they do need support in terms of shelter, rehabilitation and job opportunities. However, the only work available is agricultural work while PMF controls most agricultural lands. Some IDPs also need legal support for the documentation due to the high cost of the procedures. Furthermore, a single household from Diyala resides in the camp and are unable to return due to tribal conflict.

The men and women IDPs expressed no willingness to return unless specific conditions are met:

- Reconstruction of their homes.
- Reinstatement of police and federal army presence.
- Availability of job opportunities.
- Withdrawal of the PMF group from the area.
- Despite the presence of WASH facilities, PMF control restricts its usage, particularly impacting agriculture and daily water needs.

The IDPs in Suli have freedom of movement, once they choose to return the families process their return through camp management, Asayish and MoMD, which is the usual return process.



YEZIDI GROUP

DISPLACEMENT HISTORY

During the ISIL conflict, families fled their homes in 2014 and displaced in Ashti camp. The families fled to Ashti because of the availability of services, livelihoods and safety. The total number of Yezidi families in Ashti camp is 111 households. Their areas of origin in Sinjar include Siba Shekh Khdir, Tal Bannat, Khanasor, Andalus, Adnanya, Hatim, Yarmouk, Taluzzer, and Wardia. In general, according to the latest update from DTM, the total number of IDPs from Sinjar in Sulaymaniyah is 6,187 households (37,122 individuals) indicating that the majority of Sinjar IDPs in Suli are in out of camp settings. The KII expressed that many Yezidis face obstacles to returning, primarily stemming from security concerns and a shortage of shelter.



Building in Ashti Camp

CURRENT SITUATION AND CHALLENGES

The women expressed that they feel discriminated in the camp and stated that the Yezidi's are not included in assistances provided by the government such as winter supplies, gasoil and food baskets. They have raised their concerns to the camp management and were informed that the camp management is unable to do anything as the assistance is not provided to Yazidis. According to the KII's, the main reason the Yezidi's are not receiving any assistances by the government is due to the government insisting on their return and believe that the areas in Sinjar are liberated. Additionally, some individual donors occasionally aid the IDPs including the Yezidis.

Access to Services

The IDPs, both men and women, generally provided favorable feedback regarding the services in the camp, stating that the WASH facilities there are superior to those in their places of origin. The camp has reliable electricity, and Heartland Alliance NGO manages waste every four days. Furthermore, the IDPs receive their PDS items in their areas of origin. Most families gather their items and rent a car to transport all the PDS items to the camp. In the first two years of displacement, they used to receive it in the camp but now their items are taken to their areas of origin. It is worth noting that some of the IDPs had no information on the compensation procedures for damaged housing.

Access to Livelihoods

Some IDPs are involved in daily work or tailoring and some women also work as daily workers in the farms, obtaining security clearance from Asayish and camp management for job flexibility. Both Asayish and camp management maintain a list of daily workers, allowing unrestricted movement.

Safety

Families report that there are no security concerns in the camp or with the host community, and both women and men IDPs feel at ease and welcomed by the host communities.

Areas of Origin

The IDPs actively engage with relatives to gather information on their areas of origin. Many IDPs have visited both their houses and AoO, to obtain further information on the status of their homes. All the IDPs have a majority of their relatives residing in Duhok camps. Some IDPs have returned to their areas of origin, solely due to their governmental jobs. However, concerns arise in their areas of origin due to the ongoing presence of PKK and YPG. The fear stems from the recruitment of young individuals, with reports of forced enlistment into PKK. Joining these armed groups is incentivized with a payment of \$300 by YPG & PKK. To apply for HLP compensation, IDPs must visit their areas of origin and transportation cost is approximately 100,000 IQD to visit and return. Regarding the process of return, it is the same usual process of obtaining clearances from Camp Management, Asayish and MoMD.

INTENTIONS AND OBSTACLES TO RETURN

In the FGDs, the men group had approximately 6-10 participants and the women group had only two participants. Regarding their intentions, the majority of the IDPs stated that should they receive compensations and shelter assistance, they would consider returning however, the government must ensure safety and security prior to returning and provide livelihood assistance and services.

The reasons for the men and women IDPs being hesitant to return are linked to the lack of proper shelter, security, and services. The majority of IDPs resided in mud houses, but the lack of maintenance and inhabitable conditions since 2014 have led to significant deterioration, requiring assistance for reconstruction. The security concern refers to the present of PKK and YPG, as there are reports of them pressuring young men to join armed groups, offering a \$300 payment by YPG & PKK. Additionally, certain families face ongoing distress with female members, especially girls, being held hostage by ISIL with no information about their well-being. Lastly, the lack of services and job opportunities in the areas of origin are also a big factor in the lack of returns.



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