REASONS TO REMAIN:

CATEGORIZING PROTRACTED DISPLACEMENT IN IRAQ

NOVEMBER 2018

International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency

DTM

RWG Iraq
Returns Working Group

Social Inquiry

ABOUT IOM

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the United Nations Migration Agency. IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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ABOUT RWG

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.

ABOUT SOCIAL INQUIRY

Social Inquiry is an Iraq-based not-for-profit research institution focused on influencing policy and praxis that establishes civic trust and repairs social fabric within and between fragile communities, and communities and the state. Its research centers on three thematic rubrics: (i) social cohesion and fragility, (ii) transitional justice and reconciliation, and (iii) post-conflict political economy, exploring intersecting political, social, psychological, economic, and historical dimensions within these themes.

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INTRODUCTION

As the ISIL conflict ceased across Iraq, conflict-affected areas in the country experienced an uptick in returns of their internally displaced populations. The pace of this return, however, appears to be slowing, leaving the populations who still remain behind either in, or at risk of, protracted internal displacement. Protracted displacement is generally described as a condition in which internally displaced persons (IDPs) are unable to reduce the vulnerability, impoverishment and marginalization that may be caused by displacement. The result of this kind of displacement is the inability of IDPs to progress toward finding a resolution to their displacement, whether it is eventual return, integration, relocation or some combination thereof.

Understanding protracted internal displacement in Iraq, particularly since 2014 – that is, in relation to the ISIL conflict –[1] is complex because large-scale population movements occurred in several waves during the conflict and intertwined with aspects such as the ethno-religious / tribal identities of the populations moving, where they moved to within the country, and whether they moved as a result of ISIL, military operations to retake areas under ISIL control, or both. The majority of these movements were into urban and peri-urban settings, with a smaller subset of people displaced into IDP camps established in response to this crisis. Return movements also occurred in stages, depending on when areas were retaken from ISIL, physical and social conditions of these areas post-conflict, and whether or not certain groups were allowed to come back to them. Thus, in Iraq, there are broad sets of non-exclusive and often overlapping reasons explaining why certain IDPs remain in displacement.

At present, there is limited consensus on what exactly these reasons are and roughly how many people are affected by each of these reasons. Having such knowledge, though, is a key step in developing a comprehensive strategy for durable solutions for Iraq. As such, the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Unit, the Returns Working Group (RWG), and Social Inquiry, with input and support from the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) within the Federal Government of Iraq, have conducted an in-depth analysis of existing large-scale datasets as well as other geographically targeted surveys and qualitative studies. The aim is to build a categorization framework for protracted displacement as the basis for future study, monitoring and policy development in relation to the resolution of internal displacement across all populations affected by the ISIL conflict in Iraq, in a manner that is rights-based and in line with international standards.[2]

The five reasons for continued displacement that emerged here are categorized around obstacles relating to housing, livelihoods and basic services, social cohesion, security, and mental health issues and psycho-social distress. Broadly speaking, these are overlapping factors that further influence the likelihood of remaining in, or being at risk of, displacement for prolonged periods. These findings are explored in detail in this report.

What follows is a brief overview of the theoretical underpinnings of protracted displacement and their implications in the Iraq context, the methodology for this desk review and analysis, a time series of IDP movements, the categorization of reasons IDPs may still be displaced and a discussion of findings.

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1 The authors recognize that protracted displacement in relation to past conflict and policy is a persistent occurrence in Iraq, however, the focus of this study is on ISIL conflict related internal displacement. The tracking of this displacement began in 2014.

2 See, Inter-Agency Standing Committee, IASC *Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution-University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement, 2010).

PROTRACTED INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN THE LITERATURE AND IN CONTEXT

HALLMARKS OF PROTRACTED INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

The specific causes and effects of continuous displacement on conflict-affected populations who remain away from home within their countries' borders, even after fighting has stopped, are growing areas of focus within the international discourse on protracted displacement as a whole. Data shows that protracted displacement is not only a concern for refugees, but a major phenomenon among IDP populations as well. In two-thirds of countries monitored for conflict-induced displacement in 2014, at least 50% of IDPs had been displaced for more than three years.[3]

While some view temporality as a key signifier in determining whether displacement is protracted or not, there is no consensus on what time-frame qualifies for this designation. Thus, displacement is categorized as "protracted" after one, three, or five years, depending on the actor.[4] For example, UNDP focuses on the "about 50% of internally displaced persons [who] have been displaced for more than 3 years" in a given crisis setting.[5] Establishing such cut-off dates, however, may be arbitrary if considered on their own without further understanding of the complexities of each displacement context and recognition that such contexts are dynamic as displaced populations change due to returns, multiple displacements, new waves of displacement and varying degrees of integration, among others.[6]

Given the above, conflict-related internal displacement is not static, but often mobile and may have multiple proximate and latent causes. This view, which takes into account the complexity of such contexts, aligns with a framing of protracted displacement that has less to do with duration than broader "crises of citizenship."[7] In other words, protraction relates to the continued marginalization of IDPs and the inability to secure protection of their human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights,[8] preventing or severely limiting their expression of equal citizenship. Indeed, IDPs' ability to reduce marginalization and accrue rights is at the heart of achieving progress toward durable solutions to displacement, whether it is return, local integration, relocation or some kind of hybrid possibility.[9] Commonly observed features in contexts of protracted internal displacement include: politicization of and barriers to potential solutions, multiple waves and patterns of displacement, increasing neglect of IDPs, changing needs and vulnerabilities of IDPs over time, different intentions and preferences of IDPs and their invisibility in urban areas.[10]

Thus, IDPs often face hostile environments in both their places of origin and displacement due to weak state functioning after conflict, social and societal factors, government policy, fractured international response or a combination thereof. This leaves them in a state of uncertainty as they seek to meet daily needs regardless of location. Such conditions, as reported by those still displaced, relate to house destruction and poor housing conditions, lack of property restitution or compensation, poor infrastructure and lack of access to services, lack

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3 Alexandra Bilak et al., *Global Overview 2015: People Internally Displaced by Conflict and Violence* (Geneva: IDMC, 2015), 63.

4 Walter Kälin and Hannah Entwisle Chapuisat, *Breaking the Impasse: Reducing Protracted Internal Displacement as a Collective Outcome* (New York / Geneva: OCHA, 2017), 17.

5 UNDP, *Development Approaches to Displacement* (New York: UNDP, 2016), 2.

6 Nicholas Crawford et al., *Protracted Displacement: Uncertain Pathways to Self-Reliance in Exile* (London: ODI, 2015), 10.

7 Katy Long, *Permanent Crisis? Unlocking the Protracted Displacement of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons* (Oxford: Refugees Studies Centre / NRC / IDMC / NIIA, 2011), 6.

8 UNHCR and Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, "Expert Seminar on Protracted IDP Situations," (Geneva, June 21-22, 2007), 3.

9 Kälin and Entwisle Chapuisat, Breaking the Impasse, 24; Brookings Institute, IDMC, and NRC, "IDPs in Protracted Displacement: Is Local Integration a Solution?," (report from the Second Expert Panel on Protracted Internal Displacement, Geneva, January 19-20, 2011), 6-7.

