

RETURN DYNAMICS IN SALAH AL-DIN GOVERNORATE

MAY 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 Salah al-Din Governorate. The first section of this report

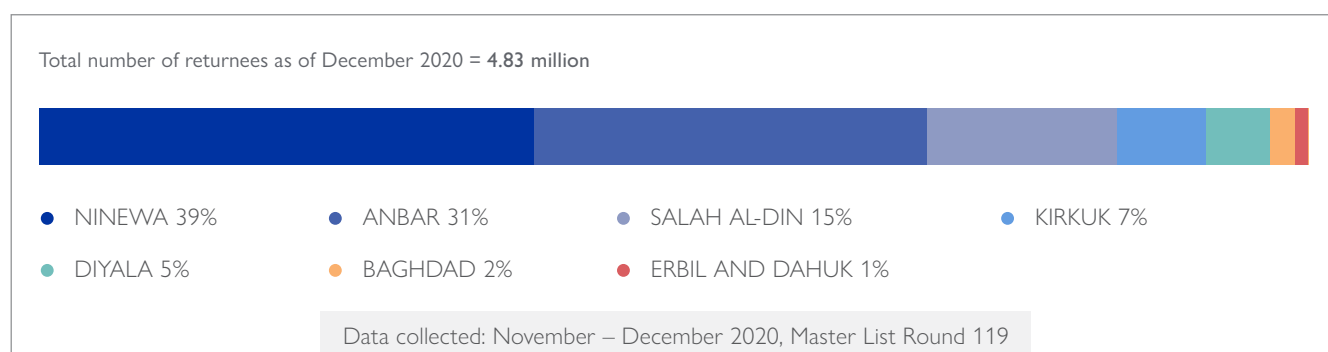
presents the overview of conditions across the governorate at the end of 2020 with a comparison of figures and the severity of living conditions over the course of 2020 (from 31 December 2019 to 31 December 2020). It also outlines the areas of no return recorded by IOM's Rapid Assessment and Response 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 is devoted to the mass arrivals from camps due to their closure, which began in mid-October, and highlights the living conditions of new arrivals either when they returned to their villages and neighbourhoods of their origin or arrived in new locations of displacement. The third section 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 2020,¹ the total number of returnees in Salah al-Din Governorate stands at 708,744 individuals out of 4.83 million nationwide, dispersed across eight districts and 238 locations. This is the third largest returnee population by governorate, with 15 per cent of all returns in Iraq (Figure 1). Between December 2019 and

December 2020, the returnee population in Salah al-Din increased by 33,552 individuals, a lower number than that of the previous year, during which 84,540 individuals returned (December 2018 to December 2019).

Figure 1. Proportion of returnees per governorate



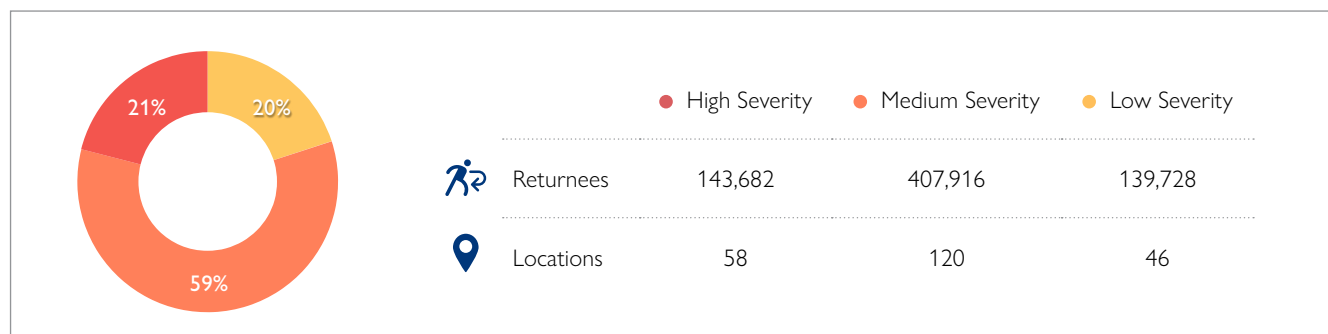
¹ Master List Round 119 (November–December 2020)

RETURNEE POPULATION IN SEVERE CONDITIONS

During the Return Index Round 11 collected in November and December 2020, a total of 224 locations of return were assessed. Out of these 224 locations assessed, 58 present severe conditions.² Salah al-Din Governorate hosts the second largest number of returnees living in severe conditions, with 143,682 individuals. In relative terms, this means that around 21 per cent of the returnee

population in Salah al-Din has returned to locations classified as high severity, followed by 59 per cent to medium severity, and 20 per cent to low severity. This distribution of returnees per severity category is over twice the national average, with 10 per cent living in high severity locations (Figure 2).

