

RETURN DYNAMICS IN DIYALA GOVERNORATE

JUNE 2021

The Return Index is a tool designed to measure the severity of conditions in locations of return. The Return Index is based on 16 indicators divided into two scales: Scale 1, on livelihoods and basic services, and Scale 2, centered around social cohesion and safety perceptions. A regression model is used to assess the impact of each of the indicators in facilitating or preventing returns. The index ranges from 0 (all essential conditions for return are met) to 100 (no essential conditions for return are met). Higher scores denote more severe living conditions for returnees. The scores of the severity index are grouped into three categories: low, medium and high (which also includes very high). Refer to the report "[Methodological Overview](#)" for more details on the methodology.

The Return Index Governorate Profiling provides an analysis of returns in a specific governorate. This report focuses on the return dynamics in Diyala Governorate. The first section of this report

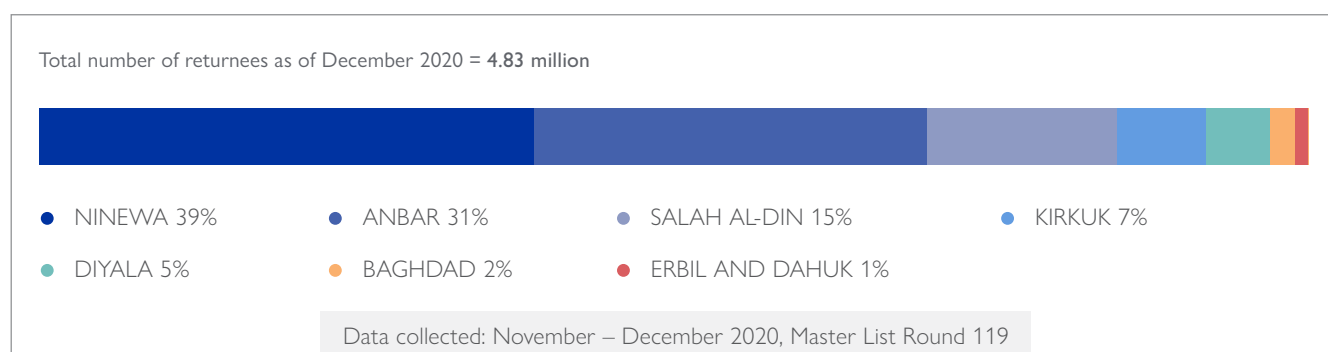
presents the overview of conditions across the governorate at the end of 2020 with a comparison of figures and the severity of living conditions over the course of 2020 (from 31 December 2019 to 31 December 2020). It also outlines the areas of no return recorded by IOM's Rapid Assessment and Response Teams (RARTs) as well as the newly assessed locations, the returnee population living in critical shelters and the displaced population hosted in the governorate. The second section devoted to the mass arrivals from camps due to its closures which began in mid-October pointing out the living conditions of new arrivals either they returned to villages and neighbourhoods of their origin or arrived in new displacement locations. The third section of this report provides an analysis of conditions at the district level and focuses on the main drivers of severity across subdistricts and changes that occurred between December 2019 and December 2020.

CATEGORIZING CONDITIONS IN AREAS OF RETURN

As of December 2020, the total number of returnees in Diyala Governorate stands at 236,574 individuals out of 4.83 million nationwide, concentrated in four districts across 224 locations.¹ This is the fifth largest returnee population, accounting for around 5 per cent of all returns in Iraq (Figure 1). Between December 2019 and

December 2020, the returnee population in Diyala increased by 8,388 individuals. Diyala, along with Erbil, was one of only two governorates to record more returns in 2020 than in the previous year, when only 4,860 individuals returned (December 2018 to December 2019).

Figure 1. Proportion of returnees per governorate



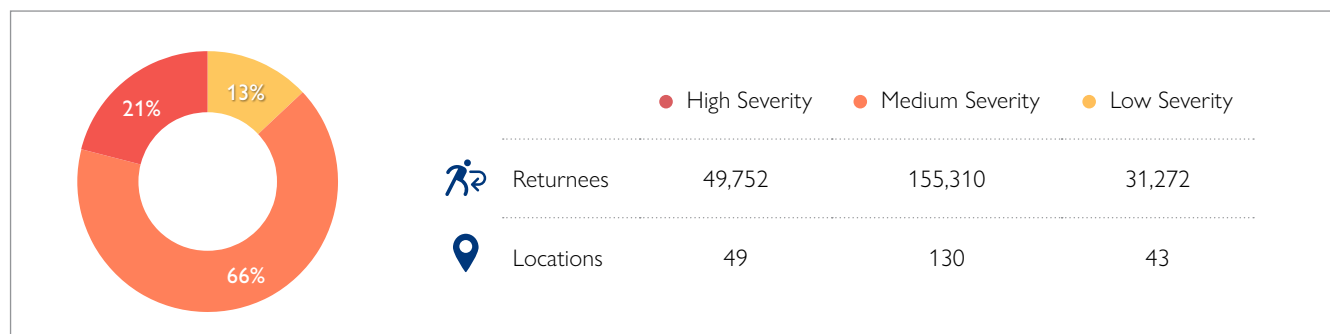
¹ Master List Round 119 (November–December 2020)