10 Bilak et al., *Global Overview* 2015, 64-69.

of social protection including against discrimination and exclusion due to ethno-religious identity, insecure conditions, fear of encountering perpetrators of violations, and lack of reconciliation and other proposed redress mechanisms. This is seen in contexts as diverse as Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Caucasus region, Peru and Sri Lanka.[11] The most vulnerable of protractedly displaced IDPs across these contexts include those without social support networks, particularly the elderly; female- and child-headed households; the chronically ill; the physically and mentally impaired; highly traumatized individuals; those with limited to no education including not speaking the dominant language of the area of displacement; and those belonging to ethno-religious groups that have been historically marginalized and/or excluded within wider society. The fact that these problems persist long after conflict has ended is an indication that a) conflict-induced displacement protracts in part because the status quo ante was itself unjust[12] and b) tackling these issues requires a cross-cutting approach that spans humanitarian, development, peacebuilding and security sectors.[13]

The sustainable resolution of displacement, then, is a long-term process requiring close cooperation between governments and a range of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors, supporting the solutions IDPs themselves take the lead in crafting.[14] Such support includes helping IDPs improve their coping capacities and self-reliance and working to ensure conducive environments to absorb displaced and returning populations without undue pressure on host communities.[15] It is thus of vital importance to establish a national policy framework or strategy to appropriately guide and support stakeholders in helping IDPs achieve durable solutions, mitigating the continuation of displacement.

UNDERSTANDING PROTRACTED INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN POST-2014 IRAQ

The above framing of protracted displacement also broadly fits with what is known of the current remaining displacement context linked to the ISIL conflict in Iraq. Displacement since 2014 has occurred in various waves caused by a number of events including the emergence of ISIL and military operations to remove them, which occurred in different phases across the conflict-affected parts of northern and central Iraq. As such, in terms of duration of displacement, there are some IDPs who have now been displaced for four years originating from areas retaken early on in the conflict, exceeding at an individual level one designation for protracted displacement. Others still remain at risk of protracted displacement, including those whose places of origin have only recently been retaken and deemed suitable for return, regardless of how long they displaced initially. Furthermore, when and where people moved often depended on ethno-religious identity, wealth and social capital, particularly if such movement entailed crossing between Federal Iraq territory, that belonging to the Kurdistan Regional Government, and those areas disputed between the two.[16] Displacement was by and large out of camp and urban (and peri-urban), with smaller populations residing in camps established for this crisis.[17] This displacement has also not been entirely static, with some families moving to other locations – but notably not their places of origin – to improve their living conditions.[18]

Following the official declaration of the end of the ISIL conflict in December 2017, there was an increase in the number of families returning to their places of origin. However, it is important to note that return movements have taken place throughout the conflict, as areas were retaken from ISIL. These displacement and return

11 See, Erin Mooney and Naveed Hussain, "Unfinished Business: IDPs in Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Forced Migration Review 11* (2009): 22-24; Nadine Walicki, "Europe's IDPs Still Marginalized," *Forced Migration Review 11* (2009): 25-26; Gavin David White, "Displacement, Decentralization and Reparation in Post-Conflict Peru," Forced Migration Review 11 (2009): 44-45; and Kavita Shukla, "Protracted Muslim Displacement in Sri Lanka," *Forced Migration Review 11* (2009): 73.

12 Megan Bradley, "Displacement, Transitional Justice and Reconciliation: Assumptions, Challenges and Lessons," Forced Migration Policy Briefing 9 (Oxford: Refugee Studies Centre, 2012), 20.

13 Kälin and Entwisle Chapuisat, Breaking the Impasse, 26-28.

14 Ibid., IASC, IASC Framework, 8.

15 IOM, *The Progressive Resolution of Displacement Situations* (Geneva: IOM, 2016), 10.

16 IOM and Social Inquiry, *Reframing Social Fragility in Areas of Protracted Displacement and Emerging Return in Iraq* (Erbil: IOM, 2017).

17 IOM DTM, Rounds 1 to 103.

18 Lorenza Rossi, Rochelle Davis, and Salma Al-Shami, "Longitudinal Study of Iraqis Displaced by ISIL: Accessing Durable Solutions," (presentation at the Access to Durable Solutions Among Iraqi IDPs with IOM and Georgetown University meeting, Erbil, June 28, 2018).

movements are also marked by premature and forced returns,[19] as well as blocked returns[20] and detention of those IDPs deemed to be in some way affiliated with an extremist group.[21] These latter patterns highlight the fact that there are some populations who are not accepted in their places of displacement and/or are not welcome back to their places of origin either.[22] The reasons for these complex social cohesion-linked issues relate not only to the ISIL conflict, but deeper held grievances and root causes of conflict that have plagued Iraq prior to and after 2003.[23] Finally, recent location-level analysis reveals that returns are less likely in places that have widespread house destruction, limited livelihood opportunities, non-functioning primary education and basic health services, illegal or unauthorized occupation of housing, land and property, tense social environments, landmine and explosives contamination, and a multiplicity of security actors operating in them.[24]

THE MISSING PIECES

There remains 1.9 million people displaced in Iraq, with some in protracted displacement already and others at risk for it. It is difficult, however, to define who these IDPs are and why they are still displaced, with any greater precision of number and detail, based on the above findings alone. Further assumptions to test relate to whether time of displacement and location of displacement in Iraq influence such protraction. This is useful operationally, but also contributes to filling research gaps to further understand localized displacement movements, so-called "micro-displacements" to locations close to one another as a coping strategy and the influence of pockets of stability, such as autonomous and semi-autonomous regions, within fragile contexts with regard to protracted displacement.[25]

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19 See, for example, OCHA, "Governorate Return Committees Updates for ICCG," (presented at the Returns Working Group meeting, Erbil / Baghdad, September 19, 2018); Alexandra Saieh, Dhabie Brown, and Padraic McCluskey, *The Long Road Home: Achieving Durable Solutions to Displacement in Iraq – Lessons from Returns in Anbar* (Erbil: DRC / NRC / IRC, 2018), 13-24; and Protection Cluster Iraq, "Rapid Protection Assessment Crisis Information Report" (Kirkuk: Protection Cluster Iraq, October 11, 2016).

20 See, for example, IOM, *Obstacles to Return in Retaken Areas of Iraq* (Erbil: IOM, 2017), 13-14; Roger Guiu, Aaso Ameen Shwan, and Nadia Siddiqui, Scenarios of Fragility in Northern Ninewa: Baseline Assessment of the Subdistricts of Wana, Zummar, Rabbia, and Sinuni (Erbil: Social Inquiry, 2017), 51-53; and Saieh, Brown, and McCluskey, The Long Road Home, 21-23.

21 Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Displacement, Detention of Suspected 'ISIS Families,'" *Human Rights Watch*, March 5, 2017; and Amnesty International, Amnesty International Report 2017/2018: *The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: Amnesty International), 203-204.

22 See, IOM and Social Inquiry, *Reframing Social Fragility*; Nadia Siddiqui and Roger Guiu, "'We Don't Want Them Back': Balancing the Rights of Displaced, Returning, and Remaining Populations in the Aftermath of ISIS in Northern Ninewa, Iraq," Policy Brief 1 (Erbil: Social Inquiry, 2017); UNHCR, DRC, and Social Inquiry, *Population Return Trends, Protection, and Social Dynamics in Northern Ninewa* (Dohuk: UNHCR, 2018); and IOM, Tal Afar District Center Rapid Conflict Assessment (Erbil: IOM, 2018).