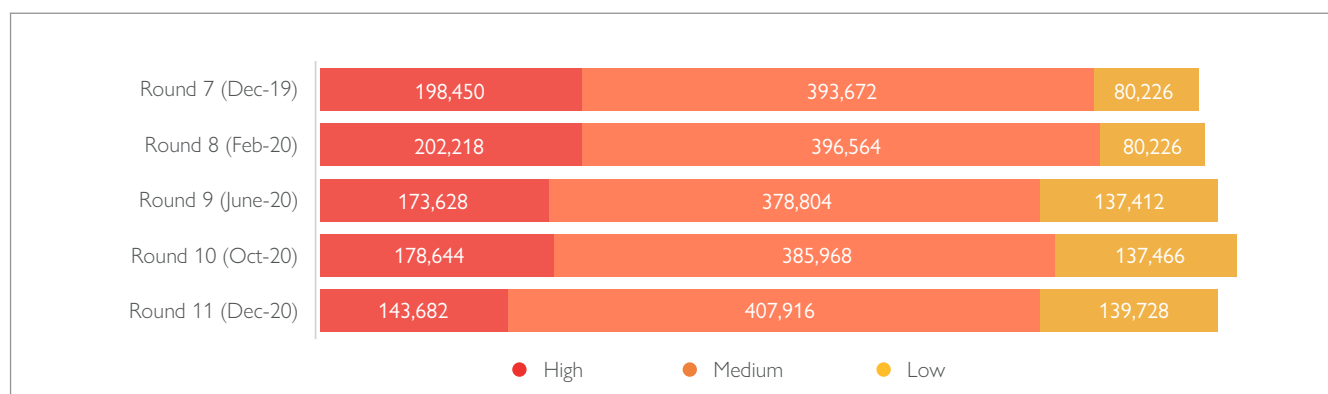
Figure 2. Proportion and number of returnees by category of severity in Salah al-Din Governorate



Over the course of 2020, Salah al-Din Governorate witnessed a gradual decrease in the number of returnees living in locations classified as high severity (Figure 3). Between December 2019 and December 2020, an increase of 54,768 individuals living in severe or poor conditions was recorded. Unlike in other governorates, there was no 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. The greatest reduction in the number of returnees living in severe conditions occurred between the rounds collected in October and December 2020, with a reduction of 34,692 individuals.

Figure 3. Yearly trend of returnees by category of severity in Salah al-Din Governorate



LOCATIONS WITH NO RETURN AND NEWLY ASSESSED LOCATIONS

A location is recorded as having had no returns if all its pre-2014 population displaced, and none of it has returned yet.³ As of December 2019, DTM identified 46 locations with no returns in Salah al-Din Governorate, mainly in the districts of Tuz Khurmatu (29), Baiji (7) and Balad (3). Out of these 46 locations, 15 witnessed returns over the course of 2020, after a general improvement in the security situation enabled families to return to agricultural activities and rehabilitate their houses. Over the course of 2020, DTM additionally identified two locations with no returns in Salah al-Din,

bringing the total number to 33 locations as of December 2020. The main reasons for these locations having no return remain the security situation, housing damage and lack of services and infrastructure.⁴ Thanks to access to new areas throughout the year, an additional 20 locations of return were assessed in Salah al-Din Governorate since December 2019. Newly assessed locations were mainly in the districts of Tuz Khurmatu (15 locations) and Al-Shirqat (3). Out of these 20 locations, 17 were classified as high severity and the majority were in Tuz Khurmatu (15).

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

³ It should be noted that these locations, having no key informants and no population, are difficult to record and monitor and are generally identified through word-of-mouth.

⁴ Refer to the report "[Areas of No Return](#)" for more details on the locations with no returns.

RETURNEE POPULATION IN CRITICAL SHELTERS

As of December 2020, 42,540 returnees arrived at shelters in critical condition in Salah al-Din, representing 6 per cent of the total returnee population in the governorate.⁵ Specifically, most arrived at destroyed or heavily damaged pre-conflict residences, with a

far smaller share returning to informal settlements (8%) or unfinished/abandoned buildings. Around 30 per cent (12,888 individuals) of returnees in critical shelters are concentrated in Baiji district, followed by Tikrit (22%), Al-Shirqat (22%) and Balad (10%).

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPs) IN SALAH AL-DIN

Between December 2019 and December 2020, Salah al-Din Governorate witnessed a decrease in the number of IDPs, from 79,794 to 62,232 individuals. Of the 17,562 decrease in the displaced population between December 2019 and December 2020, 16,387 (93%) were from non-camp settings and 1,175 (7%) were from camp settings. Salah al-Din hosts the sixth largest number of IDPs

in Iraq (5% of all IDPs), with all living in out-of-camp settings as of December 2020. Tuz Khurmatu, Samarra and Tikrit districts host the largest population of IDPs in the governorate, respectively accounting for 35 per cent (21,942 individuals), 26 per cent (16,404 individuals) and 25 per cent (15,600) of IDPs in Salah al-Din (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of returnees and IDPs per district in Salah al-Din (December 2020)

District	Average Severity (return locations)	Total Returnees (individuals)	Total Non-camp IDPs (individuals)	Total Camp IDPs (individuals)	Locations with more IDPs than Returnees
Al-Daur	Medium	60,678	66	0	0
Al-Fares	Medium	12,378	2,424	0	0
Al-Shirqat	Medium	161,952	528	0	0
Baiji	Medium	119,370	600	0	0
Balad	HighG	68,184	4,668	0	0
Samarra	Medium	57,666	16,404	0	0
Tikrit	Low	175,368	15,600	0	2
Tuz Khurmatu	Medium	53,148	21,942	0	3
Salah al-Din Total		708,744	62,232	0	5

ARRIVAL FROM CAMPS AND CORRELATION WITH SEVERITY⁶

ARRIVAL OF IDPs FROM CAMPS TO NON-CAMP SETTINGS IN SALAH AL-DIN GOVERNORATE

Between November and December 2020, DTM tracked a total of 3,270 individuals (545 households) who arrived in non-camp settings in Salah al-Din after departing camps across the country.⁷ Most of those movements were a consequence of the camp closures and consolidation, which began in mid-October 2020. A total of 2,694 individuals (82%) have returned to their district of origin, while the remaining 576 (18%) moved to new locations of displacement, thus becoming out-of-camp IDPs. In addition to the camp closures and the 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 the area of origin and of displacement, pushed returns to areas of origin.