RETURNEE POPULATION IN SEVERE CONDITIONS

During the Return Index Round 11 collected in November and December 2020, a total of 222 locations of return were assessed in Diyala. Out of these 222 locations assessed, 49 present severe conditions.² Diyala Governorate hosts 49,752 returnees living in severe conditions. In relative terms, this means that 21 per cent of the returnee population in Diyala has returned to locations classified

as high severity, followed by 66 per cent to medium severity and 13 per cent to low severity. This distribution of returnees per severity category is significantly higher than the national average (10% living in high severity locations and 41% living in medium severity locations); (Figure 2).

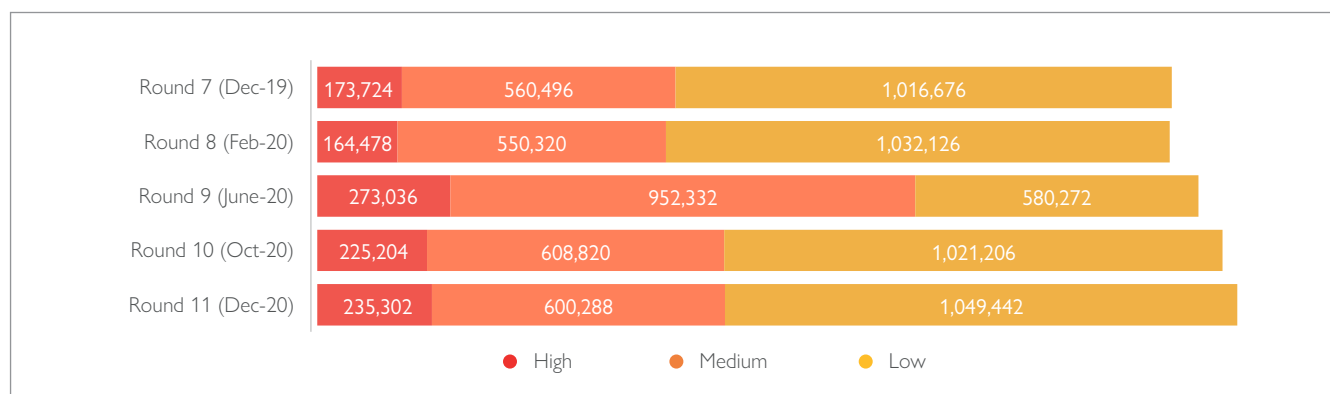
Figure 2. Proportion and numbers of returnees by category of severity in Diyala Governorate



Over the course of 2020, Diyala Governorate witnessed a very slight increase in the number of returnees living in locations classified as high severity (Figure 3). Between December 2019 and December 2020, an increase of 8,118 individuals living in severe or poor conditions was recorded. There was a spike in the number of returnees living in severe conditions in the round collected in May–June 2020

due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak and ensuing lockdown, which worsened the employment situation and changed daily public life. However, the number of individuals living in severe conditions dropped in the round collected in September–October 2020, when the lockdown measures were lifted and the employment situation and daily public life stabilized.

Figure 3. Yearly trend of returnees by category of severity in Diyala Governorate



LOCATIONS WITH NO RETURN AND NEWLY ASSESSED LOCATIONS

A location is recorded as having had no returns if none of the population displaced since 2014 has returned to date.³ As of December 2019, DTM identified 31 locations with no returns in Diyala Governorate. Out of these 31 locations, 5 witnessed returns over the course of 2020 as the security situation improved in Khanaqin and families were granted security clearances and returned to

rehabilitate their homes. Over the course of 2020, DTM identified 21 additional locations with no returns in Diyala. In the same period, seven locations witnessed returns. As a result, there were 45 locations of no return recorded as of December 2020. Three quarters of these locations are in Khanaqin (33 locations), followed by Kifri (6), Al-Khalis (4) and Al-Muqdadiya (2).

² The wording 'severe or poor conditions' in this report refers to conditions in the locations classified as high severity.

³ These locations, having no key informants and no population, are difficult to record and monitor and are generally identified through word-of-mouth.