23 See, USIP and Social Inquiry, "Conflict and Stabilization Monitoring Framework for Ninewa," February and August 2018; Sanad for Peacebuilding and Social Inquiry, *Conflict Fragility and Social Cohesion in Diyala Governorate: Khalis, Muqdadiya, Kifri, and Baladrooz* (Baghdad: Sanad for Peacebuilding, 2018); and Erica Gaston and András Derzsi-Horváth, Iraq After ISIL: *Sub-State Actors, Local Forces, and the Micro-Politics of Control* (Berlin: GPPI, 2018).

24 IOM DTM, RWG, and Social Inquiry, "Return Index Findings Round 1," Briefing Report (Erbil: IOM, 2018).

25 *Long, Permanent Crisis?*, 31-36.

This study involves an in-depth desk review of existing large-scale datasets as well as more geographically targeted surveys and qualitative studies to gain deeper insight into who is still displaced because of the ISIL conflict and build a categorization framework for why, while also testing the assumptions listed above. A key aspect of this analysis is understanding how IDPs view their current places of displacement and their places of origin as well as being able to empirically assess their behaviors in displacement. The specific datasets analyzed include the following:

- *IOM's DTM from Round 1 (April 2014) to Round 103 (September 2018)*. This includes data on both camp and non-camp displaced populations.

- *IOM and Georgetown University's Access to Durable Solutions for IDPs in Iraq (Longitudinal Study), Round III collected in mid-2017*. Of all the analyzed datasets, this study has the most detailed information on IDP experiences and behavior in displacement as well as perceptions of their places of origin over time. However, it is only representative for those IDPs who displaced in 2014 and reside in urban settings in four targeted governorates (Baghdad, Basra, Kirkuk, and Sulaymaniyah).

- *IOM's Integrated Location Assessment (ILA) III collected in April 2018*. The dataset covers both places of origin and displacement at the location level as well as capturing perceptions of IDPs in relation to their places of origin. Data is collected through one or several key informants in each location who answer(s) questions on behalf of a potentially large and diverse population of IDPs hosted there. This method, however, incurs both inclusion and exclusion errors.

- *REACH's Intentions Survey II collected in January 2018*. This survey collected data at the household level on conditions in IDPs' places of origin and their views on future movements. However, it is focused only on in-camp populations and is therefore not representative of the entire IDP population in the country. Summary data from the third Intentions Survey collected in August 2018 was also reviewed.

- *REACH's Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment (MCNA) VI completed in August 2018*. This assessment is also collected at the individual level in both camp and non-camp settings and is the most representative sample of IDPs among the datasets reviewed. However, it has limited questions on IDPs' perceptions of their places of origin.

LIMITATIONS

These datasets, while covering similar topics, have different aims and therefore target different populations, asking questions related to reasons for continued displacement in different ways. As such, they are not entirely comparable and their analysis cannot yield absolute estimated numbers of population within each proposed stylized reason for this displacement. Rather, they provide useful and necessary insight into the range of ways in which reasons for protracted displacement is captured by research and thought about by IDPs, giving the basis for a categorization framework as a starting point for further investigation and monitoring.

The data presented in this section provides figures on the movement of displaced people in Iraq since 2014. From a peak of 569,628 families (or approximately 3.42 million individuals) displaced in April 2016, this number has decreased to 317,420 families (or 1.9 million individuals) as of 15 September 2018.[26] This snapshot is also put in context, below, through an analysis of movements over time to uncover patterns that may help to explain protracted displacement based on the time and location of displacement.

IDPS BY PLACE OF ORIGIN

Of the remaining 1.9 million IDPs, 60% are originally from Ninewa Governorate, followed by Salah al-Din Governorate (13%) and Anbar Governorate (12%). Kirkuk, Diyala and, to a lesser extent, Baghdad and Babylon complete the list of governorates from which people have forcibly moved during the current displacement crisis.[27]

Figure 1. Time series of the number of IDPs by governorate of origin
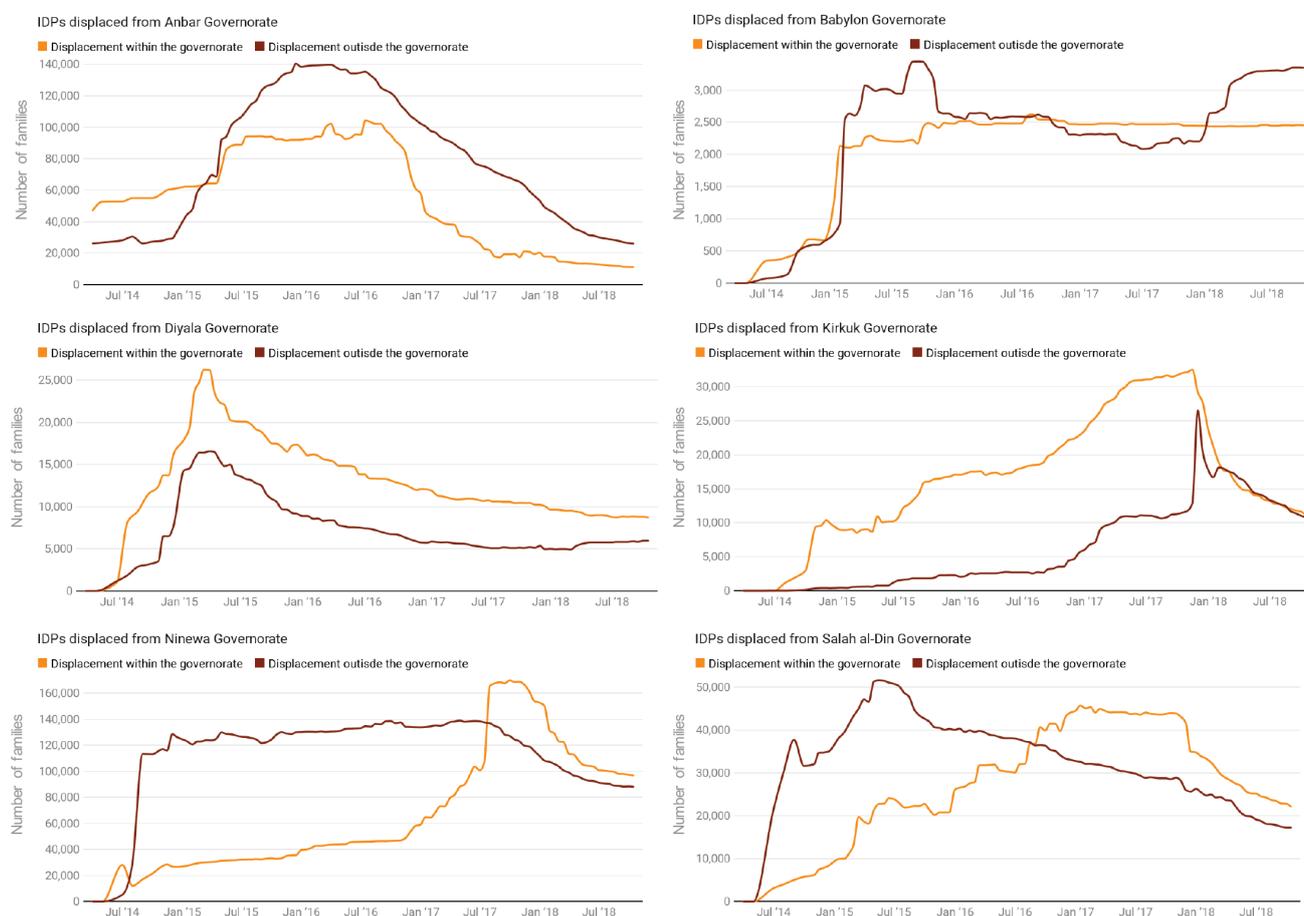
Source: IOM DTM, Round 1 to 103.

