

Rapid Overview of Areas of Return (ROAR): Ba'aj, Sinjar, Telafar and surrounding areas

Ninewa Governorate, Iraq - April-May 2018

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Returns Working Group
RWG Iraq



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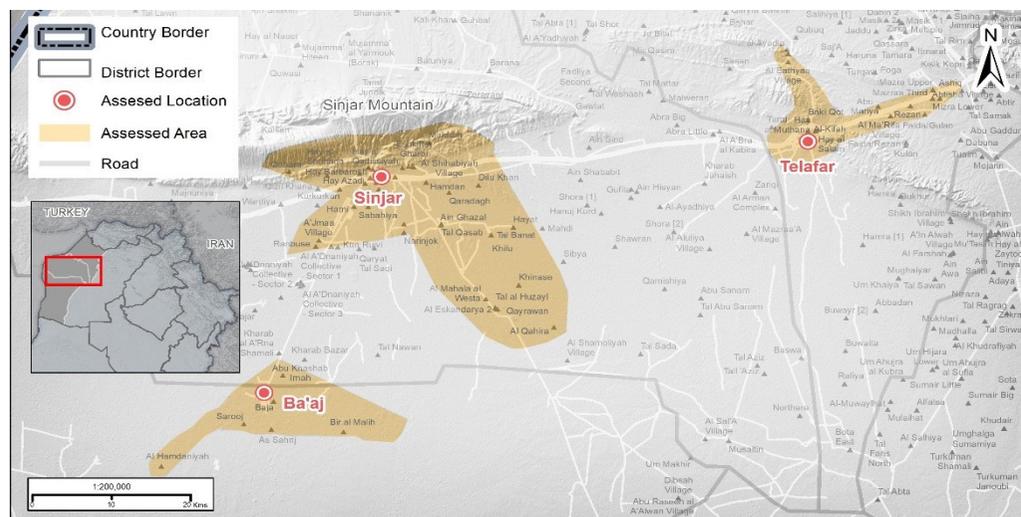
Summary

To help inform programming in support of a durable and safe returns process in Iraq, REACH, in collaboration with the Returns Working Group (RWG), conducted three Rapid Overview of Areas of Return (ROAR) assessments in Ninewa governorate, between April and May 2018. Ba'aj town, Sinjar town and Telafar city,¹ three urban centers close to the Syrian border (see Figure 1), were selected for the assessment as an increasing number of formerly displaced people have returned to these places, and because there is a scarcity of up-to-date publicly available information on the humanitarian situation in these specific places. The ROAR assessment gives insights on what motivates return, along with an overview of the current situation in each assessed area with regards to the provision of basic services, protection issues and availability of livelihoods. Information on these locations was obtained through 76 remote key informant (KI) interviews between March and May 2018.

Key Findings

Findings indicate that there were considerable gaps in basic service provision across all three assessed areas at the time of data collection. In addition, residents returning to these areas were reportedly facing protection concerns and a lack of livelihood opportunities. Providing a solution for these inter-related issues is a prerequisite for effectuating durable and safe returns.

Assessed locations, Ninewa Governorate



What are factors affecting the decision of displaced people to return or not return?

The assessment indicates that some internally displaced persons (IDPs) originating from Ba'aj, Sinjar and Telafar were not yet returning because they perceived their area of origin (AoO) to be unfavorable for return. **Push factors in the AoO often highlighted by IDP KIs were: a lack of sufficient services, limited availability of livelihood opportunities, damaged, destroyed and stolen property, and a perceived lack of safety.** Returnees highlighted that they had decided to return to their AoO because they perceived the safety situation to have improved and because they had a strong desire to return to work, land and property.

What is the functionality and accessibility of basic services?

There was reportedly only limited accessibility to basic services in Ba'aj, Sinjar and Telafar, and services were in general in a bad state. Only basic healthcare services were available in most areas, leaving residents deprived of specialized healthcare or forcing residents to travel vast distances in order to access healthcare facilities in other cities. Telafar reportedly had a functioning hospital. However, healthcare services in all assessed areas were hampered by a lack of sufficient personnel and medication. In addition, only a limited amount of education facilities had reopened. A lack of teachers and educational equipment was further aggravating provision of education. Moreover, public water and electricity networks were supposedly non-functional or did not fully cover all areas within the assessed locations, making parts of the populations dependent on alternatives such as trucked water and communal generators. Lastly, waste collection services had resumed in all locations, albeit with varying coverage.

Which protection concerns are prevalent?

Findings indicated a considerable number of protection concerns in all assessed locations. Residents in Ba'aj, Telafar and Sinjar reported fear of attacks by armed actors, a disruption of social cohesion, explosive hazard contamination of areas surrounding the urban centers, loss of civil documentation and the inability to request or renew those documents. Furthermore, many residents indicated that their property had been destroyed, damaged or stolen during the recent conflict. Lastly, legal services were reportedly not available to all residents in the assessed areas.

