In August 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS) seized the districts of Sinjar, Tel Afar and the Nineveh Plains, leading to a mass exodus of Yazidis, Christians and other religious communities from these areas. Soon, reports began to surface regarding war crimes and serious human rights violations perpetrated by ISIS and associated armed groups. These included the systematic targeting of members of ethnic and religious minorities. By March 2015, 500,000 Yazidis, predominantly from Sinjar District, had been displaced, with the majority fleeing to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) and particularly Dohuk Governorate.²

Some 3,000 Yazidis, mostly women and children, reportedly continue to be missing after having been abducted by ISIS in 2014.³ Since Kurdish forces retook Sinjar in mid-November 2015, dozens of mass graves containing the remains of Yazidis have been found.⁴
1) Access to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I)

Access to the KR-I via Erbil Airport or internal land borders is generally possible, provided the individual holds valid travel documents. There are no visa requirements for Iraqi nationals to enter the KR-I. Persons originating from outside the KR-I must approach the local Directorate General of Asayish (Asayish) in the neighbourhood in which they seek to reside in order to obtain a residency card. They do not require a sponsor.5

2) Humanitarian / Socio-Economic Situation in the KR-I

There are serious concerns about the limits of the KR-I’s absorption capacity in light of the continued high numbers of displaced populations present in the region,7 and against the backdrop of deteriorating socio-economic conditions and increasing poverty in the KR-I8 and limited (and decreasing) humanitarian assistance.9 The presence of large numbers of displaced populations mainly in and around urban areas is reported to have stretched local services and infrastructure, increased job competition, and contributed to a significant decline in living standards across the KR-I.10

---

5 The Directorate General of Asayish is responsible for domestic security in the KR-I.
7 The KR-I, with an estimated total population of over five million people, continues to host close to 700,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 250,000 Syrian refugees. Some 1.2 million people, including IDPs, refugees, returnees and vulnerable host communities are considered to be in need of humanitarian assistance. Funding constraints mean that of these, fewer than half (500,000) are targeted for humanitarian assistance in 2019. In all three governorates, there are districts with high or very high humanitarian needs, including Sumel and Zakho (Dohuk Governorate), Makhmour (Erbil Governorate) and Sulaymaniyya (Sulaymaniyya Governorate). The severity of needs in Erbil District is assessed to be moderate, however, it hosts the highest number of people in need in all of the KR-I (approximately 321,000 people, including a third of all refugees). The majority of IDPs currently in camps in the KR-I do not intend to return to their areas of origin in the foreseeable future, which may result in further strains on already stretched resources; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Iraq: Humanitarian Response Plan January – December 2019, 26 February 2019, https://bit.ly/2TyibMb, pp. 2, 12, 13, 33, 34. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)/IOM, Demographic Survey: Kurdistan Region of Iraq, 13 September 2018, https://bit.ly/2XvPev, p. 14. "The Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) has borne the brunt of the influx of millions of refugees and displaced persons, often relying on its own finances to provide shelter and other basic needs for them. One in four current residents of the Kurdish Region is either an internally displaced person (IDP) or a refugee“; Kurdistan 24, Access to Employment Greatest Concern for Iraq’s Displaced; IOM, 4 January 2019, https://bit.ly/2NKIDTG.
8 "Continued low oil prices have led to budget deficits which have forced the KRG to reduce many government programs"; Bertelsmann Foundation, BTI 2018 Country Report – Iraq, 2018, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1427413:482988_en.pdf, p. 9. The poverty level in the KR-I, although still lower than in other parts of the country, has risen from 3.5 per cent in 2012 to 12.5 per cent since the beginning of the conflict against ISIS. The unemployment rate is reported to have increased from 6.5 per cent before 2014 to 14 per cent in 2016, due to the influx of IDPs and refugees; World Bank, Iraq Economic Monitor - Toward Reconstruction, Economic Recovery and Fostering Social Cohesion, Fall 2018, http://bit.ly/2UDxN2a, pp. 9, 15.
a) Shelter

The majority of Yazidi IDPs reside outside camps, while others are hosted in IDP camps. Out-of-camp IDPs are settled in informal settlements and in urban areas, including in unfinished or abandoned buildings and/or rented accommodation.

