

The closure and consolidation of IDP camps has been expressed as a goal by successive Iraqi administrations since the end of combat operations against ISIL in December 2017. During late 2019 and the first half of 2020, IDP returns were suspended as a result of political unrest and COVID-19 movement restrictions. **It should be expected that several camps in federal Iraq will close or consolidate in the last quarter of 2020 or the first quarter of 2021.** (Camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq may also be subject to closure or consolidation, although the timeline is likely to be less compressed.) **During October 2020, several IDP camps closed at the behest of the Government of Iraq without prior coordination with humanitarian agencies.** The United Nations and other humanitarian organizations are working to ensure that IDPs who have left camps at short notice have access to basic life-sustaining assistance both while en route and upon arrival.

- **Primary responsibility for the protection and welfare of IDPs rests with national governments and local authorities. Decisions on camp closures and consolidations are taken independently of humanitarian actors,** who are not involved in governmental determinations regarding the status of IDP camps. The decision to close and/or consolidate camps appears to be made at the federal level and is not always coordinated with governorate authorities or camp management.
- **The Government of Iraq should be encouraged to coordinate with humanitarian organizations** on the closure and consolidation of camps, as there are a number of interventions both in camps and in areas of return/resettlement that the United Nations and partners can offer, including housing and livelihood support; rehabilitation of basic services; social cohesion and peacebuilding programmes; and post-return reintegration support. Timely coordination is paramount to allow necessary assistance to be effectively pre-positioned.
- **The humanitarian community supports IDP returns that are safe, dignified, voluntary and sustainable,** and also supports alternative durable solutions including local integration and resettlement. Humanitarian partners have been involved in facilitated return movements of IDPs in recent months, in collaboration with the Government of Iraq.
- **The United Nations maintains its mandate to coordinate with the Government on issues of humanitarian assistance.** The RC/HC and UN agency representatives have been involved in high-level strategic discussions with counterparts in the Government of Iraq on the issue of durable solutions for IDPs for several weeks. Technical, working-level discussions on the timing, sequencing, and practical arrangements for IDP returns, resettlement or local integration have been ongoing at the governorate level for several months.
- **Humanitarian funding should be as flexible as possible** to ensure that in-camp assistance can be adjusted to support the humanitarian needs of newly returned IDPs, those who may find themselves in secondary displacement, and/or those who may identify alternative solutions to displacement.
- **Uncoordinated IDP movements and camp closures which do not consider social cohesion dynamics and broader access to durable solution**—and which are not linked to necessary material support in areas of return, resettlement or local integration—can do harm and exacerbate protection concerns, including:
 - lack of adequate shelter, services and livelihoods opportunities in areas of origin leading to secondary displacement, failed returns, or negative coping mechanisms; lack of adequate shelter is a particular concern as winter approaches;
 - risk of violence and secondary displacement due to reprisals against families with a perceived association with ISIL; risk of tribal or sectarian disputes; risk of increased social tensions linked to unresolved housing, land and property issues;
 - risk of lost or missing civil documentation in the confusion of an uncoordinated move with the involvement of multiple actors;
 - lack of coordination among relevant security actors or governorate authorities, leaving people stranded at checkpoints or in vulnerable circumstances without proper support