What is the availability and accessibility of livelihood opportunities?

There were reportedly very few livelihood opportunities in the assessed areas. Notably, work in the agricultural sector was said to be hampered due to fear of explosive hazards on agricultural and grazing land, lack of agricultural equipment and lack of rainfall. As a result of the lack of livelihood opportunities, residents reportedly left their AoO to find work in other cities, or rely on financial or in-kind support from relatives and the community.

¹ For more detailed information on each location the individual Situation Overviews on [Ba'aj](#), [Sinjar](#) and [Telafar](#) can be consulted.

Introduction

Iraq has seen more than 3.9 million displaced people return to their AoO nationwide, whilst there are still predicted to be almost 2 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).² Returns began mid-2015 when the Government of Iraq (GoI) began to re-establish control over areas that were formerly occupied by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). There is limited publicly available information about the current situation in Ba'aj town, Sinjar town and Telafar city, despite an increasing number of people returning to these locations. As a result, partner international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) expressed a strong interest in increasing knowledge on the humanitarian situation in these locations. Therefore, REACH, in partnership with the Returns Working Group (RWG), launched the Rapid Overview of Areas of Return (ROAR) in order to better inform the recovery process and support safe and durable returns in these locations. The ROAR examines motivations driving returns, as well as assessing the current situation as it relates to key protection issues, livelihoods, and the provision of basic services in order to identify priority areas based on identified needs. This report provides a comparative analysis for the three assessed locations and addresses the following four research questions:

- What are the factors affecting the decision of displaced people to return or not return?
- What is the functionality and accessibility of basic services?
- Which protection concerns are prevalent?
- What is the availability and accessibility of livelihood opportunities?

Methodology

REACH collected data from a total of 76 key informants (KIs), including 18 returnee residents, 30 KIs from Telafar, Qa'im and Sinjar who remain in displacement, and 28 KIs with specialist knowledge in one of the sectors covered by the assessment (health, education, electricity, WASH, solid waste disposal, livelihoods, and protection). In some cases, the same respondent was classed as a specialist KI in multiple subject areas. Given their broad community knowledge, mukhtars³ and mayors were classed as specialists in all subject areas. KIs reported on the urban areas and their direct surrounding areas, such as villages in close proximity to Sinjar town (see Figure 1 for the surrounding areas). KIs were identified through existing REACH networks and the networks of other INGOs. Data collection took place between March and May 2018, through remote telephone interviews conducted by REACH enumerators. In addition, secondary data was consulted and used for contextualization and triangulation of findings.

Limitations

Findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than statistically generalizable to the assessed area. Furthermore, KIs provided estimates based on their understanding, which should also be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings.

Table 1: Number of KIs per assessed location

Location	IDP KIs	Returnee KIs	Specialist KIs	Total
Telafar	5	6	13	24
Ba'aj	13	6	9	28
Sinjar	12	6	6	24
All locations	30	18	28	76

Table 2: Type and number of specialist KIs

Type of specialist KI	Telafar	Ba'aj	Sinjar	Total
Protection	2	5	2	9
Livelihoods	1	4	3	8
Education	3	5	3	11
Healthcare	3	5	2	10
Water	3	4	2	9
Electricity	3	5	1	9
Waste Disposal	3	5	1	9

Background

Geography and Population

Ba'aj town, Telafar city and Sinjar town are all located in the west of the Ninewa Governorate, which is the second highest populated Governorate in Iraq.⁴ All three places are the capitals of three homonymous districts which border Syria, and can be considered the major urban centers within those districts. The total population of the combined districts was estimated at 732,414 people in 2009 (see Table 3). The population in Ninewa is ethnically and religiously diverse, with Arab Sunnis being the biggest population group.⁵ The population of Ba'aj is primarily Sunni Arab, but Telafar mainly consists of ethnic Turkmen, as well as Kurdish, Christian and Sunni Arab communities.⁶ In Sinjar the inhabitants are mostly Yazidi and Sunni Arab.

Table 3: Estimated pre-conflict population and current number of returnees⁷

District	Population (2007)*	Returnees (2018)**
Telafar district	382,050	311,394
Ba'aj district	113,291	10,047
Sinjar district	237,073	52,170
All districts	732,414	373,611

* IAU and OCHA, [Ninewa Governorate Profile](#), March 2009.