As camps were built and are managed by different actors, standards of accommodation vary greatly, ranging from upgraded shelters (e.g. caravans and residential housing units) to emergency shelters (tents with or without cement base). IDPs living in camps and informal settlements are particularly exposed to extreme weather conditions, and challenges related to inadequate water and sanitation infrastructure continue to persist.

As rent levels in the KR-I are relatively high and increasing, many IDPs cannot afford the rising costs and are at risk of eviction and/or are forced to relocate to IDP camps. However, admission to camps is limited the capacity of local communities and authorities to adequately respond to the continued influx of IDPs and Syrian refugees facing protracted displacement. And further: “The presence of IDPs and refugees in need of accessing the job market creates significant competition among the different target groups and causes social frictions in many areas”, Action Against Hunger, Creating Job Opportunities for Young Adults in Kurdistan – Final Independent Evaluation, September 2018, https://bit.ly/2NIlf5V, pp. 8, 39. “Syrian refugees and IDPs today constitute about 23 per cent of the Kurdistan population. This entails a strain on employment and livelihood opportunities, as well as on services. Increased competition for housing outside the camps drove up costs and led to overcrowding and resorting to substandard accommodations”, Migration Policy Centre, Profile Iraq, undated, accessed 30 April 2019, https://bit.ly/2IfIloR. See also, ACTED, Municipal Services under Pressure as IDPs Flood to Dohuk, 10 October 2018, https://bit.ly/2C4KEUX.

IDPs in Dohuk Governorate are dispersed across the governorate’s seven districts. The majority, over 222,968 individuals, reside outside camps, while over 166,105 individuals are hosted in one of 17 camps. In Erbil Governorate, nearly 200 Yazidi families are scattered in areas outside camps of which around 60 reside in unfinished buildings. A total of 1,025 Yazidi families (5,365 individuals) reside in Sulaymaniyah Governorate, of which 198 families (941 individuals) live in camps and 827 families (4,424 individuals) live outside camps; UNHCR Information, May 2019.

“Those Yazidis and other internally displaced populations who have opted to live outside of the camps have struggled to find shelter (for example in unfinished construction sites) on the outskirts of major urban centres. These populations are required to fend for themselves with little or no social support and generally must barter or offer their labour in exchange for rent payments and other shelter. This is in the context of an economic crisis in Kurdistan where the State struggles to provide minimal services while public employees are not paid regularly”; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Population Profile: The Yazidis, 24 February 2017, https://bit.ly/2zuxEa5, p. 7. See also, IOM, Protracted Displacement Study: An In-Depth Analysis of the Main Districts of Displacement, April 2019, https://bit.ly/2xDU4mx, pp. 21-26.

More than 20,000 households are estimated to be in need of tent replacement and are exposed to harsh climatic conditions. Furthermore, “[i]n many of these camps, overall minimum service standards have not significantly improved from the initial emergency phase due to lack of investment and upgrades. The large caseload, protracted nature of displacement, and age of the camps (some camps are over four years old, particularly in Dohuk), are also contributing factors”; OCHA, Iraq: Humanitarian Response Plan January – December 2019, 26 February 2019, https://bit.ly/2TvIbMb, pp. 8, 17. Fifty per cent of in-camp IDP households surveyed were found to be in need of shelter assistance; REACH, Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment (MCNA) – In-Camp IDPs, September 2018, https://bit.ly/2CWipesP, p. 4. See also, Foreign Policy, Among Displaced Iraqis, One Group Is Worse Off than the Rest, 29 April 2019, https://bit.ly/2J7j9fW. The New Humanitarian, As Displacement Runs to Years, Northern Iraq Camps Need an Overhaul, 25 February 2019, https://bit.ly/2Xgq1SY; World Food Programme (WFP)/UNHCR, Joint Vulnerability Assessment June 2018, 2 August 2018, https://bit.ly/2Dv1Jbdn, p. 48.