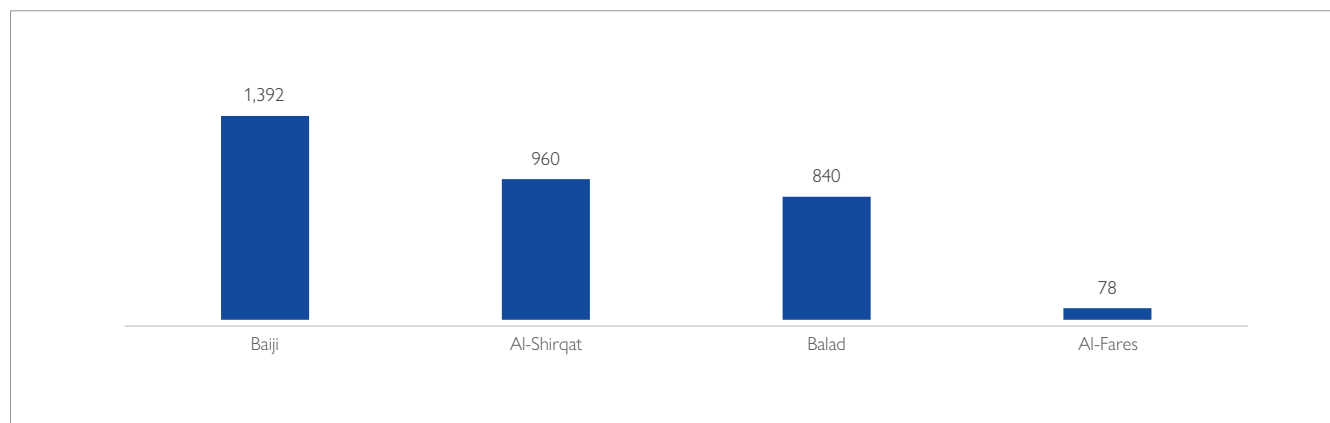
Baiji district witnessed the highest number of arrivals from camps, accounting for two fifths of camp arrivals to Salah al-Din, followed by Al-Shirqat (29%) and Balad (26%); (Figure 4). Most of those arriving from camps in Baiji and all arrivals from camps in Al-Shirqat and Al-Fares have returned to their areas of origin. In Balad, 40 per cent have returned to their areas of origin and 60 per cent arrived to new locations of displacement and therefore are considered out-of-camp IDPs.

⁵ Critical shelters include collective shelters (such as religious buildings, schools, or other public buildings), unfinished or abandoned buildings, tents, caravans and other temporary, substandard 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).

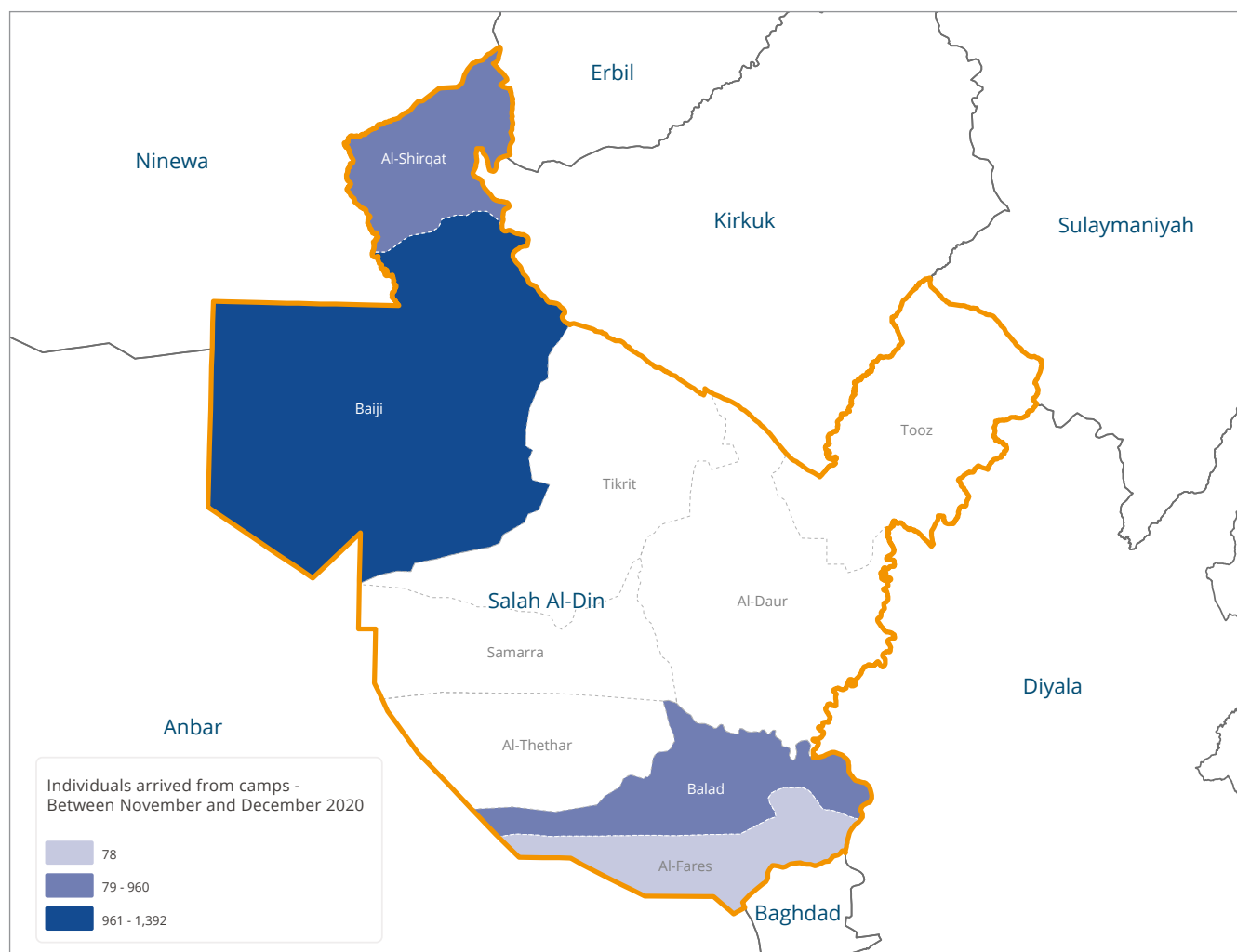
⁶ Refer to the Emergency Tracking report on "[Movement of Camp IDPs](#)" for more details on new arrivals since camp closures began in mid-October.