** Based on [IOM DTM data](#), as of 15 August 2018.

Displacement and Return Trends

Displacement from Ba'aj, Telafar and Sinjar began mid-2014 when ISIL established control over large parts of Ninewa governorate.⁸ In Sinjar around 200,000 residents reportedly fled from the town and surrounding villages at the beginning of August 2014, with around 130,000 individuals becoming trapped on the Sinjar mountain to the north of the town. Through a safe corridor, established by forces from the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), most of those who were stranded could escape. The Yazidi population that remained in the town faced human rights abuses, including systematic killing, kidnap and sexual enslavement.⁹

In Ba'aj and Telafar displacement occurred in two stages, with initial large-scale displacement starting when ISIL established control. The second stage of substantive displacement started for Telafar at the beginning of the offensive to retake Mosul city in October 2016. For Ba'aj displacement increased in 2017, when Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) tried to establish control in the surrounding area. Between April and August of that year almost 30,000 residents displaced from the district. Most of the displaced people from Ba'aj, Sinjar and Telafar displaced to the Mosul area, Dahuk governorate (KRG), camps in Syria and Turkey, or to other areas in Iraq.

Damage to Infrastructure

During the conflict all locations suffered from widespread damage to infrastructure. According to a damage assessment conducted in January 2018, 96% of housing assets in Ba'aj town were damaged to some extent, whilst in Sinjar this was 70% and in Telafar 32%.¹⁰ Furthermore, the road network in Sinjar sustained a high level of damage, whilst the road networks in Ba'aj and Telafar suffered moderate damage. The assessment also highlighted high levels of damage to education and health facilities. Findings from the ROAR assessment were in line with the above, with KIs mentioning damage to their property, to the water and electricity networks, and to education and healthcare facilities.

KRG forces established control in Sinjar in late 2015, after which ISF took over in October 2017. Returns began in January 2016 and since then 52,170 have returned to the district.¹¹ However, one KI interviewed for this assessment stated that only 20% of Sinjar town's population before 2014 had returned. The vast majority of returnees were reported to be Yazidi, with the Muslim population generally said not to have returned.¹² Moreover, many villages near the town, especially to the south, had not seen any returns.¹³

Returns started in Telafar in August 2017¹⁴ and in Ba'aj in January 2018¹⁵ when the GoI re-established control and after both places were perceived to be partially cleared of explosive hazards. Since returns started 311,394 people have returned to Telafar district,¹⁶ whilst 10,047 people have returned to Ba'aj district.¹⁷ Notably, several KIs indicated that some Sunni Muslim residents were not returning to Telafar city due to fear of reprisals from other members of the community, whilst a disproportionate amount of Shi'a Muslim residents reportedly returned. For Ba'aj, KIs noted that some residents re-displaced because of the state of living conditions and services, indicating that returns are not durable.

Motivations behind displacement and return

A recent REACH report on movement intentions of in-camp IDPs found that many displaced households were not intending to return to their AoO.¹⁸ For Sinjar district only 13% of households reportedly intended to return, whilst for Ba'aj and Telafar districts this number was higher (43% and 48% respectively). In order to obtain more in-depth information on reasons why displaced persons from Ba'aj town, Telafar city and Sinjar town were or were not returning, IDPs were asked why they remained in displacement, whilst returnees were asked what caused them to return.

Why are displaced persons not returning?

For all assessed locations IDP KIs primarily provided answers in the form of push factors. In other words, KIs were reportedly not returning because they perceived the situation in their AoO to be unfavorable for return. The push factors that were often mentioned across all assessed locations were limited livelihoods opportunities in the AoO and damaged, destroyed or stolen property in the AoO (see Figure 1). Lack of services in the AoO, insufficient funds to return and restart, and a perceived lack of safety in the AoO appear to be mainly an issue in Ba'aj and Sinjar. Regarding the latter all Muslim IDP KIs in Sinjar mentioned this reason and specified that they were unwilling to return do to fear of reprisals from community members or local security actors. In addition, Sinjar IDP KIs specifically mentioned that they did not return because their villages were reportedly contaminated by explosive hazards.

⁷ Recent census data on population numbers per district before is not available. Furthermore, data on the number of Ba'aj district returnees from the IOM DTM are not available. The numbers presented in this table should be considered as indicative. ⁸ The Guardian, "[Iraqi city of Tal Afar falls to Isis insurgents](#)", June 2014; The Washington Post, "[Islamic State seizes town of Sinjar, pushing out Kurds and sending Yazidis fleeing](#)", August 2014; The Guardian, "[Isis surrenders Iraqi hideout of leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi](#)", June 2017. ⁹ UNAMI, "[A Call for Accountability and Protection](#)", August 2016. ¹⁰ World Bank and Government of Iraq, "[Damage and Needs Assessment of Affected Governorates](#)", January 2018. ¹¹ Based on [IOM DTM data](#), as of 15 August 2018. ¹² IOM, "[Obstacles to return in retaken areas of Iraq](#)", March 2017. ¹³ In line with the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), which shows that most return locations are north of Sinjar mountain. ¹⁴ Rise Foundation, "[Mosul and Telafar: Conflict Analysis](#)", December 2017. ¹⁵ Al Jazeera, "[Iraq's pro-government forces retake Al-Baaj from ISIL](#)", 4 June 2017. ¹⁶ Based on [IOM DTM data](#), as of 15 August 2018. ¹⁷ Based on [IOM DTM data](#), as of 15 August 2018. ¹⁸ REACH, [IDP Camp Intentions Survey](#), December 2017-January 2018.