“In areas of displacement – especially the northern governorates which host a large proportion of IDPs – rent prices are increasing, negatively affecting IDPs, host communities and returnees”; OCHA, Iraq: Humanitarian Response Plan January – December 2019, 26 February 2019, https://bit.ly/2TvIbMb, p. 8. “Housing prices increased by 20 percent in 2018 in the Kurdistan Region, while rent has gone up by 15; with even higher prices predicted”; Rudaw, Housing, Rent Prices Increasing in Kurdistan Region, 8 January 2019, https://bit.ly/2Vz1Wv4; “Increased competition for housing outside the camps drove up costs and led to
subject to space limitations and therefore regulated by waiting lists. Those living in critical shelter arrangements such as unfinished or abandoned buildings are often faced with no or limited access to adequate water, electricity, heating and sanitation, and exposed to harsh weather conditions, e.g. as a result of leaking roofs, opening in the walls, and broken windows.

b) Employment

IDPs in the KR-I are reported to face difficulties in accessing employment and many can only find casual work, leaving them without a regular income. IDPs find it difficult to find jobs that would enable them to cover their basic costs of living, including medical care, education fees and housing. IDPs living outside of camps may find it difficult to compete with those in camps where living costs are lower, allowing them to accept lower wages. A survey undertaken in the KR-I by the International

overcrowding and resorting to substandard accommodations"; Migration Policy Centre, *Profile Iraq*, undated, https://bit.ly/2RPlrR. For example, in Dohuk Governorate, rent payments range from Iraqi Dinar (IQD) 150,000 (US$ 125) to IQD 500,000 (US$ 416) depending on the location and the distance from Dohuk City. In Erbil Governorate, the average rent is around 300 US$. In Sulaymaniyah Governorate, rent payments range from IQD 200,000 (US$ 166) to IQD 550,000 (US$ 458), depending on the location and the distance from the City; UNHCR information, May 2019.

As at April 2019, around 3,000 individuals were waiting for admission to an IDP camp in Erbil (2,200 persons) and Dohuk Governorates (780 individuals). In Dohuk Governorate, the highest demand is for admission to Yezidi-populated camps; UNHCR information, April 2019. Moreover, "[I]n many camps, tents are worn-out, water and sanitation services need to be increased, access to health and education services needs to be improved and livelihood programmes need to be expanded"; OCHA, *Iraq: Humanitarian Response Plan January – December 2019*, 26 February 2019, https://bit.ly/2TylbMb, p. 34.


IDPs in the KR-I are more likely to be among the lower-income households: over 80 per cent of households settled in camps and nearly 45 per cent of those living outside of camps have a monthly income of less than 500,000 IQD per month (compared to 35 per cent among the non-camp KR-I); UNFPA/IOM, *Demographic Survey: Kurdistan Region of Iraq, 13 September 2018*, https://bit.ly/2NXvPeV, p. 44. “The impact of the economic crisis is severely felt in camps because of a lack of jobs outside the camp both for men and women reduced household incomes and peoples’ purchasing ability. All the female participants who are/were running shops or beauty salons said their income has declined significantly since the start of the economic crisis”; London School of Economics (LSE), *Displacement and Women’s Empowerment: Voices of Displaced Women in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq*, 4 March 2018, https://bit.ly/2MZvqvG, p. 17.

Organization for Migration (IOM) in September 2018 indicated that IDPs settled in camps appear to be more vulnerable than the non-camp IDP population.\(^\text{23}\)

The public sector, which plays a dominant role in the KR-I economy,\(^\text{24}\) is generally not open for non-Kurds from outside the region.\(^\text{25}\) Patronage and nepotism continue to be important factors in securing employment in the KR-I, which puts those not originating from the area at a disadvantage.\(^\text{26}\) Yazidis face particular difficulties in finding employment, including on account of low levels of education, missing documentation, as well as lack of work experience in sectors other than construction and agriculture.\(^\text{27}\)

In light of limited livelihood opportunities and exhausted savings,\(^\text{28}\) IDP households have been increasingly reliant on negative coping strategies in order to meet their basic needs, including incurring debts, child marriage and forced marriage, sending children to work and reducing food intake.\(^\text{29}\)

---

\(^\text{23}\) "Internally displaced people settled in camps appear to be more vulnerable than the non-camp IDP population, which displays on average a distribution of vulnerabilities in line with the KRI. In nearly 57% of camp households, the HoH [heads of household] was found not working and in 41% no one was working in the week preceding the survey. In addition, 14% of camp households are led by a female, and 15% include a mentally/physically impaired individual among their members"; IOM, Demographic Survey: Kurdistan Region of Iraq, September 2018, https://bit.ly/2Go8mZ, p. 30.