⁷ Master List Round 119 (November – December 2020)

Figure 4. Number of individuals arriving from camps to districts in Salah al-Din (November–December 2020)



Map 1: Districts in Salah al-Din that recorded new arrivals from camps, by number of individuals, between November and December 2020

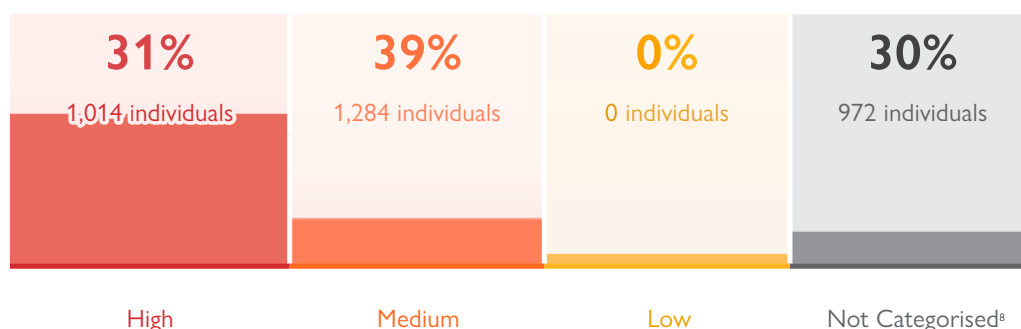


SEVERITY OF CONDITIONS IN LOCATIONS WITH ARRIVALS FROM CAMPS (NOVEMBER TO DECEMBER 2020)

As of December 2020, 31 per cent (1,014 individuals) of the new arrivals from camps to non-camp locations in Salah al-Din settled in locations classified as high severity (Figure 5). Balad and Al-Shirqat districts respectively host 40 per cent and 38 per cent of individuals from arriving from camps into locations with severe conditions,

which is higher than the governorate average of 31 per cent. More individuals upon leaving camps settled in locations with medium severity (39%), while the remaining percentage arrived to locations not Categorised in the Return Index (30%).

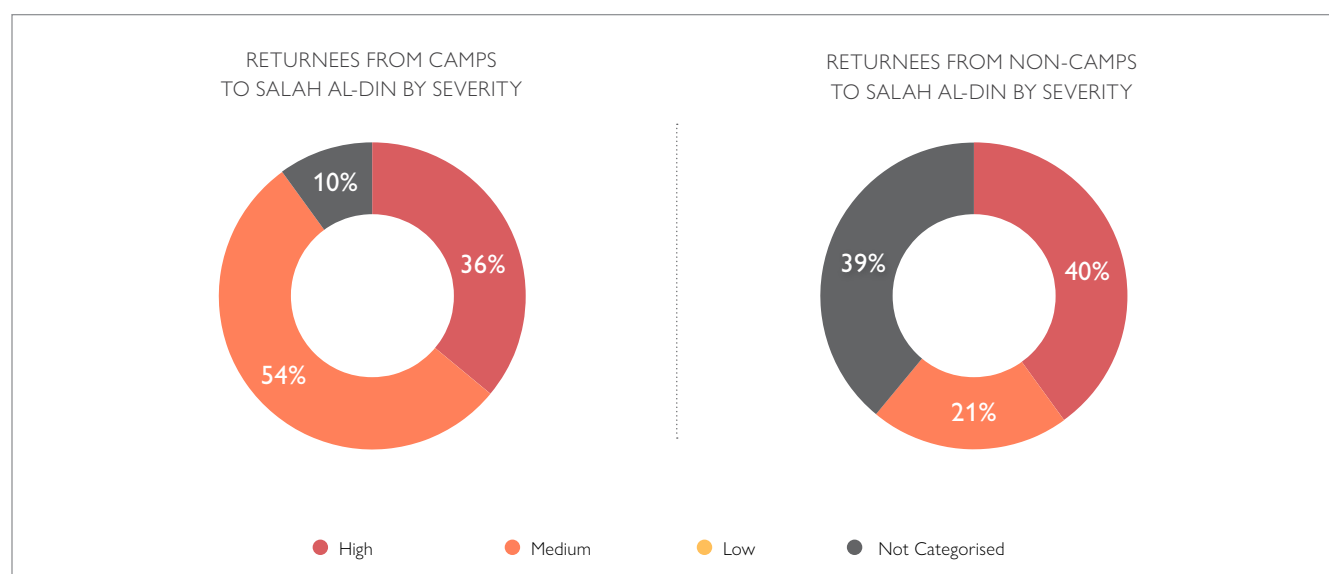
Figure 5. Distribution of new arrivals from camps to non-camp locations in Salah al-Din by category of severity



