



**THE BROOKINGS-BERN PROJECT
ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT**



^b
**UNIVERSITÄT
BERN**

2007 IRAQ DISPLACEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW

HOSTED BY:
THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION
&
THE BROOKINGS-BERN PROJECT ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

16 JULY 2007

-
- Introduction: **Dick Scott**, Regional Representative, *International Organization for Migration*
- Presenter: **Dana Graber Ladek**, Iraq Displacement Specialist, *International Organization for Migration, Iraq*
- Commentators: **Kristele Younes**, Advocate, *Refugees International*
Bill Frelick, Director of Refugee Policy, *Human Rights Watch*
- Moderator: **Elizabeth Ferris**, Senior Fellow and Co-Director, *Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement*

Summary:

Elizabeth Ferris opened the meeting with brief introductions of the panel members and expressed gratitude to IOM's hardworking and courageous staff members for their valuable, ongoing work. Mrs. Ferris noted that the Iraqi displacement is a "major humanitarian nightmare" in the midst of a complex political crisis.

Dana Graber-Ladec began with an overview of the current displacement crisis. Approximately 2.2 million Iraqis are currently displaced within their country, and another 2.2 million are displaced in the surrounding region. One in seven Iraqis has been displaced from his/her home and 60,000 Iraqis continue to be displaced each month. Many Iraqis have fled across the border; unfortunately most neighboring countries are not signatories to the UN Convention on Refugees. Currently there are 1.2 – 1.5m in Syria (the most open and accepting of host nations), 750,000 in Jordan (most Iraqi refugees per

capita of host nations), 150,000 in Egypt, 150,000 in Iran, 40,000 in Lebanon, and 10,000 in Turkey. Refugees in the region have limited access to drinking water, health care, education, and employment. As an illustration of this widespread lack, a full fifty per cent of Iraqi families living in Lebanon do not send their children to school.

Host nations have begun restricting Iraqi entrance. Jordan has even denied entrance to Iraqi IOM employees for short-term stays. There exists widespread fear among host countries that the displacement crisis will become a permanent situation.

Iraq has a lengthy and complex history of displacement. Before February 2006, 1.2 million Iraqis were displaced due to various conflicts (including the Iran-Iraq war, the Saddam Hussein regime's Arabization campaign of the 1980s, the draining of the southern marshes, and the government repression of the 1991 Shi'a & Kurdish uprisings). Since February 2006, over one million Iraqis have been displaced. Iraqis are being displaced due to an ongoing deterioration of basic services, insurgent/militia attacks, and tribal/sect driven violence. According to the Brookings Index on Iraq, attacks have increased this year, with approximately 300 civilian casualties and 100 civilian deaths per day. This is a national average; the security situation is worst in the center of the country.

Men comprise 90% of violent deaths, leaving behind a growing crisis for women and children. Overall the future looks bleak; certain governorates have begun restricting access to IDPs. If the displaced are unable to move within Iraq, they are likely to leave the country, exacerbating the regional crisis.

- IOM Assessment of IDPs:
 - 1,011,870 Iraqis have been internally displaced since February 2006 and IOM has assessed 700,000.
 - 70% of those displaced are fleeing Baghdad.
 - 63% report that they are fleeing direct threats on their lives.
 - 44% say they are fleeing generalized violence.
 - 27% have been forcibly removed.
 - 90% believe they were targeted due to their religious sect.
 - 93% are Arab; 7% are Syrian, Kurdish, Turkmen, or other.
 - 64% are Shia, 32% are Sunni
 - More than 50% are under age 18.
 - 55% say they wish to return to their homes (though this number is decreasing), 23% want to stay where they are, and 12% would like to go elsewhere.
 - Top three stated needs of IDPs: Food, shelter, and employment
 - **Food:** 40-60% of Iraqis are dependant on the Public Distribution System.
 - **Shelter:** 41% of IDPs live in rented shelters, 19% live with a host family, 8% live in tents, 7% live in public housing, and 7% live in collective settlements. Less than 1% live in camps, but this number is growing. For those forced from their homes, IOM is working to distribute pamphlets informing Iraqis of their property

rights and measures they can take to document their homes for eventual reclamation.

- **Employment:** 60-70% of Iraqis are unemployed. Local employers are wary of hiring displaced people as they are blamed for violence and crime.
- The safety of women and children is declining. Rates of abduction and rape are on the rise. Children are often unable to attend school and many suffer from psychological trauma due to bearing witness to extreme violence.