\(^\text{25}\) In the KR-I, non-Kurds cannot work in the public sector unless it is for the institutions of the central government. Some IDPs were able to transfer their employment to these bodies and received their salaries from the central government. Others managed to find employment because of their Arabic language skills in the largely Kurdish-speaking KR-I; Georgetown University/IOM, Access to Durable Solutions Among IDPs in Iraq: Three Years in Displacement, 12 February 2019, http://bit.ly/2H7oZQ, p. 25.

\(^\text{26}\) "For minorities living in the KRI or areas under the de-facto control of the Kurdish authorities, access to public sector jobs is often conditioned on support for the aims of the major Kurdish political parties"; Minority Rights Group International (MRG), Alternative Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) – Review of the Periodic Report of Iraq, 2018, http://bit.ly/2VkJsoYo, para. 18. For example, "(...) presidents of universities, deans of colleges, and heads of departments and even school managers in Hawler (Erbil) and Duhok provinces are either employed by, or are members of KDP; and in Sulaimani and Halabja provinces they are mostly hired by PUK"; Open Democracy, Corruption Corrodes Kurdish Education, 15 October 2018, https://bit.ly/2Umst4c. "About one fifth of interviewees perceive wasta [(a term referring to connections, favoritism, nepotism) as a key hindrance to obtaining livelihood opportunities, especially in the camps"; LSE, Displacement and Women's Empowerment: Voices of Displaced Women in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, 4 March 2018, https://bit.ly/2MzZvqc, p. 17. According to reports, finding work in the informal sector often requires connections: "Informal job searching is by far the main recruitment mechanism. Employers generally turn first to their friends and families and advertising job openings is not a common practice, therefore making the recruitment system non-transparent"; DRC/UNDP/UNHCR, A Study of the Opportunities in Labour Markets for IDPs and Refugees in Kurdistan Conflict Labour and Service-Sector Labour Market Systems, December 2014, https://bit.ly/2UpErq, p. 7.

\(^\text{27}\) An IOM study on ethno-religious groups found that unemployment was widespread among both IDP and returnee households. With regards to Yazidi IDPs, "levels of unemployment were significantly higher among Yazidi IDPs: half of the interviewed Yazidi IDPs were unemployed (49.6%)." This compares to 24 per cent among Christian, Shabak Shi’a and Turkmen Shi’a IDPs. The study further found that "[E]mployment in informal commerce or inconsistent daily labour as well as agriculture and animal husbandry are more prevalent among Yazidis"; IOM, Understanding Ethno-Religious Groups in Iraq: Displacement and Return Report, 28 February 2018, https://bit.ly/2VHf1LS, pp. 6, 10, 11.

\(^\text{28}\) "Across the region [KR-I], limited livelihood opportunities, compounded by increased indebtedness and the exhaustion of savings, further exacerbated protection risks and negative coping mechanisms for vulnerable populations, refugees, IDPs and host communities"; Action Against Hunger, Creating Job Opportunities for Young Adults in Kurdistan, September 2018, https://bit.ly/2UJvYrQ, p. 8. "(...) findings from the tenth round of Camp Profiling [August 2018] indicate that 70 per cent of in-camp IDP households had been resorting to borrowing money or relying on debt as a coping strategy in the 30 days prior to being interviewed, or had already exhausted such means of coping"; OCHA, Iraq: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019 (November 2018), 16 December 2018, https://bit.ly/2Cf5Wd, p. 47. "As their displacement becomes protracted, IDPs shift from selling assets and spending savings towards the use of debt to meet their needs, as they exhaust their resources. This was visible in Duhok, Diyala and Sulaymaniyah, where the average date of displacement was in 2014. In these governorates the use of debt as a coping strategy was more common than the sale of assets: 55% of households in Duhok reported resorting to taking on debt whilst only 29% reported selling assets, compared to 32% and 16% respectively in Sulaymaniyah and 23% and 15% respectively in Diyala (...). This indicates a trend in the use of coping strategies where IDPs increasingly resort to taking on debt once their assets become exhausted" (emphasis added); REACH, Comparative Multi-Cluster Assessment of Internally Displaced Persons Living in Camps – Iraq, July 2017, https://bit.ly/2xWJDJ, p. 15.