Over the course of 2020, a total of 6,018 individuals (1,003 households) arrived from camps to their respective districts of origin in Salah al-Din, while 38,640 individuals (6,440 households) arrived from non-camp locations. The situation appears to be slightly less critical for returnees from camp settings, as 36 per cent (2,184 individuals) are currently living in high severity conditions, compared to 40 per cent of returnees from non-camp locations (15,360 individuals);

(Figure 6). In Al-Fares district, almost all individuals who arrived from camps settled in locations classified as high severity. The other district with a high proportion of arrivals from camps in severe conditions is Balad district, with 70 per cent of individuals from camps in high severity locations, followed by Al-Shirqat district (32%).

Figure 6. Distribution of returnees from camps vs returnees from non-camp locations in Salah al-Din by category of severity (December 2019 to December 2020)



8 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

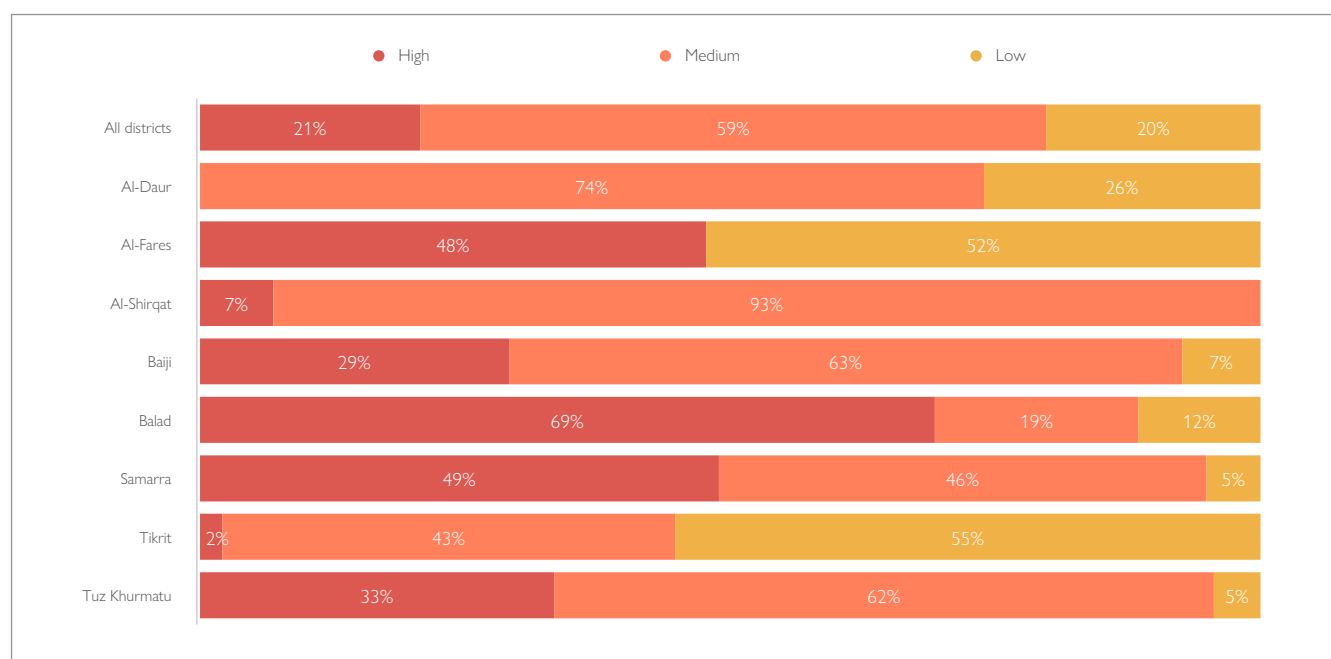
As of December 2020, Balad (47,256 individuals) hosts the largest number of returnees living in severe conditions, followed by Baiji (30,282) and Samarra (28,224); (Table 2). The number of returnees in severe conditions in these three districts represent three quarters of all the returnee population living in severe conditions in Salah

al-Din Governorate (105,762 individuals in total). In relative terms, Balad has the highest proportion of returnees living in severe conditions (69%), followed by Samarra (49%) and Al-Fares (48%). These numbers are more than twice the average for the governorate, at 21 per cent.