RETURNEE POPULATION IN CRITICAL SHELTERS

As of December 2020, 23,760 returnees arrived at shelters in critical condition in Diyala, representing 10 per cent of the total returnee population in the governorate.⁴ This percentage is considerably

higher than the national average of 3.6 per cent as of December 2020. All returnees in critical shelters in Diyala reside in their habitual residence, which is uninhabitable.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPs) IN DIYALA

Between December 2019 and December 2020, Diyala Governorate witnessed a decrease in the number of IDPs from 54,786 individuals to 45,926. Of the 8,860 IDPs who left, 32 per cent were from non-camp settings. Diyala remains the governorate hosting the seventh largest number of IDPs in Iraq (just under 4% of all IDPs),

with the majority (45,276 individuals or 99% of IDPs in the governorate) living in out-of-camp settings. The four districts of return in Diyala host just over half of the IDPs in the governorate (55%) nearly all of whom reside in out-of-camp settings (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of returnees and IDPs per district in Diyala

| District | Average Severity (return locations) | Total Returnees (individuals) | Total Non-camp IDPs (individuals) | Total Camp IDPs (individuals) | Locations with more IDPs than Returnees |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Al-Khalis | Medium | 74,430 | 5,244 | | |
| Al-Muqdadiya | High | 59,790 | 198 | | 1 |
| Khanaqin | Medium | 101,034 | 12,120 | 650 | |
| Kifri | High | 1,320 | 7,104 | | |
| Diyala Total | | 236,574 | 24,666 | 650 | 1 |

ARRIVAL FROM CAMPS AND CORRELATION WITH SEVERITY⁵

ARRIVAL OF IDPs FROM CAMPS TO NON-CAMP SETTINGS IN DIYALA GOVERNORATE

Between November and December 2020, DTM tracked a total of 3,870 individuals (645 households) who arrived in non-camp settings in Diyala after departing camps across the country. Most of those movements were a consequence of the camp closures and consolidation that began in mid-October 2020. A total of 2,634 individuals (68%) returned to their district of origin while the remaining 1,236 individuals (32%) moved to new locations of displacement, thus becoming out-of-camp IDPs. In addition to the camp closures and IDPs' desire to return home due to improved security in their area of origin, a notable push factor for departures from camps was related to movement restrictions imposed because of the COVID-19

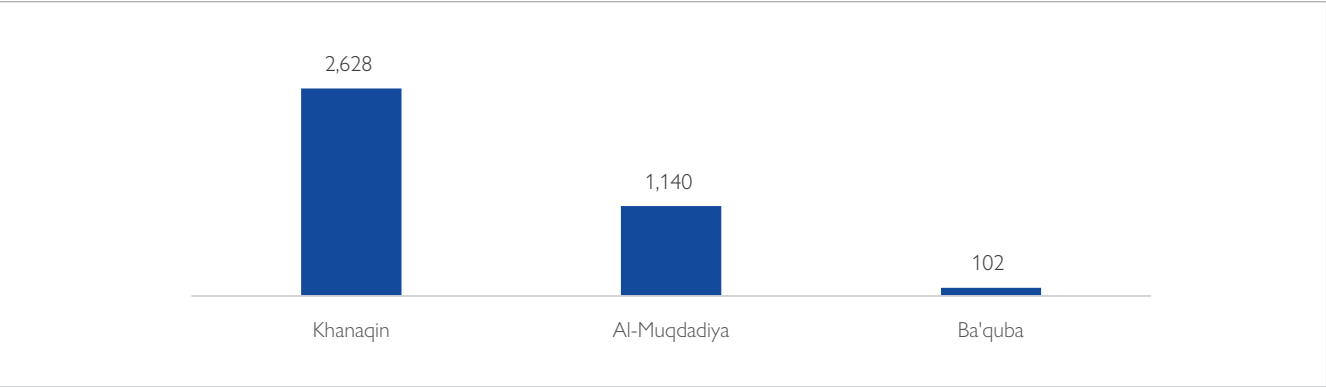
pandemic. These restrictions, which limited the ability of IDPs to work outside camp settings or to move freely between area of origin and area of displacement, pushed returns to their areas of origin.

The districts with the highest number of arrivals from camps are Khanaqin and Al-Muqdadiya, both accounting for 97 per cent of camp arrivals to Diyala (Figure 4). In Al-Muqdadiya district, the vast majority (98%) of the arrivals from camps have returned to their areas of origin, with the remaining (2%) arriving to new locations of displacement and therefore considered out-of-camp IDPs.