In response, humanitarian NGOs are trying to deliver aid, but much of their work is thwarted by the security situation. Eighty aid workers and 204 journalists were killed between March 2003 and May 2007. The Ministry of Displacement is operational but has many limitations. The Iraqi Red Crescent Society has been the most visible and neutral organization working on these issues. However, they are facing funding issues and some of their members have been kidnapped in Baghdad.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that militias are increasingly providing aid (food) to their constituents. Aid seems to be provided on a sectarian basis and to those who remain in the militia's territory.

IOM actively assists IDPs through "Community Assistance Programs". Assistance includes activities such as digging wells for drinking water, rehabilitating schools, conducting skills trainings, operating portable medical centers, and distributing emergency supplies (IOM leads the country in emergency distributions and has assisted 300,000 families since February 2006). However, funding is problematic. More funding and greater flexibility and accessibility of funds is needed. Through 2006, U.S. Government was IOM Iraq's largest donor, but this is no longer the case in 2007. For 2007, IOM Iraq requested a total of \$86 million for IDP work from all donors, but has received only 18% of this request. To put this in perspective: According to the U.S. Congressional record, the U.S. government spends \$200 million each day on the war in Iraq; this exceeds the entire annual budget of the UNHCR.

Donations have been meager for several reasons. Through 2006 there was widespread denial about the crisis and therefore most funding was directed towards development rather than humanitarian needs. Now, as the war enters its fifth year a certain donor fatigue has set in. Also, in the eyes of many donors, it is not safe to give money to a government widely perceived to be corrupt. We must continue to advocate for awareness and pull on donors by stressing the humanitarian aspects of the crisis.

IOM sees that the humanitarian community's priorities for the short term must be to provide emergency provisions including food, shelter, and medical care. For the long term IOM asserts that employment solutions must be found. Stability in Iraq would greatly decrease displacement.

First response

Bill Frelick noted that it is remarkable that IOM Iraq has been able to collect vast amounts of information given the security climate in country. He believes that the magnitude of the crisis demands more funding and is frustrated with the slow response of donors. There is a greater need for international aid; however, because the U.S. went into Iraq unilaterally it has become a hard pitch for broad support at this point.

Mr. Frelick is pessimistic about the future. He thinks that so far we have been lucky, to an extent, that sectarian violence is not broad-based, and displacement has been targeted and from the top down (rather than a popular displacement from the bottom up). With 10 out of 18 governorates restricting IDP entrances, and other nations in the region closing their borders, there is great danger for Iraq to become a “pressure cooker”. The international community must be aware of this danger if it intends to construct a containment policy. There must be escape valves to “let off steam” lest the country explode. The Iraqi Refugees are urban, educated, and have a great deal to offer host countries if these countries are receptive. It would be tragic to look to camps as even an interim solution. The region has been devastated by the Palestinian situation and Iraqis do not want to move into camps for fear of becoming the next Palestinians.

We must also be wary of the situation in Kirkuk. So far the oil-rich city has been relatively quiet, but the city could become a new flash point of displacement if the scheduled referendum actually takes place.

Second response

Kristele Younes began her remarks by sounding alarm bells that aid is increasingly reaching fewer and fewer IDPs. Anger and frustration are growing and there is a very real possibility that people will turn to militias for aid.

There is a great concern that the great out-flow of Iraqis into neighboring countries will create another “Palestinian” situation. In some countries, Iraqis are already beginning to be “treated like Palestinians”.

Neighboring countries are taking measures to deal with the crisis. Syria has generated a five year plan, though they are disappointed with the general international response. At a recent conference in Geneva members of the international community made various pledges of support to Syria (including \$25 million from Iraq). However, few nations have made good on these promises and Damascus has threatened to close national borders if the international community does not demonstrate greater fortitude.

Refugees in countries like Lebanon and Jordan are gripped by the fear of deportation; they have little control of their fate. Refugees need the security of proper status. Refugees need medical and mental health care. We must bear in mind that this is a

highly traumatized population. Unfortunately, most children are not in school. The ramifications of not addressing these issues will be a deep, generations-long humanitarian and security crisis.

Many members of the international community do not see Iraq as their problem. The crisis is perceived as a direct consequence of a U.S. war. If other nations are expected to provide support the U.S. must take a much stronger leadership role. Also, the United Kingdom should step up their contribution; they have been deporting Iraqi asylum seekers.

Refugees need a combination of NGO and government assistance. They need bilateral assistance to the region (the State Department notes that it cannot send bilateral aid to Syria, but the U.S. government did send millions of dollars to Jordan in 2003, why not now?). The Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) has made contingency plans for humanitarian aid that cover the next three years. However, these plans were drawn under the assumption that security will improve and the Iraqi government will assume greater responsibility in the mid-term.