Note: a relatively small number of families also displaced from the governorates of Erbil and Baghdad (not shown in figure).

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26 IOM Iraq DTM, Round 103.

27 While figures for out-of-camp IDPs show a similar geographical distribution as the one described, the pattern is different for in-camp IDPs. Nearly 8 out of 10 in-camp IDPs are originally from Ninewa Governorate. Specifically, 36% of the entire in-camp population is originally from Sinjar district and another 15% from Mosul district, with the rest largely dispersed in different districts across Iraq.

Anbar and Ninewa are the two governorates from where the largest majority of IDPs have displaced. As of 15 September 2018, however, most people who were displaced from Anbar have returned to their places of origin, while the return rates for Ninewa IDPs remains low (Figure 1). One possible reason for this different pattern likely relates to when, in particular, the districts within these governorates were retaken by the Iraqi Security Forces. Large portions of Anbar were retaken from ISIL in 2015, which allowed for earlier returns. In contrast, key urban areas of Ninewa were not easily accessible to IDPs until one year ago, including Mosul City, the second largest city in Iraq.

Figure 1 also illustrates how the profiles of displacement and return are significantly diverse per governorate, with different temporal patterns of movement within and outside them. It shows, for instance, that almost as many IDPs are displaced within their own governorates of origin as into other governorates. This fact further highlights the highly localized dimension of population movement (as well as conflict dynamics) during this crisis, giving ground to focus on more targeted and nuanced geographical analysis than macro-level data to empirically understand reasons for protracted displacement.

IDPS BY PLACE OF DISPLACEMENT

That displacement had a predominantly urban and peri-urban character is shown by the fact that, at the peak of displacement in April 2016, camps established for this crisis only sheltered 12% of IDPs. This ratio has increased to 30% as of September 2018 (Figure 2), explained by a significant influx of IDPs to camps through the end of 2017 during the last stages of the conflict – mainly because displacement flows were increasingly directed to camps. At the same time, the overall number of IDPs, including out-of-camp populations, decreased as more areas became accessible for return.

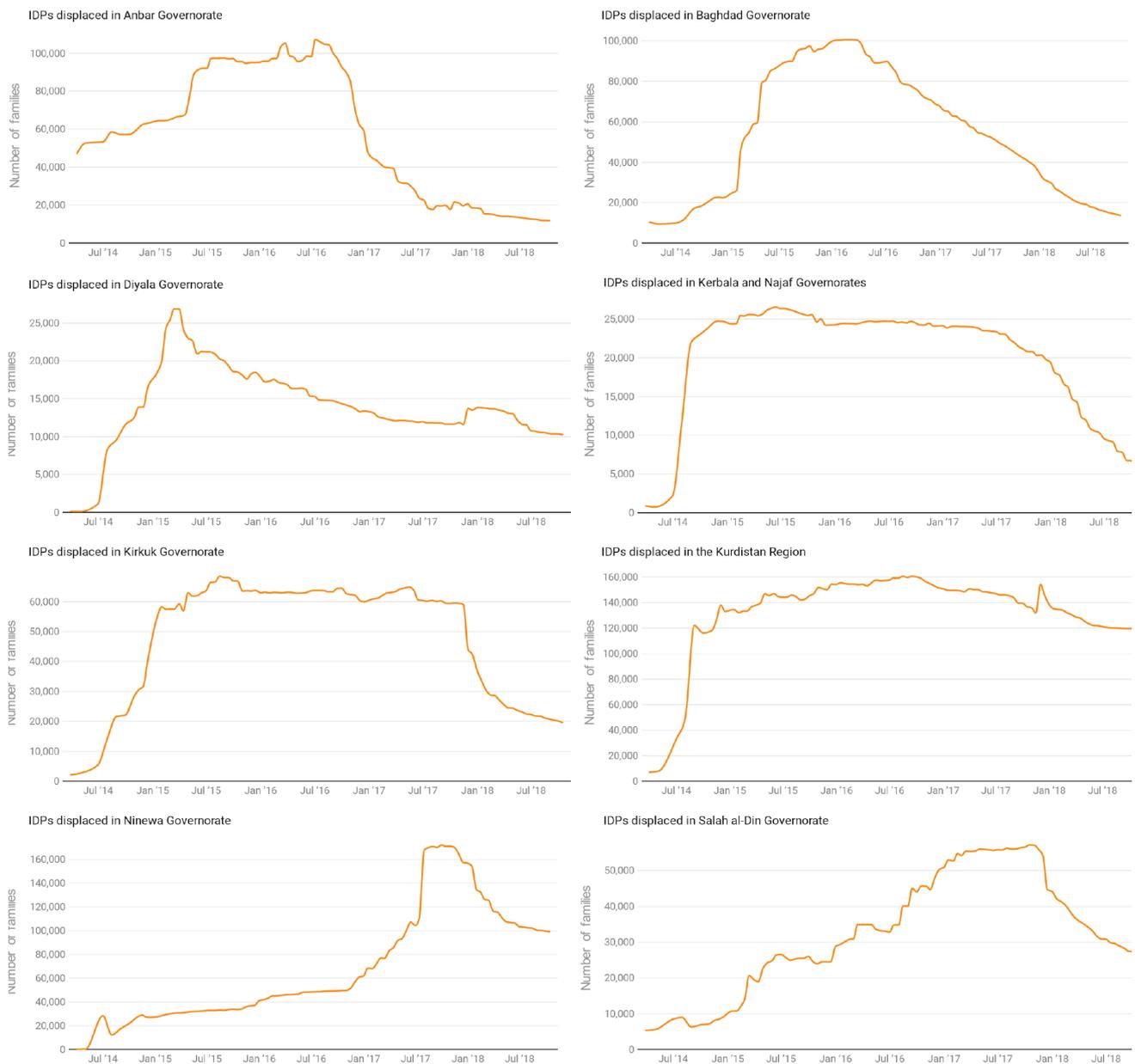Figure 2. Distribution of IDP population by characteristics of displacement
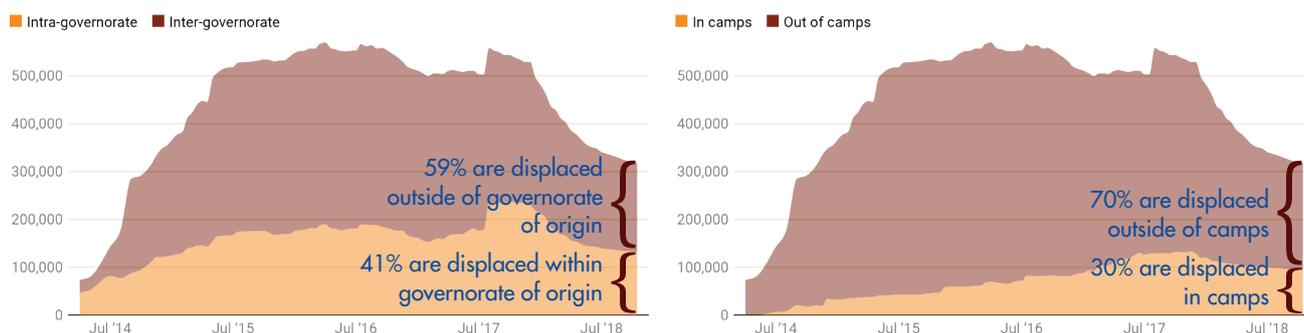
Source: IOM DTM, Round 1 to 103.