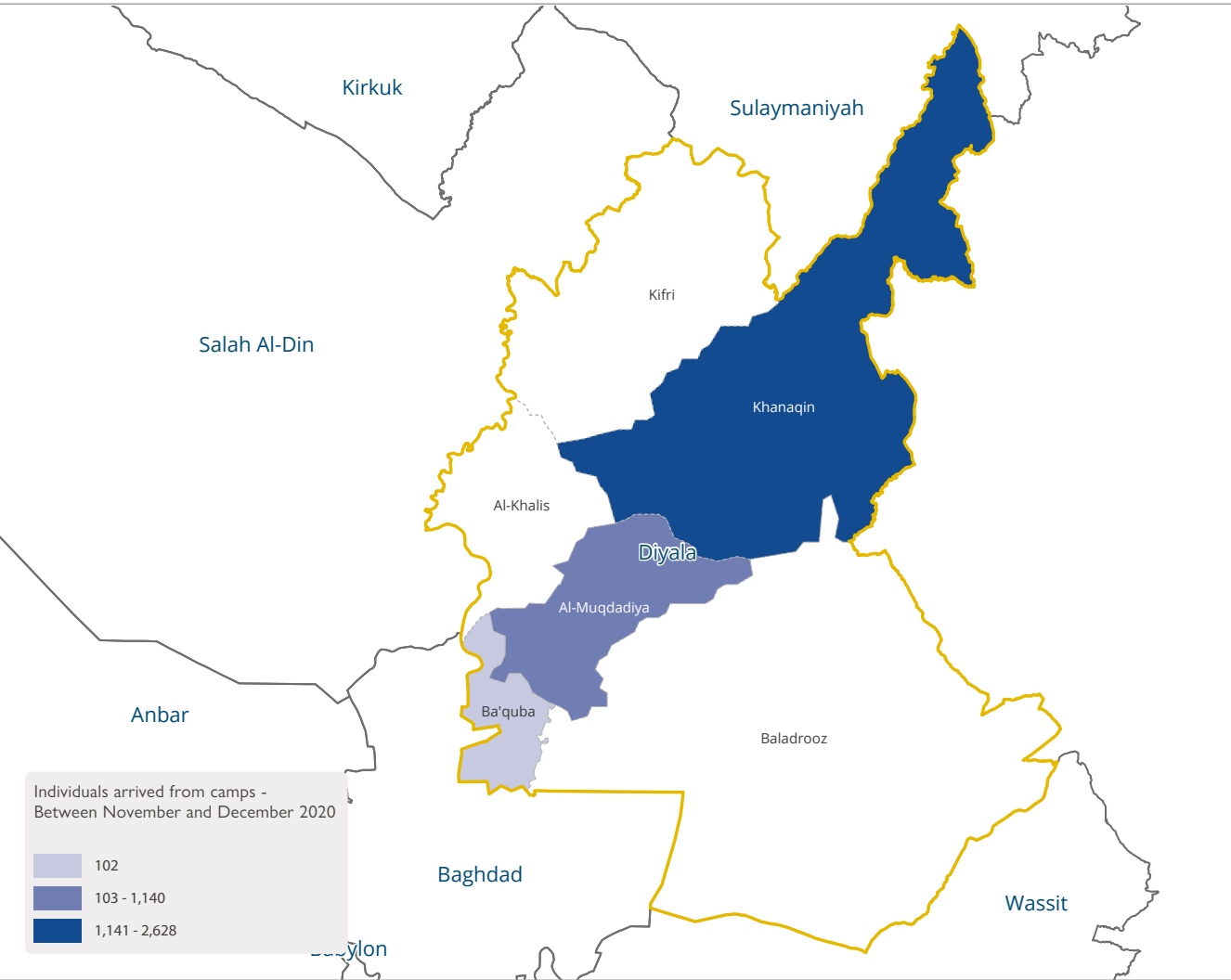
⁴ Critical shelters include collective shelters (such as religious buildings, schools, or other public buildings), unfinished or abandoned buildings, tents, caravans and other temporary, sub-standard or makeshift shelters; as well as severely damaged or destroyed habitual residences and long-term rental accommodations that are unfit for habitation (having the characteristics of unfinished or severely damaged buildings).

⁵ Refer to the Emergency Tracking report on "[Movement of Camp IDPs](#)" for more details on new arrivals since camp closures began in mid-October.

Figure 4. Number of individuals arriving from camps to districts in Diyala (November to December 2020)



Map 1: Locations in Diyala that recorded new arrivals from camps, by number of individuals between November and December 2020

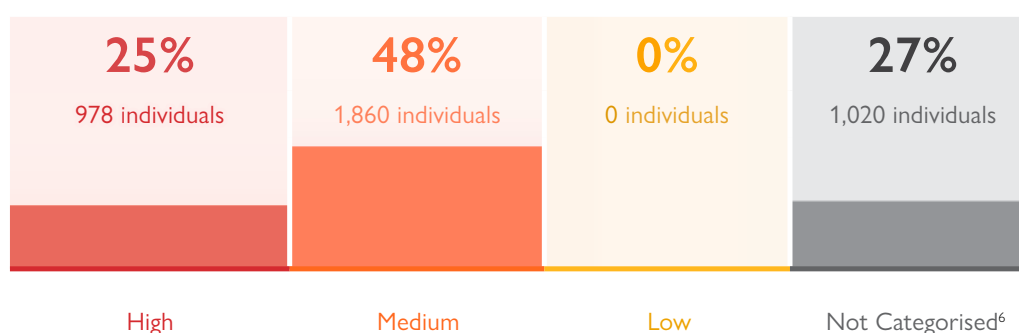


SEVERITY OF CONDITIONS IN LOCATIONS WITH ARRIVALS FROM CAMPS (NOVEMBER TO DECEMBER 2020)

At least 25 per cent (978 individuals) of the new arrivals from camps to non-camp locations in Diyala settled in locations classified as high severity (Figure 5). Al-Muqdadiya and Khanaqin districts had

the highest number of individuals from camps who settled in high severity locations (23% and 2% respectively).