Inability to access employment/livelihoods often results in difficulties with accessing food, health services and shelter.\textsuperscript{30}

c) Education

Overall in Iraq, one third of school-aged IDP children in camps and a quarter of IDP children living in out-of-camp location have no access to formal education opportunities.\textsuperscript{31} Schools across the country are reported to lack basic facilities and access to electricity and water.\textsuperscript{32} Furthermore, schools suffer from overcrowding and a shortage of qualified teachers, textbooks and teaching materials.\textsuperscript{33} The shortage of adequate school facilities means that many schools have to run multiple shifts, further compromising educational standards.\textsuperscript{34} Lack of access to and participation in education increases the risks for children and youth to be exposed to child labour, recruitment by armed groups, child marriage and psychosocial distress.\textsuperscript{35}

A considerable number of IDP children is reported to face challenges to accessing formal education in the KR-I, including due to the long distance to reach school and limited economic resources (e.g. to pay for school fees, uniforms, transportation and books).\textsuperscript{36} Moreover, while Arabic schools, established in

\textsuperscript{36} In Dohuk Governorate, in 95 out of 115 assessed informal IDP sites school-aged children faced challenges to accessing formal education, mostly due to long distance to school, limited economic resources and physical/logistical restraints. In Sulaymaniyah Governorate, key informants in 17 of 18 sites reported challenges to accessing formal education for the same reasons; REACH, Informal Site Assessment Sulaymaniyah Governorate, August 2018, https://bit.ly/2VHNhH; Ibid, Informal Site Assessment Duhok Governorate, August 2018, https://bit.ly/3swY1YQ. According to a 2018 assessment of IDPs in camps in Sulaymaniyah Governorate, 75 per cent of IDP children aged 6 to 11 received formal education, while the figure decreased to 59 per cent for children aged 12 to 17. In Dohuk Governorate, the rates stood at 83 and 69 per cent, and in Erbil Governorate at 78 and 54 per cent, respectively. The most commonly cited reason for non-attendance was the “disinterest of children”; REACH, Comparative Multi-Cluster Assessment of IDPs Living in Camps – Assessment Report Round IX, April 2018, https://bit.ly/2NpeAG, p. 29. “Children affected by conflict continue to have limited access to education, particularly those still living in displacement – in and out of camps – as well as in the areas of return. The greatest education needs continue to be in Ninewa, Anbar, Salah al ‘Din, Kirkuk, Diyala, Sulaymaniyah, Erbil and Duhuk” (emphasis added); OCHA, Iraq: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019 (November 2018), 16 December 2018, https://bit.ly/2CjZSwD, p. 48. In Sulaymaniyah, “many IDP schools have only one or two teachers who receive a salary from the government; other teachers are supported directly by IDP families through the collection of monthly economic incentives,’ which has financial and protection implications for IDPs. In 12 out-of-camp schools, IDP parents also pay the rent for the school building because it is not a government-owned facility. Such circumstances are one of the consequences of protracted displacement, as host communities try to contend with unexpected population increases”; OCHA, Iraq: “Internally Displaced Persons Must Be Presented with Options Beyond Life in a Camp” – Humanitarian Coordinator, 4 March 2019, https://bit.ly/2On09W. “MRG’s sources indicate that many Christians and Yezidis have been quitting even temporary schools due to a different education environment, whereas IDPs from Sinjar have reported difficulties in adapting to the KRI curriculum, as schools in Sinjar pre-ISIS used to follow the Arabic curriculum of the GoI”; MRGI, Alternate Report to the
response to the influx of mostly Arabic-speaking IDPs into the KR-I since 2014, are set to close according to a decision by the Iraqi Ministry of Education. School attendance among Yazidi children in displacement is reportedly limited including as a result of families’ inability to afford costs related to education and the need for children to work in order to support their families. In addition, schools in IDP camps reportedly suffer from overcrowding and a lack of qualified teaching staff. These conditions reportedly result in elevated levels of illiteracy among Yazidi IDP children.