Figure 1: Reasons reported by IDP KIs for not returning to their area of origin²⁰

	Telafar (5 IDP KIs)	Ba'aj (13 IDP KIs)	Sinjar (12 IDP KIs)
Lack of services in AoO	1	13	11
Limited livelihood opportunities in AoO	4	12	8
Damaged, destroyed or stolen property in AoO	4	7	7
Perceived lack of safety in AoO	0	5	11
Insufficient funds to return and restart in AoO	0	7	2
Children in school in area of displacement	4	1	0
Situation better in area of displacement	0	0	3

IDP KIs mentioned two pull factors for not returning. KIs from Telafar and Ba'aj highlighted that they did not return because their children were attending school in the area of displacement. Furthermore KIs from Sinjar perceived the situation to be better in the area of displacement. Reasons given by IDPs were similar to the findings from the REACH intentions survey.¹⁹

Why have formerly displaced persons returned?

The primary reasons provided by returnees for going back to their AoO consisted of pull factors (see Figure 2). In all assessed locations returnee KIs highlighted that they perceived safety to have improved in their AoO, indicating that returnee KIs deem the situation in the AoO to be safe enough to return. Three KIs (1 from Ba'aj and 2 from Sinjar) elaborated on this point by stating that the presence of armed forces in their AoO made them feel safe. Other pull factors that were mentioned in all locations were a desire to return to work and to land or property in the AoO. In addition, KIs from Sinjar highlighted an emotional attachment to the AoO, whilst KIs from Telafar highlighted a desire to be with family and friends in the AoO. Resumption of basic services in the AoO does not seem to be a key reason for returning, with only one KI from Telafar mentioning this.

Figure 2: Reasons reported by returnee KIs for coming back to their area of origin²¹

	Telafar (6 IDP KIs)	Ba'aj (6 IDP KIs)	Sinjar (6 IDP KIs)
Perceived improvements to safety in AoO	6	5	4
A desire to return to land or property in AoO	3	2	4
A desire to return to work in AoO	2	3	3
Discontent with situation in area of displacement	0	3	3
An emotional attachment to AoO	0	0	3
A desire to be with family and friends in AoO	2	0	0
Due to resumption of services in AoO	1	0	0

The only push factor mentioned was feelings of discontent with the situation in the area of displacement, which was only mentioned by KIs from Ba'aj and Sinjar. For both locations KIs highlighted that the areas were too hot and uncomfortable in the summer months.

Status and availability of basic services

Table 4: Status and availability of basic services in assessed locations

Service	Telafar	Ba'aj	Sinjar
Healthcare	● Functioning hospital including specialist care, shortage of medicines, lack of doctors	● 2 functioning health clinics: only basic healthcare services available; lack of sufficient personnel, medicines and equipment	● Partially damaged but functioning hospital; only basic healthcare services available; lack of sufficient personnel, medicines and equipment
Education	● 69 schools open; overcrowded classes; lack of teachers and equipment	● Only 2 schools open; overcrowded classes; lack of teachers and equipment; not all children in the area able to attend school	● Only 2 schools open; overcrowded classes; lack of teachers and equipment
Water	● 12 of 21 neighborhoods had complete coverage from water network; alternatives were trucked water and boreholes	● Water network not functional; alternative was trucked water	● Water network not functional; alternative was trucked water
Electricity	● Public electricity grid functional, but not available in all surrounding areas; damage to electricity infrastructure	● Public electricity grid not functional; damage to electricity infrastructure; residents rely on generators and other alternatives	● Public electricity grid functional, but not available in villages without returns; damage to electricity infrastructure
Solid Waste	● Waste collection services functional; not all part of town and villages were covered; waste piling up in the streets	● Waste collection services functional; not all part of town and villages were covered	● Waste collection services functional; surrounding villages not covered

- Service fully functional
- Service partially functional
- Service not functional

¹⁹ REACH, [IDP Camp Intentions Survey](#), December 2017-January 2018.

²⁰ KIs could provide more than one answer.

²¹ KIs could provide more than one answer.



Basic Services: Healthcare

Pre-conflict situation

Before the start of the recent conflict, healthcare services were reportedly available in the assessed areas. According to respondents Ba'aj, Sinjar and Telafar all had a functioning hospital as well as several health clinics, including sufficient personnel, equipment and medication.