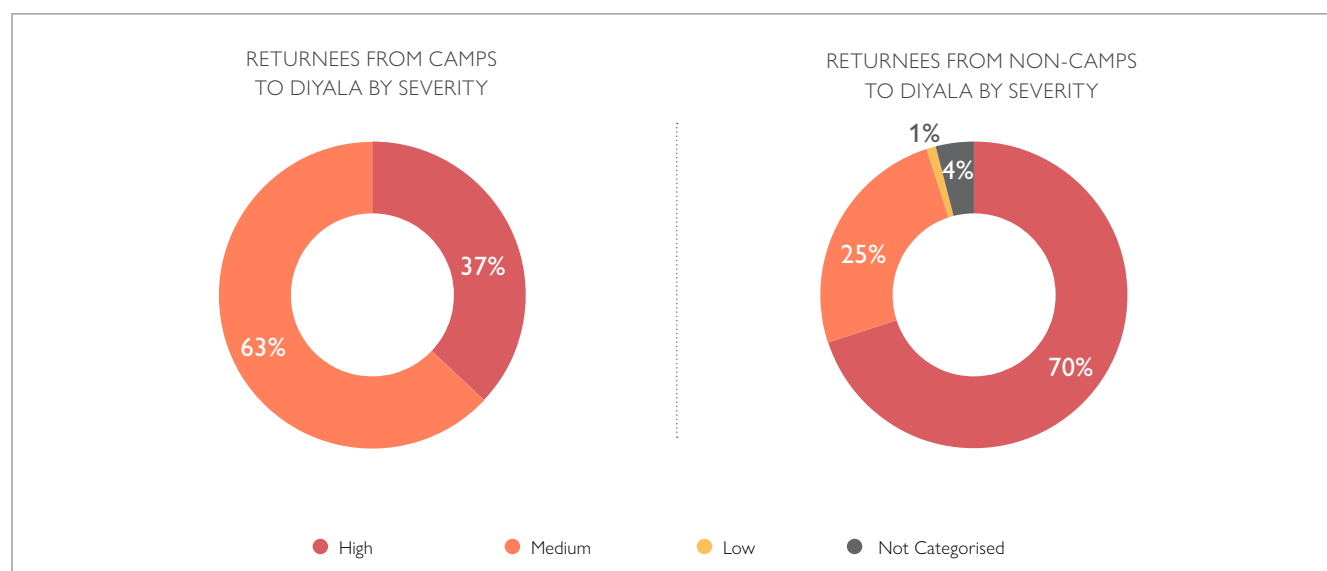
Figure 5. Distribution of new arrivals from camps to non-camp locations in Diyala by category of severity



Over the course of 2020, a total of 2,634 returnees (439 households) arrived from camps to their respective districts of origin in Diyala while a total of 5,958 returnees (993 households) arrived from non-camp locations to Diyala during the year. The situation, however, appears to be less critical for returnees from camp settings as 37 per cent (966 individuals) of those who returned from camps in 2020 are currently living in high severity conditions, compared to

70 per cent (4,176 individuals) of returnees from non-camp locations to Diyala (Figure 6). In Al-Muqdadiya district, most of the returnee individuals who arrived from camps in 2020 settled in locations classified as high severity, while the district also received the highest proportion of returnees from non-camp locations who have settled in high severity locations (40%, 2,376 returnees).

Figure 6. Distribution of returnees from camps vs returnees from non-camp locations in Diyala by category of severity (December 2019 – December 2020)



⁶ These locations are not Categorised in terms of severity, as they consist of newly inhabited returnee places not assessed as part of the Return Index.