Table 2: Number of returnees per district and category of severity in Salah al-Din Governorate⁹

DISTRICT	HIGH SEVERITY	MEDIUM SEVERITY	LOW SEVERITY	NUMBER OF RETURNEES
Al-Daur	0	44,862	15,816	60,678
Al-Fares	5,910	0	6,468	12,378
Al-Shirqat	11,202	150,750	0	161,952
Balad	47,256	13,092	7,836	68,184
Baiji	30,282	65,952	7,656	103,890
Samarra	28,224	26,514	2,928	57,666
Tuz Khurmatu	17,100	31,860	2,250	51,210
Tikrit	3,708	74,886	96,774	175,368
Salah al-Din	143,682	407,916	139,728	691,326

Figure 7. Proportion of returnees per district and category of severity in Salah al-Din Governorate



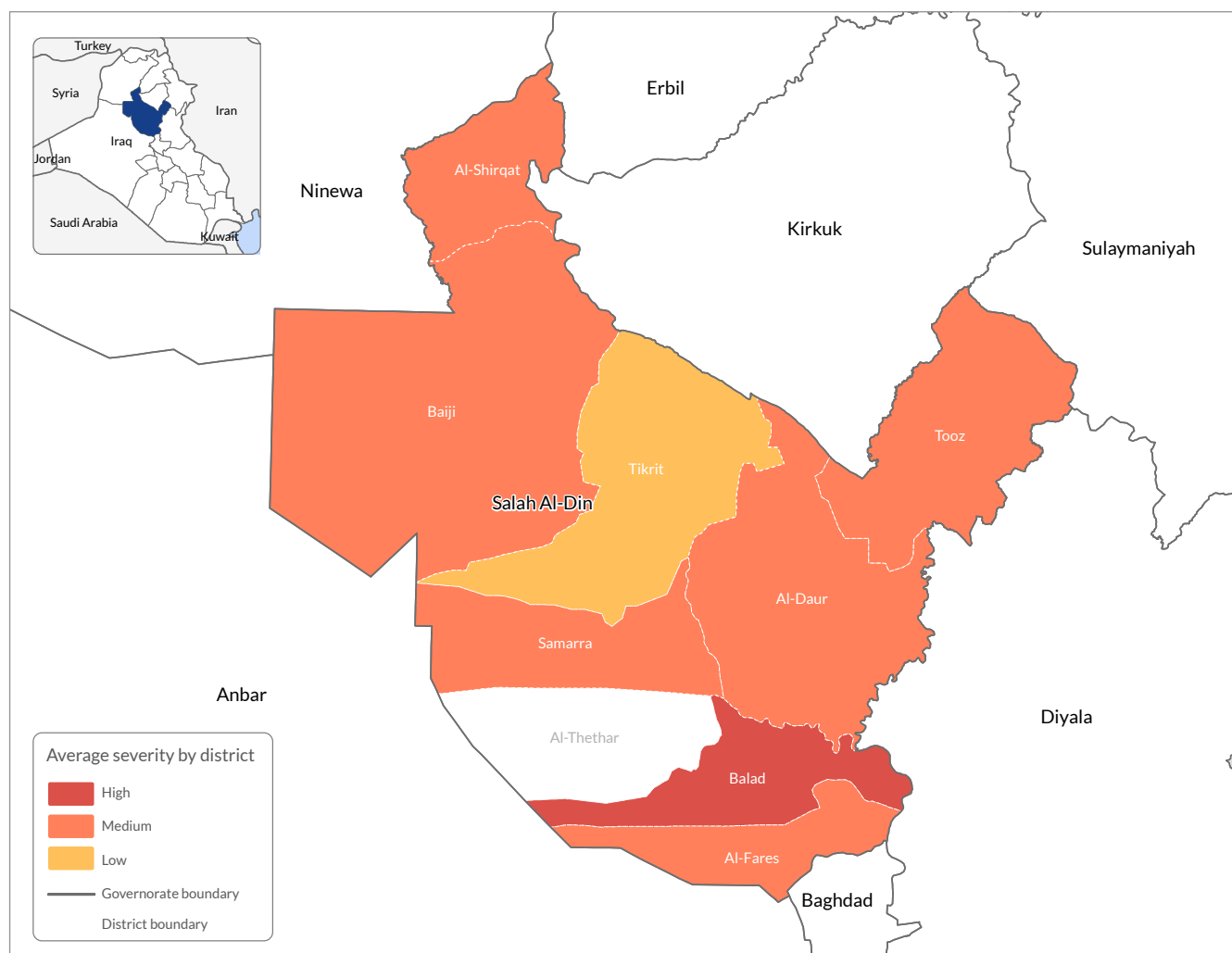
⁹ This total only includes returnees in locations assessed for the Return Index and does not constitute the total number of returnees in Salah al-Din, as some locations have not been assessed.

VARIATION AT DISTRICT LEVEL BETWEEN DECEMBER 2019 AND DECEMBER 2020

The analysis presented in this section focuses on the overall severity in each of the districts in Salah al-Din as well as the main drivers¹⁰

that contribute to particularly high severity conditions and changes that occurred between December 2019 and December 2020.