Overall status and accessibility

In general, the availability of healthcare services has reportedly changed alarmingly compared to the pre-conflict situation, with KIs indicating that healthcare facilities had been damaged, destroyed and looted during the recent crisis. KIs furthermore expressed that facilities which were operational suffer from a lack of personnel, equipment and medicines. As a result, not all residents in the assessed areas supposedly had access to appropriate healthcare in the vicinity of their homes, leading to residents being deprived from necessary care or having to travel significant distances, including associated costs for travel. Access to professional maternity care seemed to be a specific issue for all locations. There was reportedly no availability of professional maternity care in the assessed areas, especially when women faced complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. In Sinjar, four KIs reported that women had died as a result of maternity care services being located too far away.

Location-specific findings

- In Ba'aj and Sinjar only basic healthcare services were reportedly available. For more complex healthcare issues, residents needed to go to Mosul or other places, such as Telafar, Dahuk or Sununi. As a result, residents were said to travel long distances to access healthcare (see Figure 2). In addition, the costs related to traveling to healthcare facilities created a barrier. KIs from Ba'aj reported that the trip – including travel, accommodation and medical fees – could cost more than 100,000 IQD (84 USD).²² Five KIs reported deaths as a result of ill or injured patients not being able to access appropriate healthcare due to the distance and related costs for accessing healthcare facilities.
- In Telafar there was reportedly a functional public hospital and public and private clinics at the time of data collection. According to a media source the public hospital was the largest and best equipped hospital in western Ninewa, serving residents from Telafar, Ba'aj and Sinjar.²³ Although some specialists were available, there is reportedly a shortage of doctors and medication.

- In Ba'aj and Sinjar the hospitals had been looted during the conflict, leading to a lack of medical equipment. Although KIs reported damage, the hospital in Ba'aj remains structurally sound, but the hospital in Telafar was partially destroyed. The public hospital in Telafar was said to be undamaged.

Basic Services: Education

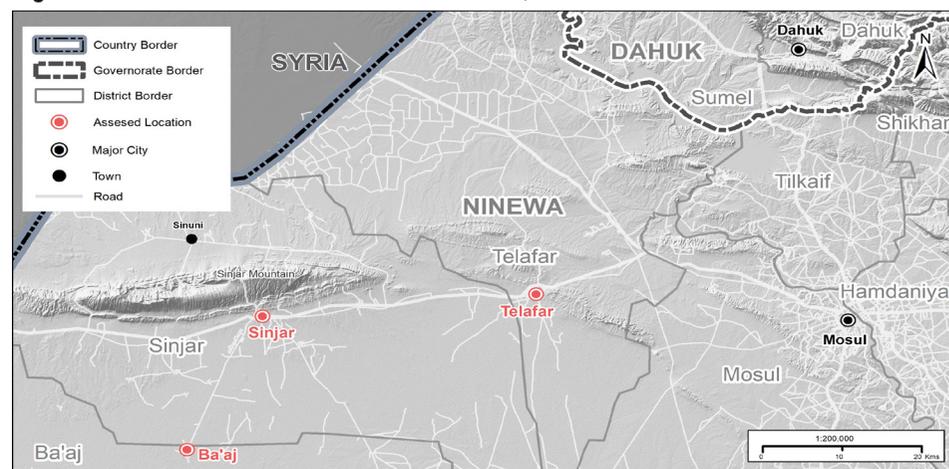
Pre-conflict situation

Before the conflict started all three urban centers reportedly had functioning primary and secondary schools, including sufficient school materials, equipment and teachers. However, education levels were a concern, with high proportions of women (64%) and men (48%) (aged 10 and over) in the assessed areas not having finished primary education in 2009.²⁴ Furthermore, the school attendance rates for children from rural areas were among the worst in Iraq.²⁵

Overall status and accessibility

In all assessed locations schools had reportedly re-opened and were operational. However, only a limited amount of schools was supposedly open compared to the pre-conflict situation. Due to the limited amount of operational schools, class rooms were said to be overcrowded in all assessed locations. In addition, all locations faced a shortage of teachers and school equipment, such as textbooks, desks and stationary. Lastly, the findings indicated that the distance to schools and associated costs were a barrier to accessing education services, especially for children living in outlying villages.

Figure 3: Assessed locations in relation to Dahuk, Mosul and Sununi



²² Price converted using www.xe.com on 26 August 2018.

²³ Al Shahid, "[Tens Of Thousands Of People Have Returned To Tal Afar After Liberation](#)", 1 March 2018.

²⁴ Non-weighted average based on: IAU, "[Ninewa Governorate Profile](#)", March 2009.

²⁵ IAU, "[Ninewa Governorate Profile](#)", March 2009.

Location-specific findings

- In both Sinjar and Ba'aj just two schools had re-opened, which were operating as primary and secondary schools at the same time.
- According to an education specialist KI there were at the time of data collection approximately 50 functioning primary and 19 functioning secondary schools in Telafar. However, the same KI reported that this was only 50% of the pre-ISIL school capacity, with 9 schools severely damaged and 10 schools destroyed as a result of the conflict.
- In Telafar and Ba'aj KIs reported that schools were looted during the conflict. Furthermore, not all teachers in Telafar and Sinjar reportedly received salaries.
- In Ba'aj KIs reported that many children from surrounding villages were not receiving education due to the distance to education facilities and related travel costs. In Sinjar some children were reportedly also not attending school for the same reason.