SEVERITY OF CONDITIONS AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL

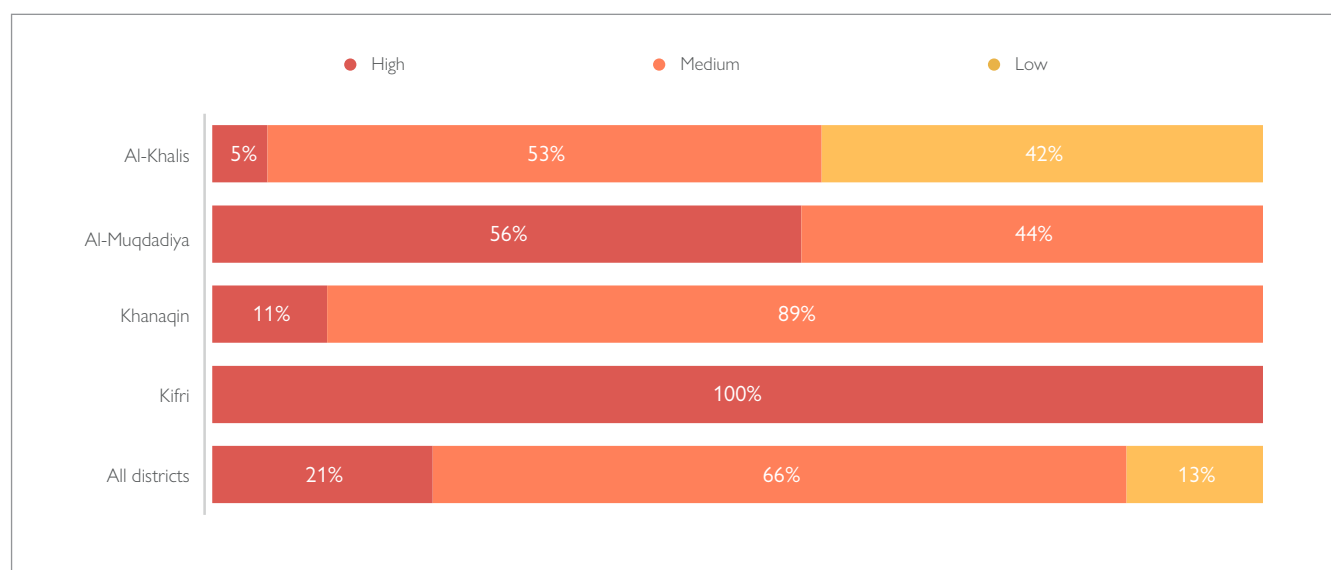
As of December 2020, Al-Muqdadiya is the district in Diyala which hosts the largest number of returnees living in severe conditions (33,510 individuals), followed by Khanaqin (11,016 individuals); (Table 2). In relative terms, Kifri hosts the highest proportion of returnees living in severe conditions as all its 1,320 returnees reside in locations with high severity (Figure 7). In other words, the majority of the

returnee population in districts across Diyala returned to medium severity conditions (66%) and 21 per cent having returned to locations classified as high severity. Al-Khalis is the only district that has a lower proportion of returnees in high severity locations than the national average of 10 per cent.

Table 2: Number of returnees per district and category of severity in Diyala Governorate⁷

| DISTRICT | HIGH SEVERITY | MEDIUM SEVERITY | LOW SEVERITY | NUMBER OF RETURNEES |
|----------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Al-Khalis | 3,906 | 39,252 | 31,272 | 74,430 |
| Al-Muqdadiya | 33,510 | 26,280 | | 59,790 |
| Khanaqin | 11,016 | 89,778 | | 100,794 |
| Kifri | 1,320 | | | 1,320 |
| All districts | 49,752 | 155,310 | 31,272 | 236,334 |

Figure 7. Proportion of returnees per district and category of severity in Diyala Governorate



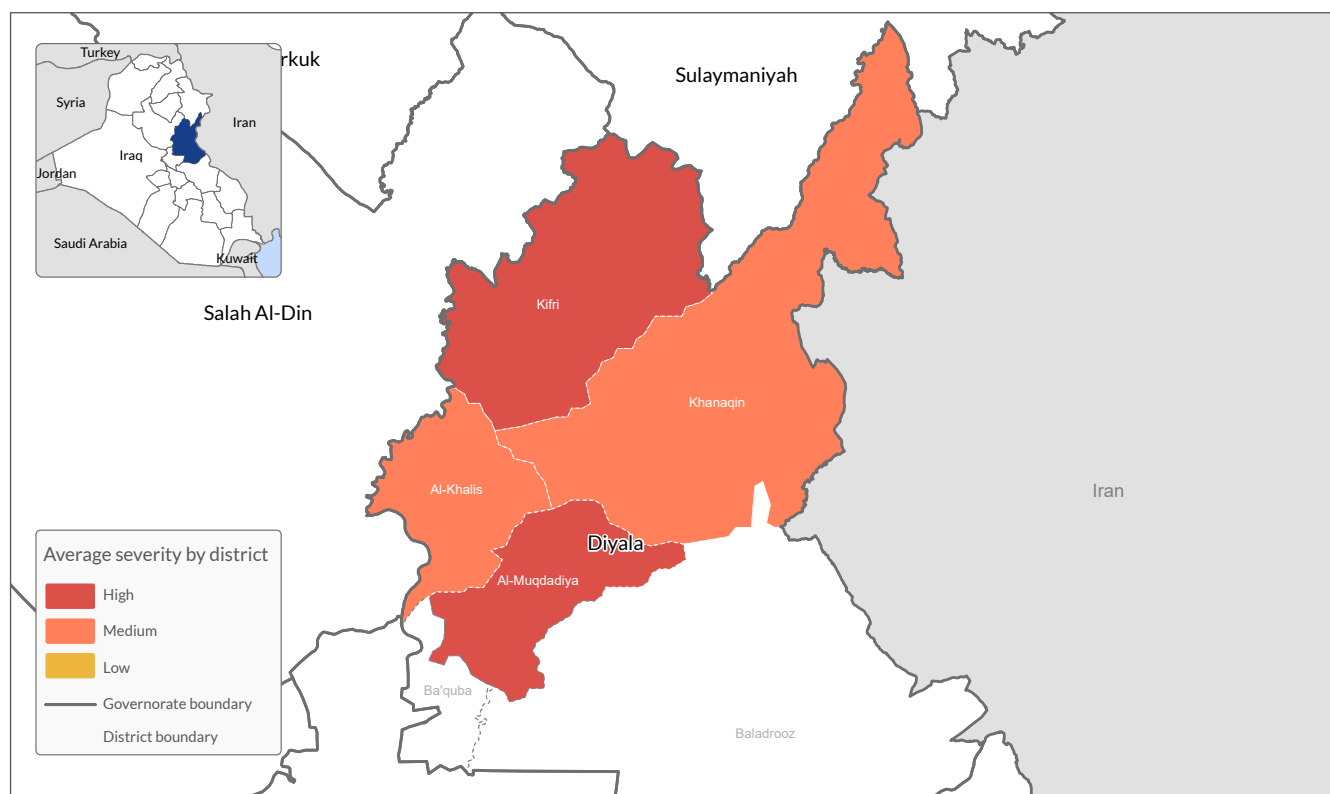
⁷ This total only includes returnees in locations assessed for the Return Index and does not constitute the total number of returnees in Diyala, as some locations have not been assessed.