According to UNHCR information, Yazidi IDP children commonly joined Arabic-speaking schools as schools in their areas of origin in Nineveh Governorate used to follow the Arabic curriculum of the central Government. According to information available to UNHCR, school closures are expected for the academic year 2019/2020. UNHCR received information that along with the decision to close Arabic schools in the KR-I, 1,800 IDP teachers have been formally requested by the central Government to return to their areas of origin. Transfers of Arabic-speaking IDP children to Kurdish schools are reportedly being planned by the government.


An IOM study found that levels of education were similar across all ethno-religious IDP and returnee groups with the exception of the Yazidis, who “had significantly lower levels of education.” Among Yazidi IDPs, 60 per cent of the respondents had not received any formal education while 28 per cent attained primary school level, IOM, Understanding Ethno-Religious Groups in Iraq: Displacement and Return Report, 28 February 2019, https://bit.ly/2VFH1lS, p. 10. Twenty per cent of IDP households in Dohuk Governorate reported the inability to afford costs associated with sending their children to school: “Here again, the lack of sufficient livelihood opportunities inside the camps has become a significant financial barrier, preventing households from sending their children to school”. The same 2017 survey also found that “[H]ouseholds in Dahuk also frequently reported children involved in work and chores as an obstacle [sic] to education (28% reported children working and 30% reported them involved in chores) – this was common across all camps, in particular Kabarto 1, Bersive, Rwanga community and Shaliya where these challenges were reported by 20 to 40% of households. The need for children to work reflects the urgency for households to find sufficient sources of income in order to meet their basic needs and be able to send their children to school”; REACH, Comparative Multi-Cluster Assessment of Internally Displaced Persons Living in Camps – Iraq, July 2017, https://bit.ly/2WJBDJ, p. 26.

In Sulaymaniyah, “many IDP schools have only one or two teachers who receive a salary from the government; other teachers are supported directly by IDP families through the collection of monthly economic ‘incentives,’ which has financial and protection implications for IDPs. In 12 out-of-camp schools, IDP parents also pay the rent for the school building because it is not a government-owned facility. Such circumstanctes are one of the consequences of protracted displacement, as host communities try to contend with unexpected population increases”; OCHA, Iraq: “Internally Displaced Persons Must Be Presented with Options Beyond Life in a Camp” – Humanitarian Coordinator, 4 March 2019, https://bit.ly/2OnO9W; “The incursion of Daesh in the summer of 2014 and the subsequent displacement of the Yazidi population resulted in a disruption of at least half a year of the studies of most Yazidi youth that had been in school. Makeshift schools that have been built in displacement camps in Iraqi Kurdistan struggle to meet the educational demand of the displaced population. Camp schools suffer from over-crowding, as well as shortages of qualified instructors and funding”; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Population Profile: The Yazidis, February 2017, https://bit.ly/2zuVEa6, p. 6.

“Among Yazidi IDPs, 60 per cent of the respondents had not received any formal education while 28 per cent attained primary school level, IOM, Understanding Ethno-Religious Groups in Iraq: Displacement and Return Report, 28 February 2019, https://bit.ly/2VFH1lS, p. 10. Twenty per cent of IDP households in Dohuk Governorate reported the inability to afford costs associated with sending their children to school: “Here again, the lack of sufficient livelihood opportunities inside the camps has become a significant financial barrier, preventing households from sending their children to school”. The same 2017 survey also found that “[H]ouseholds in Dahuk also frequently reported children involved in work and chores as an obstacle [sic] to education (28% reported children working and 30% reported them involved in chores) – this was common across all camps, in particular Kabarto 1, Bersive, Rwanga community and Shaliya where these challenges were reported by 20 to 40% of households. The need for children to work reflects the urgency for households to find sufficient sources of income in order to meet their basic needs and be able to send their children to school”; REACH, Comparative Multi-Cluster Assessment of Internally Displaced Persons Living in Camps – Iraq, July 2017, https://bit.ly/2WJBDJ, p. 26.