Basic Services: Water

Pre-conflict situation

KIs stated that there were piped water networks in Ba'aj, Sinjar and Telafar prior to the conflict. However, not all surrounding villages were connected to the network. In Ba'aj, KIs indicated that residents from surrounding villages came to the town to collect water from the pipe network. According to secondary data Ba'aj, Sinjar and Telafar districts had among the worst connections to the public water network in Iraq.²⁶

Overall status and accessibility

Piped water networks were reportedly not accessible for all residents in the assessed areas. Pipes and other water infrastructure had been damaged during the recent conflict. In addition, equipment, such as pumps and generators were looted. As a result, residents without access to the network relied on alternatives, such as water delivered through trucks and water from boreholes.

Location-specific findings

- At the time of data collection, the piped water networks in Ba'aj and Sinjar towns were not functional as a result of the conflict. In both locations, drinking water was reportedly provided mainly through water trucks. For residents from Ba'aj the drinking water costed 5,000 to 12,000 IQD (4 to 10 USD)²⁷ for 1000 liters. In Sinjar water is reportedly provided for free to some residents, but others payed between 1,000 and 5,000 IQD (1 to 4 USD)²⁸ for a 1,000-litre tank.

- In Telafar, the majority of residents were receiving drinking water from the piped network. However, according to a water specialist KI, only 12 of the 21 neighborhoods had complete coverage from the network. Availability fluctuated depending on location, ranging from 10 hours per day to only being available on alternate days. Neighborhoods that were not connected to the network relied on communal water tanks that were refilled periodically.
- For Telafar and Ba'aj KIs indicated that residents were getting sick from drinking unclean water.
- KIs from Telafar reported that some residents were not able to afford the costs of trucked water and were therefore relying on bore holes. In Ba'aj residents who could not afford water used other people's water or borrowed money to pay for it.

Basic Services: Electricity

Pre-conflict situation

In Ba'aj town, Sinjar town and Telafar city public grid electricity was reportedly available prior to the recent conflict. In Telafar an electricity specialist KI reported that electricity used to be available for 60-70% of the time. In Ba'aj availability of electricity through the public grid was reportedly similar to Telafar. According to secondary sources the districts of the assessed locations suffered from prolonged power cuts or were not connected to the public grid at all in 2010,²⁹ indicating that not all people in the assessed areas had access to the grid.

Overall status and accessibility

In Ba'aj, Telafar and Sinjar electrical wires, poles and transformers had reportedly been stolen or damaged during the recent crisis. As a result, electricity from the public grid was not available to all residents within the assessed areas. Those with access reportedly did not have to pay for the service, but supply from the grid varied considerable depending on location. Residents without access to the public grid reportedly relied on alternatives, such as communal and private generators, for which they faced additional costs.

Location-specific findings

- In Ba'aj residents reportedly did not have access to electricity from the public grid. As a result, residents were using community and private generators for accessing electricity. KIs reported that community generators provided 10 to 12 hours of electricity per day and costed between 7,000 IQD to 9,000 IQD (6 to 7.50 USD) per month.³⁰ Residents from Ba'aj who were not able to afford or access electricity were relying on alternatives, such as gas or oil lamps.

²⁶ IAU, "Ninewa Governorate Profile", March 2009.

²⁷ Price converted using www.xe.com on 26 August 2018.

²⁸ Price converted using www.xe.com on 26 August 2018.

²⁹ IAU, "Ninewa Governorate Profile", March 2009.

³⁰ Price converted using www.xe.com on 26 August 2018.



- For Telafar and Sinjar the public grid was supposedly functional and free of charge. However, in Telafar the public grid was not available in some surrounding villages and supply from the grid varied considerably depending on location. After the government fixed the public grid in Sinjar provision of electricity was reportedly good, with availability up to 24 hours a day. However, KIs from Sinjar reported that residents had to connect their own houses to the network. The associated costs (according to one KI 200,000 IQD / 168 USD)³¹ were a barrier for accessing electricity services. Lastly, villages south of Sinjar that had not seen returns still needed to be connected to the network.

Basic Services: Solid Waste Disposal

Pre-conflict situation

KIs from all assessed locations reported that solid waste was collected frequently within the assessed urban centers. However, surrounding villages were supposedly not always covered by waste collection services.

Overall status and accessibility

In all assessed locations waste collection services provided by the municipality had resumed at the time of data collection, albeit with varying coverage and regularity. Waste was reportedly not collected in surrounding villages and in some neighborhoods of the urban centers. The service was supposedly free of charge. Communities without access to the service disposed of waste themselves by burning or burying it in the vicinity of the area.