VARIATION AT DISTRICT LEVEL BETWEEN DECEMBER 2019 AND DECEMBER 2020

The analysis presented in this section focuses on the overall severity in each of Diyala's districts, as well as the main drivers that contribute

to particularly high severity conditions, and changes that occurred between December 2019 and December 2020.⁸

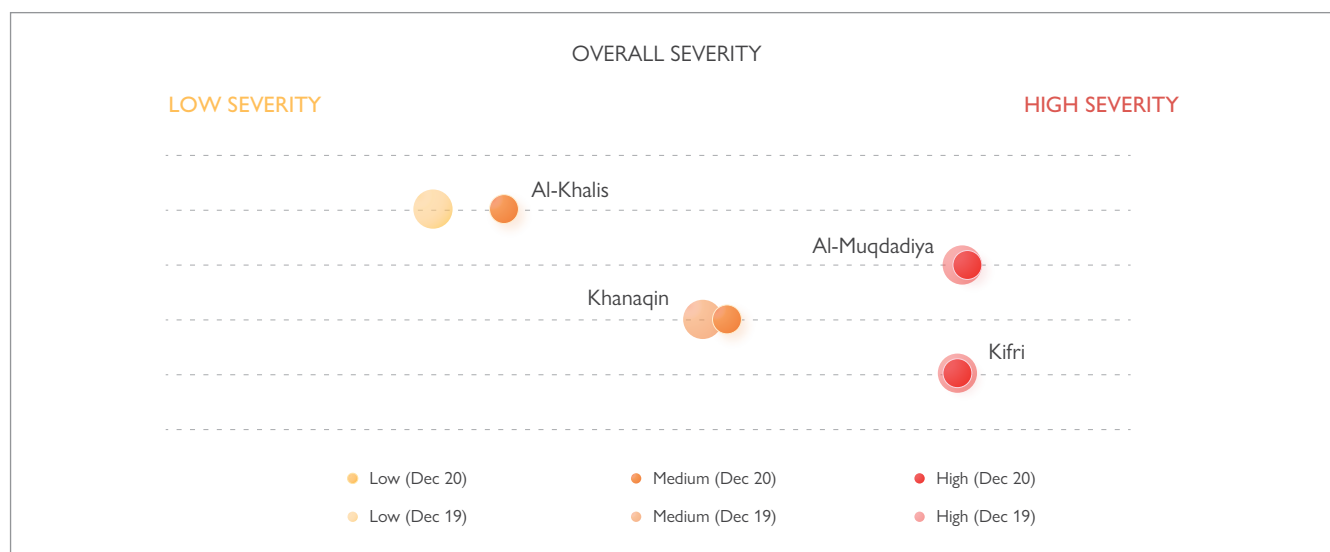
Map 2: Districts in Diyala by category of severity



On average per district, a worsening of overall severity was recorded in Al-Khalis, Al-Muqaddiya and Khanaqin between December 2019 and December 2020, while Kifri remained stable but in high severity

(Figure 8). Al-Khalis was the only district that worsened sufficiently to change in category of severity over the course of 2020, from low to medium severity.

Figure 8. Overall severity per district in Diyala in December 2019 and December 2020









⁸ Drivers of severity are calculated at the subdistrict level and provide information on living conditions that contribute to severity to better inform interventions. It is built on the Return Index indicators, and considering the impact of each of the indicators in facilitating or preventing returns and the size of the returnee population in a subdistrict.

