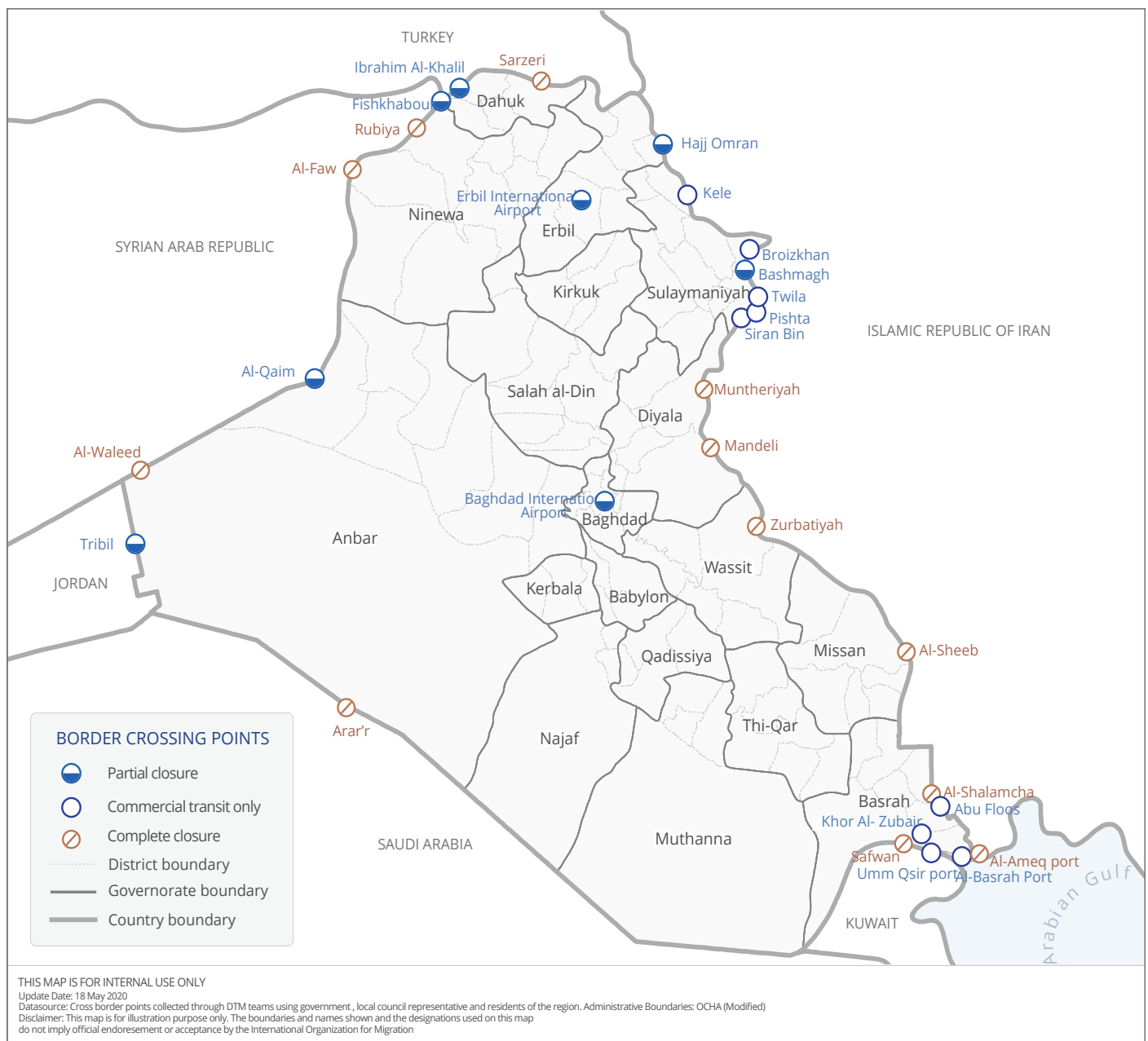# IRAQ MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS DUE TO COVID-19

5 – 18 MAY 2020

In response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Iraqi authorities have imposed mobility restrictions since March 2020 aimed at curbing the spread of the virus. These measures include restrictions on travel and limitations on freedom of movement, such as the closure of airports and points of entry (PoEs) along land borders and maritime boundaries, as well as domestic movement restrictions. IOM Iraq's Displacement Tracking Matrix

(DTM), with funding from the European Union and the US Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, assessed 29 locations between 5 and 18 May 2020, of which 12 were reported as closed, 8 partially closed, and 9 open only for commercial traffic. This report presents an overview of mobility restrictions for the 17 monitored PoEs which have remained partially open, as well as for Iraq in general. More details can be found in Table 1.