Location-specific findings

- In Telafar waste collection by the municipality, with support from an INGO, did not cover the entirety of the city due to a lack of capacity. There were reportedly large quantities of solid waste on the streets, which according to waste management specialist KIs provided a public health risk. The same applied to Ba'aj, where two KIs from within Ba'aj town reported that waste was not collected in their neighborhoods.
- In Sinjar, where the municipality was reportedly assisted by armed groups active in the area, the frequency of waste collection reportedly varied from several times per week to every twenty days.

Protection concerns

Table 5: Status and availability of basic services in assessed locations

Telafar	Ba'aj	Sinjar
<p>● Fear for attacks; social cohesion challenges; contamination with explosive hazards; residents lost civil documentation; not all documentation could be replaced in the city; residents reported destroyed, damaged and stolen property.</p>	<p>● Fear for attacks; social cohesion challenges; contamination with explosive hazards; residents lost civil documentation, which could not be replaced in the town; residents reported destroyed, damaged, and stolen property; no legal services were available.</p>	<p>● Fear for attacks; social cohesion challenges; contamination with explosive hazards; residents lost civil documentation, which could not be replaced in the town; residents reported destroyed, damaged, and stolen property; no legal services were available.</p>
		<p>● No protection concerns in the area ● Some protection concerns in the area ● Many protection concerns in the area</p>

Overall protection concerns

Although key informants reported feeling safe and did not feel like they were restricted in their movements, there were substantive protection-related concerns to be found in all assessed areas. Firstly, residents reportedly feared attacks from ISIL and other armed groups, and they felt vulnerable and uncertain about future stability. Moreover, the assessments found challenges with regards to social cohesion, relating to ethno-sectarian tensions. Thirdly, considerable parts of Ba'aj, Telafar and Sinjar were supposedly not cleared of explosive hazards. This primarily applies to villages and agricultural lands surrounding the urban centers.

As a result of the recent conflict many residents supposedly lost identity and other civil documentation, such as marriage certificates and property papers. In addition, not all residents were reportedly able to replace or request documentation within close vicinity of their habitual residence. As a result, residents remained undocumented or had to spend considerable amounts of money and time for obtaining official documentation. Furthermore, the recent conflict led to damaged, destroyed and looted property. KIs from all assessed locations indicated that items, such as generators, household appliances and furniture had been stolen. In addition, damaged and destroyed property were mentioned as one of the main reasons why displaced KIs were not returning to their AoO. This is in line with the findings from a recent damage assessment,

³¹ Price converted using www.xe.com on 26 August 2018.



which highlighted that 96% of housing assets in Ba'aj, 70% of housing assets in Sinjar and 32% of housing assets in Telafar were damaged to some extent.³² Lastly, not all residents in the assessed areas had access to legal services.

Location-specific findings

- **Perceptions of safety:** In Sinjar, returnee KIs, all of whom identified as Yazidi, noted feeling like they were not responsible for security matters in their area, which were overseen by exogenous actors. According to them, residents would feel safer if Yazidis would be responsible for their own protection.
- **Social cohesion:** In Telafar KIs indicated that Sunni Muslim residents were not returning due to fear of reprisals from other members of the community, or arrests. The majority of returnee and IDP KIs from Ba'aj and Sinjar, indicated that they did not go to or through Sinjar out of fear for reprisals from community members. Indeed, returnee and IDP KIs from Sinjar indicated that Muslim residents faced hostility from the community when visiting the area. On the other hand, KIs indicated that travelling through Mosul caused distress for Yazidi community members.
- **Explosive hazards:** A protection specialist KI from Sinjar, where contamination was mainly reported to the south of the town, noted that more than 20 settlements remained heavily contaminated with explosive hazards. These villages were largely uninhabited at the time of data collection as residents had not yet returned. In Telafar and Sinjar KIs reported that residents had been killed as a result of explosive hazards.
- **Freedom of movement:** In Ba'aj town there was said to be a nighttime curfew imposed by the ISF, although this was not the case in some surrounding villages.
- **Civil documentation:** For Ba'aj and Sinjar there were said to be no offices for replacing legal documentation. KIs reported that residents had to travel to Mosul, Hammam Alil (south of Mosul) or Dahuk to replace documentation. In Telafar residents were reportedly able to replace marriage, birth and death certificates as well as to renew property ownership documentation. However, for replacing national identity cards they had to travel to Mosul. In Ba'aj and Sinjar KIs reported that newborn babies were not being registered.
- **Damaged, destroyed and looted property:** KIs reported widespread damage and destruction to property in Sinjar town, with around 50-60% of buildings reportedly damaged.
- **Legal services:** There were reportedly no functioning courts in Ba'aj and Sinjar. Residents from Sinjar had to go to Dahuk in order to access legal services. In Telafar there was said to be a functioning court run by the government. However, due to the volume of cases there were reportedly long delays for legal processes.