Map 2: Districts in Salah al-Din by category of severity

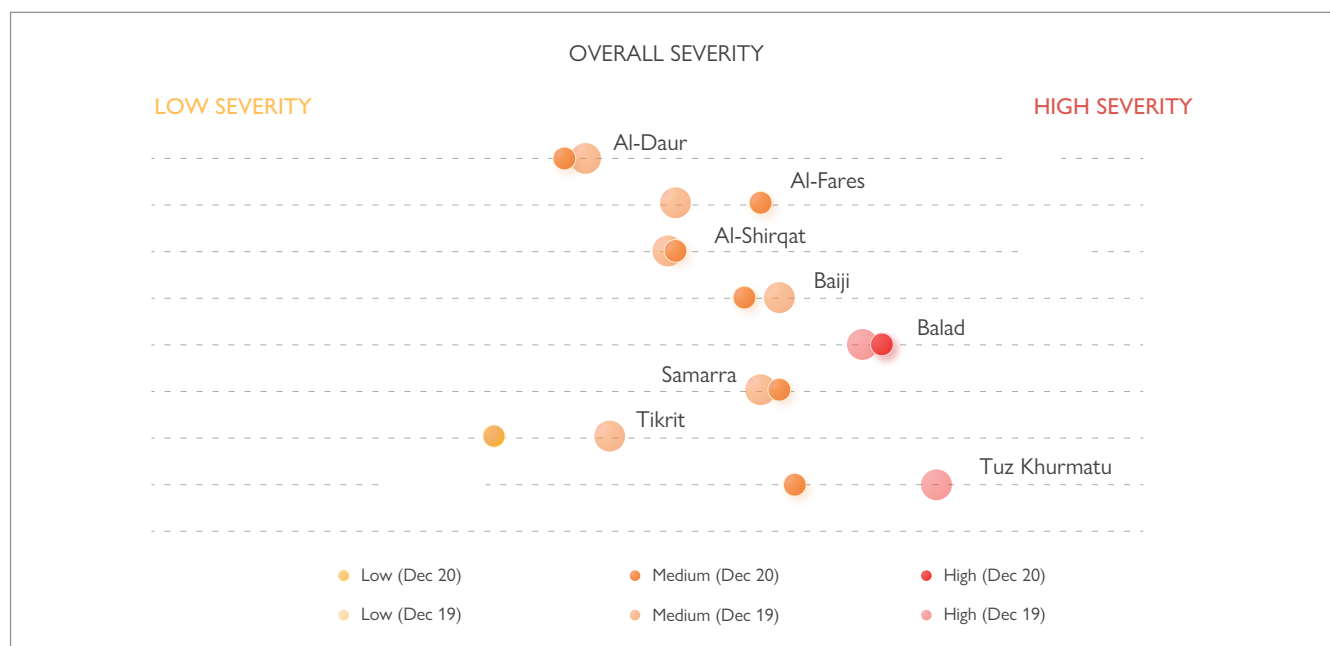


On average per district, a worsening of overall severity was recorded in Al-Fares, Al-Shirqat, Balad and Samarra between December 2019 and December 2020, while improvements were recorded in Al-Daur, Baiji, Tikrit and Tuz Khurmatu. The improvements in Tikrit and Tuz

Khurmatu were significant enough to move those districts to a lower overall category of severity (from medium to low and from high to medium, respectively).

¹⁰ 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.

Figure 8. Overall severity per district in Salah al-Din in December 2019 and December 2020









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

Balad District

Over the course of 2020, the overall severity of conditions in **Balad District** remained in the category of high severity. However, some variation in drivers of severity was observed across subdistricts. In **Markaz Al-Balad**, where severity is high and mainly driven by residential destruction and social cohesion, a severe worsening in livelihoods and essential service provision was recorded, specifically the recovery of business, access to government services and electricity supply. In **Yathreb**, overall severity remained medium throughout the year,

although there was a slight improvement in livelihoods, driven by the recovery of agriculture. Safety and security worsened, driven by increased instances of harassment at checkpoints and consistently high levels of concern about sources of violence. **Al-Eshaqi** saw a moderate increase in severity related to livelihoods, specifically in access to employment. **Al-Duloeyah** remains the only subdistrict in Balad that saw no substantive changes over the reporting period.







Balad	 Overall Security	 Residential Destruction	 Livelihoods	 Essential Services	 Safety and Security	 Social cohesion
Al-Duloeyah	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium
Al-Eshaqi	High ▼	High	High ▼	Low	High	High
Markaz Al-Balad	High ▼	High	High ▼	Medium ▼	Low	High
Yathreb	Medium	High	Low ▲	Low	Medium ▼	Medium

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

Baiji District

Baiji District also remained stable with medium severity. In **Al-Siniya** subdistrict, severity remained high, driven by poor economic recovery – low levels of business and employment – multiple sources of violence and limited access to government services and infrastructure such as electricity and water. The largest increases in severity were related to agriculture and the provision of government services. Water sufficiency remained the most severe condition in **MakkHoul**,







showing no signs of improvement throughout the year. All other indicators remained stable except for a small increase in severity related to fewer residents able to find employment. **Markaz Baiji** also remained stable over the course of the year with a small increase in severity related to the concerns about the presence of mines and UXO, which changed safety and security to high severity.