In terms of areas of displacement, Figure 3 shows that the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the governorates of Baghdad, Anbar and Ninewa have historically hosted large numbers of IDPs during this crisis. The different hosting trends and population movements in this time series reveal a number of key findings. All governorates experienced a substantial decrease in the number of IDPs being hosted with the exception of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, which experienced a relatively small decrease and still hosts as many IDPs as in the very early stages of the crisis.[28] Some governorates, in addition, show sudden drops in the number of IDPs – a trend that often indicates premature or forced returns, or policies in this direction.[29] Taken together, as of September 2018, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq remains the area hosting the largest number of IDPs (disaggregated into 18% of the total number for Duhok Governorate, 11% for Erbil Governorate, and 8% for Sulaymaniyah Governorate), followed by Ninewa Governorate with 31%. These populations comprise more than two thirds of all IDPs. In terms of camp populations, nearly half are living sheltered in camps east of Mosul, with the remainder mostly in Duhok Governorate (this includes some camps within the official borders of Ninewa Governorate but administered by the Kurdistan Regional Government).

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28 Policy discourse indicates that autonomous or semi-autonomous areas help stabilize regions and prevent escalation and expansion of displacement. See, Long, *Permanent Crises?*, 34.

29 Saieh, Brown, and McCluskey, *The Long Road Home*.

IDPs displaced in Anbar Governorate

IDPs displaced in Baghdad Governorate

IDPs displaced in Diyala Governorate

IDPs displaced in Kerbala and Najaf Governorates

IDPs displaced in Kirkuk Governorate

IDPs displaced in the Kurdistan Region

IDPs displaced in Ninewa Governorate

IDPs displaced in Salah al-Din Governorate

Source: IOM DTM, Round 1 to 103.

Note: other governorates not shown in the figure also hosted IDPs, although in too small numbers to appear here.

IDPS BY TIME OF DISPLACEMENT

Displacement since 2014 has been classified and monitored in different waves (Figure 4), accounting for key events that triggered new and significant internal movements of civilians due to violence and conflict. Displacement slowly started in early 2014 but the largest wave of movement took place during the second half of 2014 when ISIL rapidly took numerous districts across northern and central Iraq. Later waves of displacement were mainly triggered by the military operations to recapture these areas. These operations also occurred in phases and, as such, were more geographically targeted and smaller in scale.

As of September 2018, 54% of IDPs have been displaced for three or more years and the remaining 46% for up to three years. How protracted the displacement is of this 54% depends in part on when their locations of origin were retaken from ISIL and deemed accessible for return. For example, an IDP who displaced from Fallujah in 2014 would have had the possibility of returning since late 2015, while an IDP who displaced from Mosul in 2014 would not have been able to return until mid to late 2017.

Figure 4. Distribution of IDP population by time of displacement


Source: IOM DTM, Round 1 to 103.
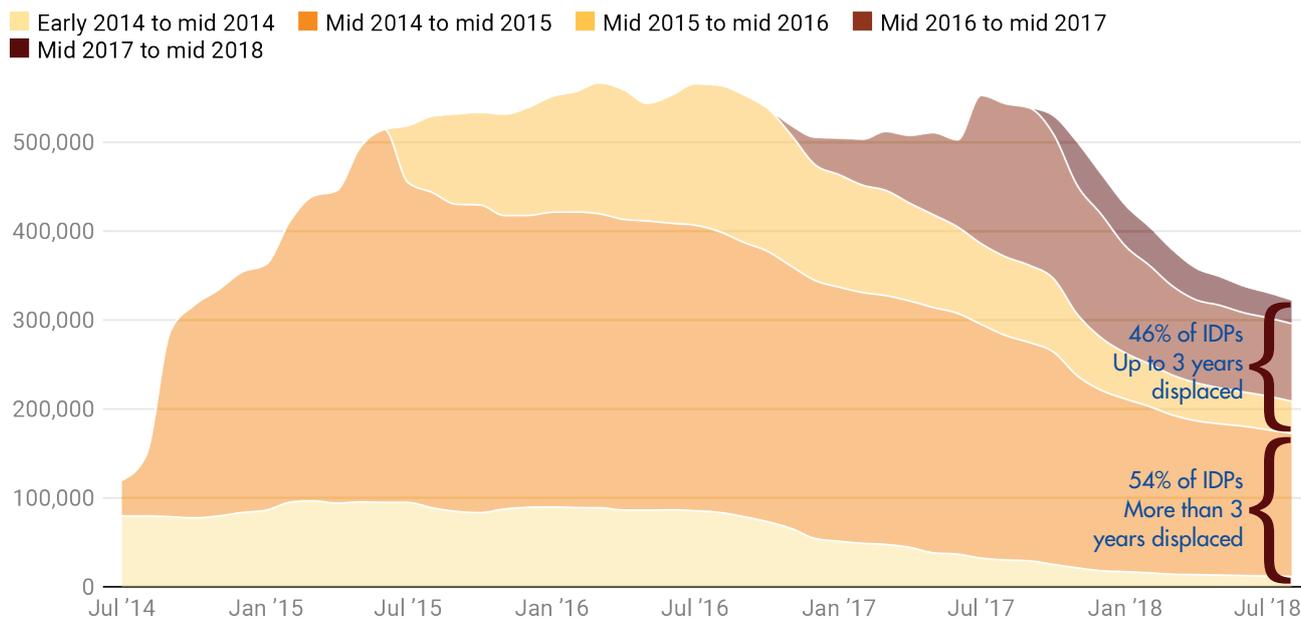
A closer comparison of the time series for each wave also indicates different trends of movement depending on when a person displaced. In particular, the earlier people displaced, the slower they are to return. This is seen in Figure 5, which shows the decrease in the number of IDPs within each displacement wave since its respective peak (i.e., the highest figure in the timeline for each wave has been indexed to 100 to allow for comparison). The number of IDPs gradually decreased from each respective peak because of returns to places of origin – or, to a lesser extent, out-of-country migration. The rate of return for those displaced in the earliest wave seems to be relatively slow across the whole period compared to other waves, which show a quicker reduction across fewer months. Even after Ninewa Governorate was fully retaken, there is a sharper drop in the number of IDPs for the first wave, but this change in trend is not as significant as in other waves. This is seen in more detail in the bottom part of Figure 5, which indexes the number of IDPs in September 2017 (the month when returns into Mosul became more pronounced) to 100 for all waves.

Crossing time of displacement with area of displacement also provides insightful patterns. In later waves, displacement into relatively stable areas such as the Kurdistan Region of Iraq or Baghdad reduced significantly as governorates imposed stricter access policies for IDPs, leaving them with fewer geographical options in which to seek safety – IDPs in latter waves would also frequently remain within the boundaries of their governorates of origin, especially given the fact that displacement flows were directed towards camps established in proximity to conflict areas.[30] Hosting governorates also tended to view these later waves of IDPs as potential security risks. This could have, in part, been the rationale for restricting their displacement movements and may have contributed to their seeking to return quicker, in that they would not necessarily feel they would be welcomed elsewhere.

The main takeaway to extract for the overall discussion on protracted displacement, therefore, is that when and *where* people displaced matters. Earlier waves of displacement show a slower rate of return in part because IDPs were able to access more stable safe havens, such as the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Baghdad and southern governorates, and may be less willing to give up the quality of life gained in these areas, particularly now that they are more difficult for IDPs to access. Intra-governorate displacement has been more prevalent for those IDPs who displaced more recently.