Livelihoods

Table 6: Availability of livelihoods in assessed locations

Telafar	Ba'aj	Sinjar
 Almost no jobs available; agricultural lands not cultivated	 Almost no jobs available; agricultural lands not cultivated	 Almost no jobs available; agricultural lands not cultivated
		 Sufficient jobs available
		 Some jobs available
		 Almost no jobs available

Pre-conflict livelihood opportunities

Before the start of the recent conflict the work available in all assessed areas reportedly included public sector employment, small businesses and agricultural work (including growing crops and sheep farming). According to secondary data, the Ninewa governorate is to a great extent dependent on agriculture.³³ Notably, prior to the conflict the agricultural sector in Ninewa suffered from successive years of drought. Furthermore, livelihoods were available in the governorate at cement, sugar, textiles and beverage factories.³⁴ Within the Ninewa Governorate male unemployment in 2009 averaged 13% and female unemployment 35%.³⁵

Current livelihood opportunities

In Ba'aj, Sinjar and Telafar, KIs reported that there were very few livelihoods opportunities available. Currently, most of those households in the assessed areas who were receiving an income had a member working in the public sector or small businesses. Residents were reportedly also employed at the security forces. KIs from all assessed areas noted that only people who had the financial ability to do so or who had jobs available to them, returned to their AoO.

The assessment indicates limited availability of livelihoods in the agricultural sector. In all assessed locations KIs highlighted that farmers and shepherds were hesitant to return to their agricultural or grazing lands, due to fear for explosive hazards, leading to land being uncultivated. In addition, farming equipment, such as pumps, generators and tractors, had reportedly been damaged or stolen. On top of this the agricultural sector was suffering from a lack of rainfall in the preceding years.

In order to cope with the lack of livelihood opportunities residents were reportedly leaving in order to find work in other cities, such as Dahuk, Mosul and Baghdad, from which they send money back home to their families. Other coping mechanisms mentioned in the assessed areas were financial and in-kind support from family or the community, spending savings and borrowing money.

³² World Bank and Government of Iraq, "Damage and Needs Assessment of Affected Governorates", January 2018.

³³ NCCI, "Ninewa Governorate Profile", December 2010.

³⁴ IAU, "Ninewa Governorate Profile", November 2010.

³⁵ IAU, "Ninewa Governorate Profile", March 2009.



Location-specific findings

- Emergency livelihoods projects had reportedly been set up in Sinjar by an INGO, including a project spanning several weeks in which residents were hired as daily laborers to clear rubble from the streets.

Conclusion

As increasing numbers of displaced people in Iraq are returning to their AoO, there is a need to better understand the humanitarian situation in the areas of return about which little information is publically available. This assessment looked at Ba'aj, Sinjar and Telafar and focused on motivations behind return, availability and accessibility of basic services, livelihoods and protection concerns.

Findings indicate that some IDPs were not returning because they perceived their AoO to be unfavorable for return. Returned residents, on the other hand, highlighted that they had mainly returned because they perceived the safety in the AoO to be improved and other factors such as a strong desire to return to work, wanting to return to land, or return of ownership of property. Basic services in the assessed areas were reportedly in a bad state and citizens only had limited accessibility to them. Furthermore, a considerable number of protection concerns were prevalent, such as a disruption of social cohesion, explosive hazard contamination and destroyed, damaged and looted property. Lastly, there were reportedly very few livelihood opportunities in the assessed areas.

The 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan stated that returns in Iraq need to be safe and sustainable.³⁶ The findings from this report highlight that safe and durable returns to Ba'aj, Sinjar and Telafar, at the time of data collection, did not seem to be feasible due to presence of protections concerns, lack of livelihoods opportunities and the bad state of basic services. Indeed, many respondents who remained in displacement highlighted that they were not returning because of these issues. Therefore, addressing the encountered issues should be a priority in order to enable safe and sustainable living conditions for those returning to their AoO in Ba'aj, Sinjar and Telafar.

About REACH

REACH facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. All REACH activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms.

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About the Returns Working Group (RWG) Iraq

The Returns Working Group (RWG) is an operational and multi-stakeholder platform on returns, which was established in line with Strategic Objective 3 of the 2016 Iraq HRP “to support voluntary, safe and dignified return” of IDPs; to monitor and report on conditions in return areas, and determine to what extent durable solutions have been achieved - or progress made - for returnees.

The key objective of the group is to establish coherence of information, data and analysis, strengthen coordination and advocacy, give guidance on activities related to the key areas, and enhance complementary action among its partners with the overall goal of supporting and reinforcing the national response to Iraq's coming reintegration challenge.

³⁶ UN OCHA, “Iraq: 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan”, February 2018.