Map 1: Status of border crossing points as of 18 May 2020

THIS MAP IS FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY
Update Date: 18 May 2020
Datasource: Cross border points collected through DTM teams using government , local council representative and residents of the region. Administrative Boundaries: OCHA (Modified)
Disclaimer: This map is for illustration purpose only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map
do not imply official endoresement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration

> **Data has been collected on the following geographic units:**
>
> - **2 airports** (currently or recently functioning airports with designated International Air Transport Association codes): Baghdad and Erbil International Airports.
>
> - **23 land border** crossing points (international border crossing points on land): Trebil, Al-Waleed, Al-Qa'em, Al-Faw, Rubiya, Fishkhabour, Ibrahim Khalil, Sarzeri, Haji Omran, Kele, Broizkhan, Bashmagh, Twila, Siran Bin, Pshta, Muntheriyah, Mandeli, Zurbatiyah, Al-Sheeb, Al-Shalamcha, Abu Floos, Safwan and Arar'r.[1]
>
> - **4 sea border** crossing points (international border crossing points on the sea, rivers or lakes): Umm Qasr, Al-Basra, Khor Al Zubair and Al-Ameq.

MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS

On 10 May 2020, the Government of Iraq (GoI) announced updated directives on the ongoing movement restrictions across the country. A partial lockdown will be in place until 22 May between 5 pm and 5 am, and during the holiday of Eid al-Fitr (23–24 May 2020) a comprehensive ban across the country will be implemented. Restaurants can continue providing delivery services, shops and factories can operate again if they implement preventive measures, and government offices have re-opened at reduced capacity.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has extended movement restrictions between Erbil, Sulaymaniya and Dohuk Governorates until 18 May, except for those who obtain permission through an electronic system administered by the KRG. Movements between Federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) remain banned from both sides. However, KRI residents who have been stranded in other governorates of Iraq are now allowed to return to KRI as long as they are tested for COVID-19 beforehand. All individuals entering KRI will be also quarantined in their governorate of residency until the result of the test is announced out.

Service delivery (health, education, food distribution, etc.) to formal camps has generally improved during this reporting period due to the loosened movement restrictions, which allow humanitarian actors to access the camps. However, service delivery remains a challenge in nine camps (out of 62) where humanitarian actors have recorded partial or no-access to the camps.

In Federal Iraq, formal IDP camps in Ninewa remain under a partial lockdown, which prohibits visitors from entering the camps as well as IDP movements in and out of the camps (some exceptions are possible for essential movements such as emergencies). Humanitarian actors and service providers can access the camps only if they come from the same governorate, as inter-governorate movement restrictions remain in place across the country. Formal camps throughout other governorates in Federal Iraq are following the new national curfew between 5 pm and 5 am.

The challenges identified for IDPs living in informal sites, mainly in the central/southern regions prior to COVID-19, have been exacerbated since the onset of the virus. These IDPs constitute the most affected group due to irregular assistance and/or no official government recognition of these sites. IDP camp closures and consolidations have been momentarily suspended due to COVID-19. However, organized and spontaneous voluntary return continues, with more than 1,000 individuals leaving the camps during the month of April. No COVID-19 positive cases have been identified in formal camps, whereas the number of cases is unknown in the informal settlements.

Entry into the country has been suspended for all residency permit holders and valid visa holders (e.g. workers, humanitarian workers, students, etc.). However, there have been some exceptions in the KRI in order to repatriate or relocate citizens and national students. Moreover, on 10 May, KRG announced the partial reopening of Ibrahim Khalil, Haji Omran and Bashmakh border points on Monday and Thursday from 8 am to midnight for KRI and GoI residents who have been stranded in Turkey and Iran due to the curfew. Foreigners working as teachers in KRI schools, institutions and universities are also allowed to return to KRI if they have valid KRG residency cards and support letters from the relevant ministries. Movement is permitted for United Nations agencies, international organizations, coalition forces, and diplomatic missions across the KRI.