VARIATION IN THE DRIVERS OF SEVERITY AT SUBDISTRICT LEVEL BETWEEN DECEMBER 2019 AND DECEMBER 2020

Al-Khalis District

Within **Al-Khalis District**, there a variation in drivers of severity contributed to a change in its category of severity over the course of 2020. In **Al A'dheem**, overall severity moved from low to medium. This change was driven by the stalled recovery of small businesses and concerns about various sources of violence, both of which peaked in May–June and remained relatively high for the rest of the year. Al A'dheem also experiences consistently high severity with regard to concern regarding non-state military actors in control of checkpoints. Finally, the subdistrict experienced a sharp increase in severity in relation to daily public life in May–June, which later

reduced to low levels. This spike can most likely be attributed to the restriction measures associated with the Covid-19 virus, which were eased by the time of the next assessment in September–October 2020. In **Al-Mansouriyah**, severity is driven by very high levels of concerns regarding various sources of violence as well as very poor recovery of small businesses and agricultural activities. While there was no significant variation in these indicators over the course of the year, the subdistrict maintained moderately high reports of blocked returns and concerns regarding non-state military actors in control of checkpoints.







| Al-Khalis |  Overall Security |  Residential Destruction |  Livelihoods |  Essential Services |  Safety and Security |  Social cohesion |
|----------------|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Al A'dheem | Medium ▼ | Low | Low ▼ | Low | Medium ▼ | Low |
| Al-Mansouriyah | Medium | Low | Medium | Low | Medium | Low |

▲ – Improvement; ▼ – Worsening compared to the round collected in November – December 2019

Al-Muqdadiya District

There was a slight overall increase in severity for **Al-Muqdadiya District**. There was no significant variation for **Abo Sayda** as it was only incorporated into the Return Index in May–June 2020. The subdistrict has multiple indicators of high severity, including high levels of residential destruction, very little recovery of agriculture and small businesses, extremely high concerns among returnees regarding sources of violence, mines and unexploded ordnances, restrictions on public life, and high levels of blocked returns. However, the delivery of essential services by the government, including electricity and running water, are all at the lowest level of severity. **Markaz Al-Muqdadiya** also remained high severity, although there was some variation over the course of 2020. While the extent of housing destruction is less severe, Markaz Al-Muqdadiya shares Abo Sayda's

poor recovery of agriculture and small business. This is compounded by the poor delivery of essential services, specifically water and electricity, which deteriorated throughout the year. Concerns regarding various sources of violence are very high and – unlike Abo Sayda – returnees are extremely concerned about the high number of security actors operating in the subdistrict. There is also a high level of concern regarding non-state military actors in control of checkpoints and concern regarding non-state military actors in control of checkpoints. As in many subdistricts, Markaz Al-Muqdadiya experienced extremely high severity in May–June 2020 regarding daily public life, which is most likely attributable to the restriction measures put in place to curb the spread of Covid-19.







| Al-Muqdadiya |  Overall Security |  Residential Destruction |  Livelihoods |  Essential Services |  Safety and Security |  Social cohesion |
|---------------------|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Abo Sayda | High | High | Medium | Low | Medium | Medium |
| Markaz Al-Muqdadiya | High | Medium | High ▼ | High ▼ | High ▲ | Low ▲ |

▲ – Improvement; ▼ – Worsening compared to the round collected in November – December 2019

Khanaqin District

Despite a slight worsening in severity in **Khanaqin district**, there was little variation recorded in its subdistricts. In **As-Saadia**, severity is driven by the poor provision of electricity and sufficient running water, the high number of security actors operating the area and concerns about non-state military actors in control of checkpoints. The subdistrict has low severity in terms of the extent of residential destruction and indicators related to social cohesion such as the extent of community reconciliation, blocked returns and daily

public life. **Jalula** also saw relatively little variation over the course of the year. The primary driver of severity is that of safety and security, with very high concerns regarding multiple sources of violence, the number of security actors operating in the area and concern regarding non-state military actors in control of checkpoints. While better than As-Saadia, there is still moderate severity regarding sufficient electricity and water provision, as well as to the recovery of small businesses and access to employment opportunities.







| Khanaqin |  Overall Security |  Residential Destruction |  Livelihoods |  Essential Services |  Safety and Security |  Social cohesion |
|-----------|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| As-Saadia | Medium | Low | Medium | Medium | High | Low |
| Jalula | Medium | Medium | Medium ▼ | Medium | High | Low |

▲ – Improvement; ▼ – Worsening compared to the round collected in November – December 2019

Kifri District

All returnees in **Kifri district** live in locations with severe conditions. In **Qara Tabe**, there was little variation in severity across any driver in 2020. Very few have access to sufficient electricity or running water. As elsewhere in Diyala, there are also very high concerns regarding multiple sources of violence, the number of security actors operating

in the area and concern regarding non-state military actors in control of checkpoints. Blocked returns are also very prevalent. However, levels of residential destruction are comparatively low and factors such as daily public life, community reconciliation and the provision of government services are at the lowest level of severity.

| Kifri |  Overall Security |  Residential Destruction |  Livelihoods |  Essential Services |  Safety and Security |  Social cohesion |
|-----------|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Qara Tabe | High | Low | Medium | High | High | Medium |

▲ – Improvement; ▼ – Worsening compared to the round collected in November – December 2019

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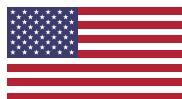
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