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30 For the two earliest waves of displacement, all of the 18 governorates of Iraq received IDPs to varying degrees. The Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Baghdad and Anbar hosted most of the IDPs. For the third wave, however, these three areas only received 8% of the IDPs compared to more than half previously. Finally, for the last round, only the Kurdistan Region of Iraq received a large amount of IDPs – with the caveat that virtually all of these consisted of Kurds displaced from Kirkuk Centre in October 2017 during the change in security and administrative control from Kurdish to Federal Iraqi authorities, and most returned in the subsequent month.

Figure 5. Distribution of IDP population by time of displacement
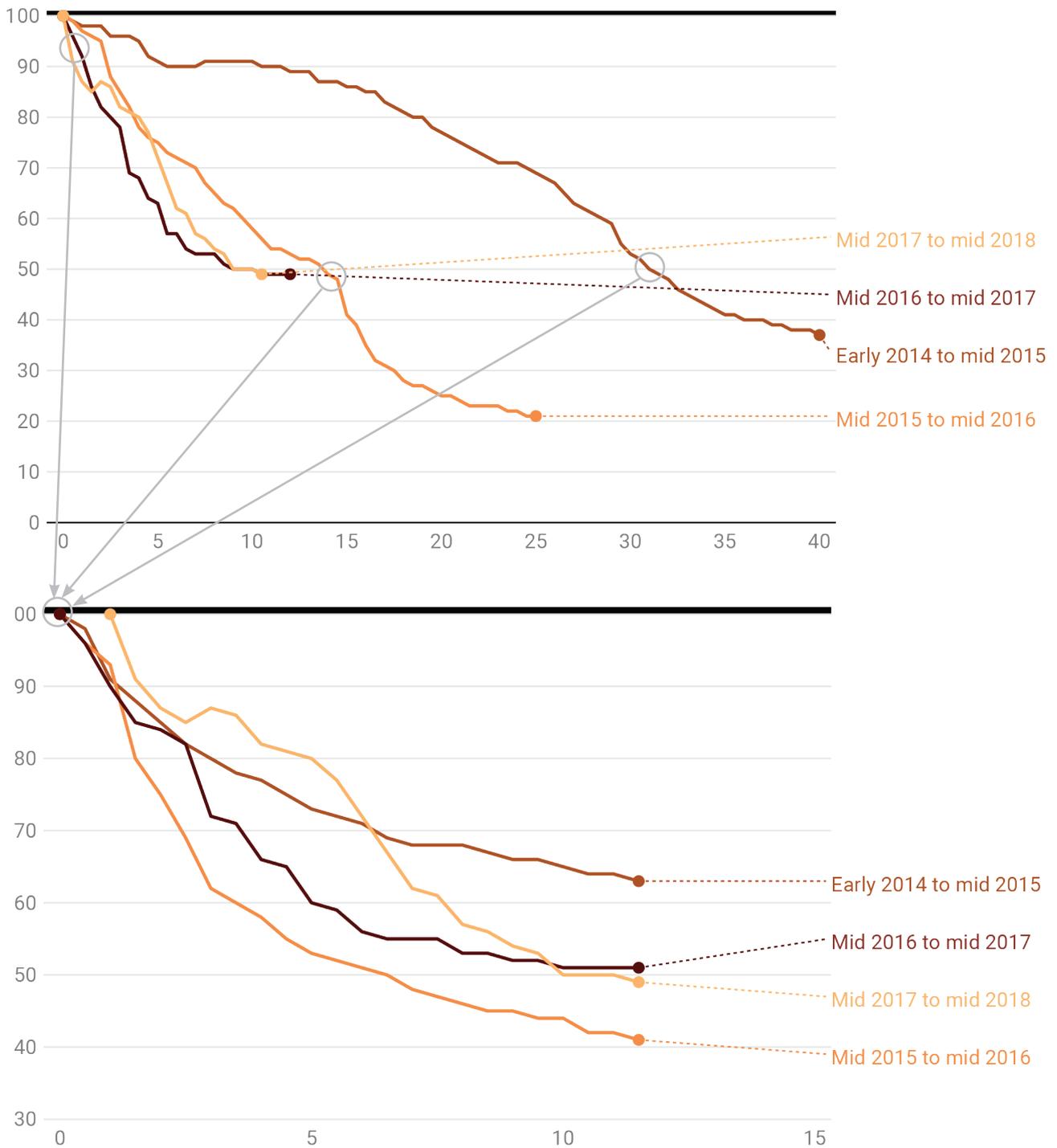
Notes for the figure: For the upper figure, 100 = period with the peak number of IDPs for each wave. For "early 2014 to mid 2015," the peak is June 1, 2015 (IOM DTM, Round 22); for "mid 2015 to mid 2016," the peak is September 1, 2016 (IOM DTM, Round 53); for "mid 2016 to mid 2017" the peak is September 15, 2017 (IOM DTM, Round 79); for "mid 2017 to mid 2018" the peak is November 1, 2017 (IOM DTM, Round 82). For the lower figure, 100 = period when returns started in Mosul city (October 1, 2017, IOM DTM, Round 80). The circles indicate at which point of the trend line this period starts in the upper figure.

IDPS BY INTENTIONS TO RETURN

Gauging IDPs' future plans related to resolving their displacement is difficult to do with any accuracy in this context, as it would be for any population who has gone through relatively recent upheaval. It is further complicated by the fact that intentions and future plans are asked about and captured differently between the datasets used for this analysis. However, given the wide range of responses, it is clear that IDPs are highly undecided regarding plans to return in the longer term and, furthermore, data collection to date may be underestimating the number of those who may wish to integrate locally or eventually relocate.

Figure 6. Distribution of IDPs per intentions of movement within the next 12 months

	IDPs out of camp	IDPs in camp	IDPs (average)
Remain where they are	65%	62%	64%
Wait to decide	22%	28%	24%
Planning to return	12%	9%	11%
Move within or outside Iraq	1%	1%	1%
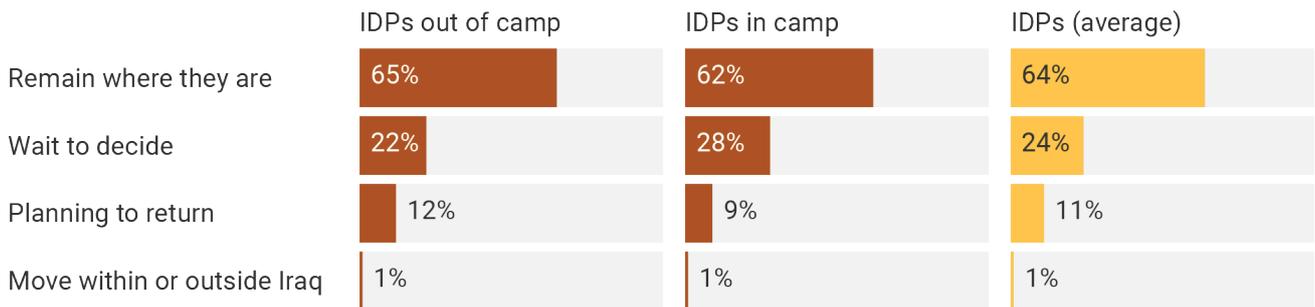
Source: REACH MCNA VI.