In terms of legal regulations, residency offices in the KRI have started to reopen since 11 May. Although staffing levels are reduced to an estimated 30 per cent of the pre-COVID level, many offices are operating extended working hours as many rush to renew their documents, particularly working migrants. Those with temporary visas, residency cards and work permits that had expired during the lockdown are not incurring any penalties. Given the high level of requests for document renewals, fee waivers have been granted for those who were not able to renew their documents within the first few days since the reopening of the residency offices.

At the federal level, fees are not applied to visas expired after 21 February 2020, and there have been attempts to reduce the fees levied on visas which had expired before that date. Moreover, migrants with expired passports and whose country of origin does not have a diplomatic presence in Iraq can be facilitated to travel through the issuance of a letter from the Iraqi Ministry of

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1   An additional PoE (Pshta) has been added to the analysis as of 5 May 2020 when monitoring of the PoE began.

Interior (MoI). Nationals of countries with an Embassy in Iraq can only travel with a letter issued by their diplomatic mission. In both cases, there has to be an agreement between Iraq and the relevant countries of origin.

Additional permits are required for workers in essential services, such as health care workers, suppliers of essential goods, among others, to prove they have the right to move freely, so they can reach their places of work.

Table 1. Status and restrictions imposed at selected points of entry

GOVERNORATE	NAME OF THE POINTS OF ENTRY	BORDERING COUNTRY	OPERATIONAL STATUS	TYPE OF MOVEMENT ALLOWED
Anbar	Trebil	Jordan	Partial closure	Incoming
Anbar	Al-Qa'em	Syria	Partial closure	Incoming
Baghdad	Baghdad International Airport	Airport	Partial closure	Special incoming and outgoing flights
Basra	Abu Floos	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Basra	Umm Qasr	Seaport	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Basra	Al-Basra	Seaport	Commercial transit only	Outgoing
Basra	Khor Al Zubair	Seaport	Commercial transit only	Outgoing
Duhok	Ibrahim Khalil	Turkey	Partial closure	Both
Duhok	Fishkhabour	Syria	Partial closure	Both
Erbil	Haji Omran	Iran	Partial closure	Both
Erbil	Erbil International Airport	Airport	Partial closure	Special incoming and outgoing flights
Sulaimaniyah	Broizkhan	Iran	Commercial transit only	Both
Sulaimaniyah	Bashmagh	Iran	Partial closure	Both
Sulaimaniyah	Siran Bin	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Sulaimaniyah	Kele	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Sulaimaniyah	Twila	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Sulaimaniyah	Pshta	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming

METHODOLOGY

Since March 2020, DTM Iraq has been supporting the DTM Global Team in a new data collection exercise aimed at better understanding how COVID-19 affects global mobility. This assessment has involved 171 IOM Country Missions worldwide with the objective to provide information on the capacity of current PoEs to mitigate and/or respond adequately and in a targeted manner to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

This data collection exercise has been led by DTM HQ and coordinated with other IOM departments, and relevant data has been collected and updated at the country level on an ongoing basis using a web application.

In Iraq, data has been collected through the IOM DTM field team composed of over 100 staff members deployed across Iraq (20% of enumerators are female), and supplemented with preexisting IOM Migration Management Unit data. IOM's field staff has collected data by phone with Key Informants (KIs) using a large, well-established network that includes local authorities, security forces and customs employees. The KIs' responses aim to represent the actual situation at the monitoring points, and are not based on their opinions, unless phrased otherwise. Whenever possible, triangulation of findings was conducted with more than one KI per monitoring point

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To systematically capture the status of each location, the following operational statuses for border crossing points are defined as follows:

- Partial closure (indicating that only a reduced number of individuals can use the border crossing point to exit and enter the country, territory or area, due to limited hours of operation or partial closure for specific nationalities)

- Closed (for both entry and exit)

- Open for entry and exit

- Open for commercial traffic only

- Other

- Unknown

For further information on the methodology, definitions and explanation please refer to the to the Methodology Framework.

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