Baiji	 Overall Security	 Residential Destruction	 Livelihoods	 Essential Services	 Safety and Security	 Social cohesion
Al-Siniya	High ▼	Low ▲	High ▼	High ▼	Medium	Medium ▼
MakkHoul	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low
Markaz Baiji	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
▲ – Improvement; ▼ – Worsening compared to the round collected in November – December 2019						

Samarra District

Generally, conditions in **Samarra District** remained stable throughout the year at medium severity. The moderate severity in **Al-Moatassem** is driven, first, by the slow recovery of business and commensurate low rates of employment among residents. Second, the subdistrict also has high severity regarding sources of violence and checkpoints controlled by other security actors. There was minimal variation over the year, however. **Dijla** also remained at medium severity, driven mainly by a poor recovery of local businesses, concerns around multiple sources of violence, checkpoints







controlled by other security actors and cases of blocked returns. However, none of these indicators changed over the course of the year. **Markaz Samarra** remains the subdistrict with the most severe conditions in Samarra, with poor provision of government services, electricity and water, all of which worsened marginally over the year. In addition, concerns around daily public life, sources of violence, presence of Population Mobilization Units (PMUs) or other groups in control of checkpoints combined with concerns about harassment and cases of blocked returns all remain in high severity.

Samarra	 Overall Security	 Residential Destruction	 Livelihoods	 Essential Services	 Safety and Security	 Social cohesion
Al-Moatassem	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium ▼
Dijla	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
Markaz Samarra	High	Low	Medium	High	High	Medium
▲ – Improvement; ▼ – Worsening compared to the round collected in November – December 2019						

Tuz Khurmatu District

Of all districts in Salah al-Din, Tuz Khurmatu saw some of the most marked improvements during the year, moving from high to medium overall severity. At the subdistrict level, **Al-Amerli** went down to medium severity over the course of the year, mostly driven by the improvement in community reconciliation. However, access to government services, infrastructure and the recovery of local business and agriculture all increased mildly in severity. Similarly, in **Markaz Khurmatu**, an overall reduction in severity was driven by community reconciliation efforts, despite very poor access to electricity, sources of violence, multiple security actors, illegal occupation of dwellings and

blocked returns. **Sulaiman Beg**, despite some improvement, remained in high severity, driven by poor provision of essential services and safety and social cohesion indicators. Unlike other subdistricts in Tuz Khurmatu, the concerns among the population are high about the presence of explosive devices in Sulaiman Beg. Community reconciliation was also extremely effective over the year, with a significant improvement in severity. Access to water and electricity remained extremely poor, but both business and agriculture saw significant improvements over the year.







Tuz Khurmatu	 Overall Security	 Residential Destruction	 Livelihoods	 Essential Services	 Safety and Security	 Social cohesion
Al-Amerli	Medium ▲	Low ▼	Low	High ▼	High	Medium ▲
Markaz Tuz Khurmatu	Medium ▲	Low	Low	Medium	High	Medium ▲
Suleiman Beg	High ▲	Low	Low ▲	High	High	Medium ▲

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

Al-Shirqat District

Al-Shirqat has one subdistrict of return, **Markaz Al-Shirqat** with medium severity. The key drivers of severity are the slow recovery of local business, concerns among the population about various sources of violence, presence of multiple security actors in control of security provision, presence of PMU or other groups in control of checkpoints

apart from the Iraqi army, the local police and the federal police, combined with concerns about harassment at the checkpoints and cases of blocked returns. There was little to no variation in these or other drivers over the course of the year







Al-Shirqat	 Overall Security	 Residential Destruction	 Livelihoods	 Essential Services	 Safety and Security	 Social cohesion
Markaz Al-Shirqat	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium

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

Al-Fares District

Al-Fares district – and the one subdistrict of return, **Al-Dujeel Centre** – remained in medium severity, with a marginal increase in severity. Severity in the subdistrict is driven by the poor recovery of local business and employment, as well as checkpoints controlled by other security actors and cases of blocked returns. There was a







moderate increase in severity for daily public life and concerns about various sources of violence, such as ISIL attacks, acts of revenge, clashes between security forces or ethno-religious-tribal tensions, as well as provision of electricity and government services.

Al-Fares	 Overall Security	 Residential Destruction	 Livelihoods	 Essential Services	 Safety and Security	 Social cohesion
Al-Dujeel Centre	Medium	Low	High ▼	Medium ▼	Medium	Medium
▲ – Improvement; ▼ – Worsening compared to the round collected in November – December 2019						

Tikrit District

Tikrit is the only district that witnessed an overall improvement over the year. In **Al-Alam** subdistrict, this improvement in severity was driven by more residents able to find employment, while concerns about multiple sources of violence and cases of blocked returns remained stable and high. **Markaz Tikrit** saw a similar improvement

in residents being able to find employment, with a small improvement in the recovery of small business, checkpoints controlled by other security actors and the illegal occupation of dwellings. Much as elsewhere in Tikrit, concerns about multiple sources of violence and cases of blocked returns remained stable and high.

Tikrit	 Overall Security	 Residential Destruction	 Livelihoods	 Essential Services	 Safety and Security	 Social cohesion
Al-Alam	Low ▲	Low ▼	Low ▲	Low	Low	Low
Markaz Tikrit	Low	Low	Low ▲	Low	Low ▲	Medium
▲ – Improvement; ▼ – Worsening compared to the round collected in November – December 2019						

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IOM Iraq thanks the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) and USAID for its continued support.



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