As Figure 6 indicates, based on data collected in August 2018, nearly two-thirds of IDPs, overall, plan to remain in their places of displacement over the next 12 months. However, this varies when disaggregating responses by IDP location of origin.[31] Those originally from Diyala and Baghdad governorates are less willing to return within the year than the average. On the other hand, IDPs from Salah al-Din and Kirkuk governorates are more likely to report that they want to return within the year than the average. Of note are IDPs from Sinjar district, who are the group of IDPs least willing to return within the following year compared to the rest.

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31 REACH, *MCNA VI.*

Using findings from the literature on characteristics of protracted internal displacement as well as context knowledge on Iraq and time series and intentions analysis, a framework of stylized reasons for continuing displacement is now proposed (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Proposed categories for why IDPs remain displaced
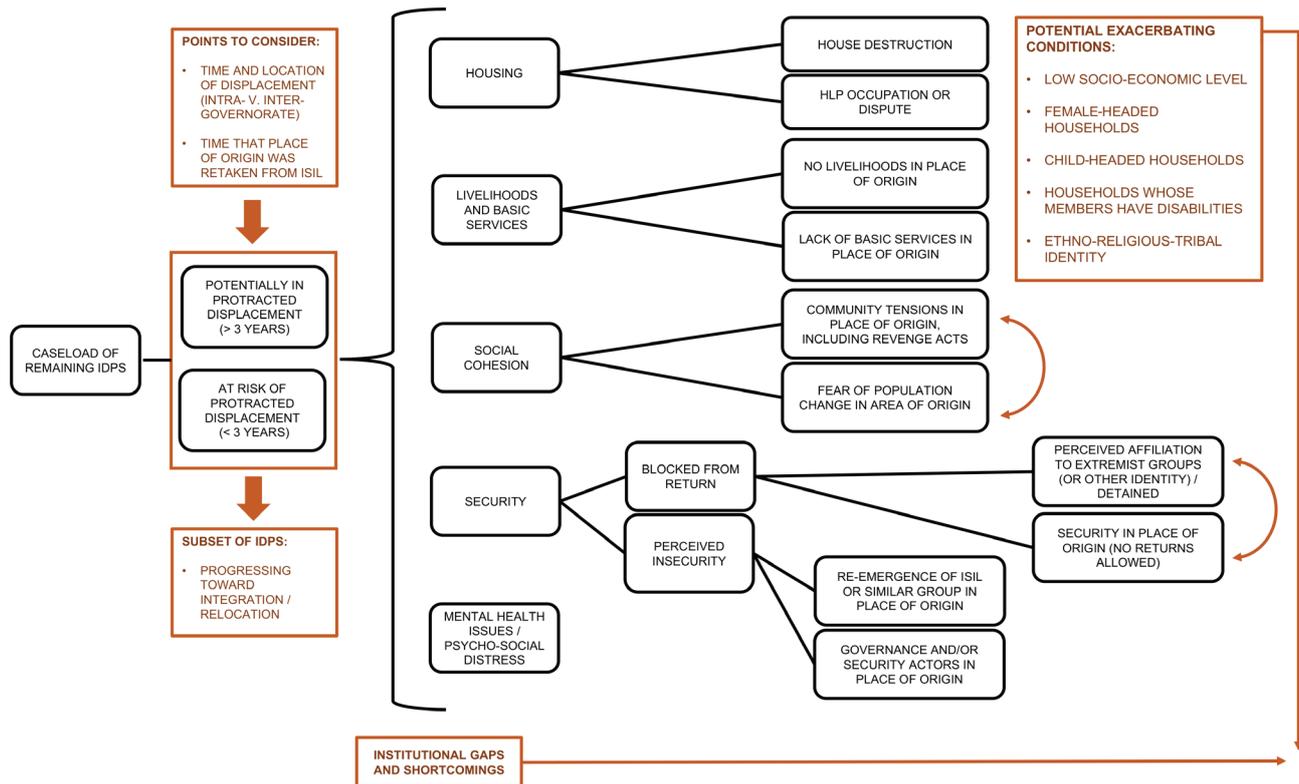
Each category and subcategory is described in detail along with institutional gaps and potential exacerbating conditions in the subsequent sections. The focus here is on understanding what seems to prevent return as a durable solution for remaining IDPs.[32]

1 HOUSING

Across multiple country case studies of protracted displacement, concerns linked to housing are reported as key reasons for continued displacement.[33] Housing is a primary issue in two ways: destruction, and issues with property ownership and restitution. Both factors in Iraq are seen to play a role in returns. Locations with high levels of residential destruction and/or presence of illegal house or property occupation tend to have significantly lower rates of return.[34] Furthermore, in relation to destruction, the context in which the house was destroyed and whether the alleged perpetrators of the destruction are still present in the place of origin – recognizing that destruction may have been perpetrated by the different parties to conflict and community members – also makes

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32 In-depth research on factors for local integration and relocation is forthcoming.

33 See, Mooney and Hussain, "Unfinished Business: IDPs in Bosnia and Herzegovina;" Walicki, "Europe's IDPs Still Marginalized;" White, "Displacement, Decentralization and Reparation in Post-Conflict Peru;" and Shukla, "Protracted Muslim Displacement in Sri Lanka."

34 IOM, RWG, and Social Inquiry, "Return Index Findings Round 1."

housing an obstacle to return.[35] Interventions that focus on remedying house destruction and illegal occupation are frequently interlinked as they both involve filing housing claims with a dedicated commission seeking compensation or arbitration. Housing, land, and property issues have been at the center of previous post-conflict cycles in Iraq and have proven difficult to properly resolve due to inherent institutional challenges.[36]

1.1 House destruction

The fact that house destruction seems to be a primary issue in keeping people in displacement is corroborated by data on IDPs' self-reported reasons for not returning yet to their places of origin, collected in the MCNA VI. When asked to list the three main reasons why they are not planning to return to their places of origin within the coming year, 41% of IDPs list their house being destroyed or damaged as one factor in this decision.[37] Disaggregating this data further by IDP location of origin, those from Anbar are significantly more likely (56%) to cite house destruction or damage as a reason than the nationwide average listed above, while IDPs from Diyala are less likely to cite the same (15%).

Key informant data from the ILA III reveals a similar trend, with 52% of IDPs reportedly pointing to house destruction as the first, second or third reason for not returning.[38] This data comes from a separate analysis, but these findings align with the above as they fall within the same margin of error.

While these findings indicate that house destruction (or damage) is a specific barrier to return, other data implies that this is a more pervasive issue among IDPs, regardless of whether they state it as a reason for their continued displacement or not. For example, only 9% of in-camp IDPs report their houses remaining undamaged in their places of origin in the Intentions Survey II[39] and similarly, of those out-of-camp IDPs who own housing, only 6% report no damage within the Longitudinal Study.[40] These same datasets indicate that 16% of in-camp IDPs and 24% of out-of-camp IDPs report not knowing the state of their house in their places of origin, which may impede their being able to make informed decisions regarding progress towards resolving their displacement.

1.2 Housing, land, and property occupation and disputes

With respect to housing, land, and property issues (either illegal occupation or ownership disputes), 2% of IDPs list housing as one of three reasons why they are not planning to return to their places of origin within the next year.[41] Within this sample, Baghdad and Anbar Governorates are the only locations where this rate is slightly higher at 4% of IDPs.