generally not possible, particularly for older children due to differences in language (Kurdish vs. Arabic) and curriculum.44

d) Mental Health

Many Yazidis suffer from (extreme) psychosocial distress as a result of the serious violence they have experienced, the loss or captivity of family members, ongoing displacement and economic hardship.45 Therefore, psycho-social needs among this IDP population are reported to be extremely high. A high number of suicides, suicide attempts and other self-destructive behaviour among the displaced population has been observed by UNHCR’s protection partners operating in camps in Dohuk Governorate. At least 40 incidents of (attempted) suicides have been reported in 2018 and some 10 incidents (six attempts and four committed) between January and April 2019 in IDP camps (primarily in Khrane, Sharya, Bajid Kandala, Chamishko, Kabarto, and Bersive) and non-camp locations where Yazidis reside. It is estimated that the real number is likely higher as not all cases are reported.46 According to the information obtained from survivors, community leaders, and/or service providers, the main causes for (attempted) suicides include psycho-social distress, family disputes and domestic abuse, as well as poor living conditions.47 One report describes that among Yazidi IDPs, “suicide, especially among teenagers, has been an increasingly worrisome problem as the community loses hope.”48

While the humanitarian community as well as relevant institutions of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) are engaged in efforts to provide psycho-social support to IDPs in critical need, particularly Yazidi women and children who escaped from ISIS captivity, reports indicate that the level of support and professional capacity remains inadequate given the overwhelming and urgent needs.49

44 UNHCR information, April 2019. A recent study on the psychological state of Yazidi children and adolescents found: “(…) factors as escape shock, sudden separation from already familiar environments, losing relatives, acquaintances, and family members can drastically threaten these children and teens. Many of them especially had witnessed the death, slavery, and selling of their close relatives and friends, or had suffered from pressure and torture to denounce their religion. Some of these children sheltered in mountains isolated from their family members and relatives for a long time, and walked for several days to find a safe place. Moreover, camp life also imposed several difficulties. The camps were overpopulated and there was a deficit in educational and hygiene facilities which seriously threatened the physical and psychological health of camp inhabitants. In any war, children and senior citizens are the most vulnerable groups due to their physical and mental condition. They witness violence, terror, and slaughter of their family members and relatives. Most of them have not experienced educational environments, or their experience has not been pleasing”, Seyedeh Behnaz Hosseini and Pegah A.M. Seidi, A Study of Psychological Problem in Yazidi Children and Adolescents, 2018, https://bit.ly/2i9ORO.


47 "There is a growing mental health crisis in Kurdistan and trauma is widespread, particularly among those who have escaped or been rescued from ISIS captivity. (…) Psychosocial support services are scarce and even where available, the stigma associated with mental health services, combined with a lack of freedom of movement of some women, has deterred many from seeking support”; Seed Foundation, Mental Health and Psychosocial Services, accessed 6 May 2019, http://bit.ly/2vAll3M. “Those [survivors] who have returned live in camps, where they struggle with stigma, and lack access to medical and psychosocial care and other basic services”; LSE, Reforming Legal Responses to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, 25 April 2019, https://bit.ly/2PvteGe. "Yazidi women who had survived prolonged IS captivity and enslavement continued to lament the lack of an accessible and unified system of medical and psychosocial care. In August [2018], Yazidi women who had recently escaped IS captivity in Syria and returned to Iraq told Amnesty International that they had struggled to pay for medical and psychological care (…)”; Amnesty International, Human Rights in Iraq: Review of 2018, 26 February 2019, https://bit.ly/2EtxROR. p. 4. According to Ramanathan Balakrishnan, UNFPA Representative in Iraq, ‘[T]he demand for health
Following the retaking of areas formerly held by the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria, many Yezidi women and girls who had been held in captivity by ISIS have re-joined their families in the KR-I. Yazidi religious authorities have called for the reintegration of women and girls who had been subjected to ISIS enslavement into the community. Nonethelss, Yazidi survivors reportedly face “extreme medical conditions” requiring “physical and emotional recovery” and fear or experience social stigma and discrimination. Survivors are reported to also face challenges to their recovery due to the difficult living conditions, which make it “difficult for victims to experience a safe environment and access resources important to the healing process.”


*Although the Yazidi community have tried to reintegrate women victims who have escaped, the stigma attached to such women is far reaching. Relatives of abducted Yazidi women and girls (...) expressed deep concerns not just about the suffering inflicted on their captured relatives, but also about the negative social consequences of the abductions for the future of these women and girls. Some said that it would be difficult to find suitable husbands for those who had been abducted, even if they had not been victims of sexual violence, because it was assumed that all those abducted had been raped*; The Conversation, Sexual Violence against the Yezidis is Part of IS’s Genocide Campaign, 6 July 2017, http://bit.ly/2q7dHSR. See also, Amnesty International, Four Years On, Yezidi Women’s Struggle Continues, www.refworld.org/docid/58b67bf04.html, para. 10; UN Women, Case Study: In the Words of Pari Ibrahim, 18 August 2017, http://bit.ly/2ECyZQE; MRGI, Crossroads: The Future of Iraq’s Minorities after ISIS, June 2017, http://bit.ly/2S9riqc, p. 18.


*Many here [at the Mosul orphanage] are the abandoned children of ISIS fathers and the Yazidi girls and women they raped, or children kidnapped from their birth parents and raised in ISIS families. (...) In the region’s conservative societies, rape victims are often blamed for dishonoring their families and are at risk of being killed. With so many Yazidi women captured, religious elders decreed that women enslaved by ISIS would be welcomed back. But there was no such ruling covering their children from ISIS fathers*; NPR, Kidnapped, Abandoned Children Turn Up at Mosul Orphanage as ISIS Battle Ends, 27 December 2017.
born to a Muslim father would automatically be considered as Muslims, irrespective of the mother's religion. The Iraqi government has to date not undertaken any efforts to amend laws that impose the Muslim religion onto children born to Yazidi mothers.56

e) Humanitarian Assistance
IDPs in camps generally have access to basic social services and humanitarian assistance, which are provided by the KRG and the humanitarian community. Assistance provided by various service providers, including food rations through the government public distribution system (PDS), is very limited and not considered sufficient as the only means of subsistence. The majority of the IDPs reside outside camps where humanitarian assistance is even less available.57

According to IDPs, immediate priority needs include the provision of special medical assistance for households hosting vulnerable members, shelter and non-food items (NFIs) related to winterisation, as well as improved water supply and sanitation. High proportions of IDPs across all camps struggle to afford their most basic needs and resort to negative coping strategies. With the overwhelming majority of assessed IDP households reporting that they do not intend to return within the near future,58 access to livelihoods and increased community representation in camp management remain key challenges in the medium to longer-term.59

3) Returns to Sinjar District
Most Yazidi IDPs who fled Sinjar District in 2014 have not attempted to return to their area of origin, including due to the widespread destruction of homes and infrastructure, the lack of livelihoods and basic services, persisting community tensions as well as continued insecurity.60 A survey conducted by


58 See below Section 3 (“Returns to Sinjar District”).

59 UNHCR Information, May 2019.

UNHCR, Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster and REACH Initiative in February 2019 indicates that only three per cent of the IDP population displaced from Sinjar District intends to return in the coming 12 months. According to the survey, the main reasons for not intending to return to Sinjar District are: presence of mines (42 per cent); lack of security forces (41 per cent); house damaged or destroyed (33 per cent); fear of discrimination (29 per cent); and no financial means to return (13 per cent). Seventy-four per cent of IDPs from Sinjar District reported that they had safety concerns in their area of origin.63