While legal issues may not be listed as a reason per se for continued displacement by IDPs, many households may still be facing obstacles in this regard. This is particularly true for IDPs in camps, where 44% never had property documentation.[42] Most of this affected group come from Sinjar district – an area where historical property rights issues are known and previously documented.[43] For out-of-camp populations, while nearly half of these IDPs physically have their property documents with them, the rate of families that cannot prove legal ownership is also relatively high (18%). In addition, almost 10% indicate that their documents are lost or have been taken.[44]

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35 IOM, *Obstacles to Return*, 64-65.

36 Deborah Isser and Peter Van der Auweraert, *Land, Property, and the Challenge of Return for Iraq's Displaced*, Special Report 221 (Washington, D.C.: USIP, 2009).

37 REACH, *MCNA VI*.

38 IOM, *ILA III*.

39 REACH, *Intentions Survey II*.

40 IOM and Georgetown, *Longitudinal Study, Round III*.

41 REACH, *MCNA VI*.

42 Ibid.

43 IOM, *A Preliminary Assessment of Housing, Land and Property Right Issues Caused by the Current Displacement Crisis in Iraq* (Geneva: IOM, 2016).

44 REACH, *MCNA VI*.

Given these findings, this subcategory may be misleading as overall rates of issues related to housing, land, and property are quite low, but in certain parts of conflict-affected Iraq, competing claims of ownership and belonging are often root causes of conflict and tension across other indicators as well.[45]

2 LIVELIHOODS AND BASIC SERVICES

Iraqi authorities and humanitarian and early recovery actors are placing growing importance on the need to restore public services and livelihoods in locations of return. This is critical, but alone is not enough to overcome longstanding disparities across the country in terms of livelihood opportunities and provision of basic public services. Many of the most conflict-affected areas of Iraq were also subject to historic development neglect.[46] This includes many current areas of return, which is the focus of the subcategories below. The nexus of perceptions related to opportunities and wellbeing in places of origin compared to places of displacement may influence if, when, and where IDPs choose to move. For example, recent data tracking behavior patterns of non-camp IDPs indicates that a small proportion move to maximize their living conditions but this movement does not include return.[47]

2.1 No livelihoods in place of origin

Lack of income generating activities in the place of origin was cited by 21% of surveyed IDPs in the MCNA VI as one of three reasons for not planning to return in the next 12 months.[48] The rate of IDPs who report this concern is relatively high among those originally from Anbar and Ninewa governorates, at 34% and 26%, respectively. Conversely, IDPs from Salah al-Din and Kirkuk Governorates do not express particular concern related to livelihoods in their places of origin with only 6% of IDPs each listing this as an issue for them. Key informant data from ILA III draws similar conclusions: 40% of non-camp IDPs reportedly also note that the lack of job opportunities in their places of origin is the first, second or third reason for not returning.[49]

Furthermore, in-camp IDPs' perception of livelihood opportunities within their places of origin, regardless of their desire to return or not, show similar geographical trends. IDPs from Anbar were significantly more likely to feel that no livelihood opportunities existed in their places of origin (35%) compared to the between 21% and 24% of IDPs from Salah al-Din, Diyala, and Ninewa who felt the same.[50] IDPs originally from Kirkuk were the least likely to believe that no livelihoods opportunities existed there.

2.2 Lack of basic services in place of origin

Rather counterintuitively, data indicates that service provision (or lack thereof) in place of origin may not be a very significant factor influencing IDP return or not. Among the IDPs surveyed in the MCNA VI, only 9% reported that poor provision of basic services in their places of origin is a factor in determining whether or not to return within the coming year.[51] There is not much variation in relative terms across governorates.[52] This is similar to findings reported by key informants in ILA III where 8% of IDPs reportedly cite a lack of basic services in their places of origin as their first, second or, more frequently, third reason for not returning.[53]

These findings may reflect the fact that many locations of origin have been retaken for around three years now and more service needs are being met to at least pre-conflict levels; services may be less of a priority, even if

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45 See, for example, Roger Guiu and Nadia Siddiqui, "Quo Vadis Ninewa? Key Social Cohesion Concerns in the Iraq Governorate for 2018," Policy Brief 2 (Erbil: Social Inquiry, 2018).

46 IOM and Social Inquiry, *Reframing Social Fragility.*

47 Rossi, Davis, and Al-Shami, "Longitudinal Study of Iraqis Displaced by ISIL."

48 REACH, *MCNA VI.*

49 IOM, *ILA III.*

50 REACH, *Intentions Survey II.*

51 REACH, *MCNA VI.*

52 It should be noted that IDPs from Sinjar district report this factor more frequently (22%) than others in relation to return.

53 IOM, *ILA III.*

in some locations provision was poor pre-conflict as well. They may also highlight the need for more targeted or disaggregated questions related to specific types of public services. For instance, recent location-level data indicates that primary health and education provision are more relevant in explaining returns than water and electricity provision.[54]

3 SOCIAL COHESION

Understanding and describing levels of social cohesion is a challenge as it involves unpacking interconnected factors linked to safety and security, stable governance, rule of law, and social wellbeing and belonging. Geographically targeted studies in conflict-affected areas in Iraq indicate that both displaced and returning populations have concerns related to discrimination, marginalization, population change and revenge or retaliatory acts occurring within their places of origin.[55] In some cases, across identity groups there also seems to be a sense of pervasive collective blame and mistrust cast upon them and a feeling that their own group's suffering (past and present) is not acknowledged by the state or other communities. Related to this, conflict-affected people within these studies see the need for formal justice proceedings and reconciliation processes in order to allow for more peaceful and sustainable returns.[56] This aligns with findings from other settings of recognized protracted internal displacement and movement. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina fears of ethnic discrimination, impunity for war criminals still at large, and the need for reconciliation between communities have limited further returns or made actual return movements at risk of new displacement. Some IDPs may seek to return only to move again to places where their ethno-religious group is in the majority, particularly if a change in population composition occurred as a result of conflict in their places of origin.[57]

Based on these findings, and acknowledging that social cohesion is complex to measure within large-scale multi-topic surveys, overarching proxy indicators were selected among the datasets under review focusing on community tensions broadly and concerns related to population change in places of origin. As more nuanced indicators are developed, these two subcategories may be collapsed into one.

3.1 Community tensions in place of origin, including fear of revenge or retaliatory acts

The best proxy indicator for community tensions within the datasets available related to fear of discrimination is captured in the MCNA VI.[58] Examining this indicator in detail reveals that 17% of IDPs list fear of discrimination as one of three reasons why they do not plan to return to their places of origin within the coming year.

More telling findings are revealed when highlighting the districts of origin where fear of discrimination rates are significantly higher than the average listed above, particularly because in many districts this is a factor of influence in relation to return. The districts where this rate is particularly high include: Kirkuk Centre (42%), Baquba (37%), Muqdadiya (36%), Balad (33%), Hamdaniya (30%), Musayab (29%), Sinjar (26%) and Baaj (20%). What these districts have in common is that they are highly polarized in terms of ethno-religious diversity within or surrounding them. Thus, while open conflict or violence may not be taking place, hostilities or tensions between communities is considerably noticeable.

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54 IOM, RWG, and Social Inquiry, "Return Index Findings Round 1."
55 USIP and Social Inquiry, "Conflict and Stabilization Monitoring Framework."
56 Guiu and Siddiqui, "Quo Vadis Ninewa."
57 Mooney and Hussain, "Unfinished Business: IDPs in Bosnia and Herzegovina," 22-23.
58 REACH, *MCNA VI.*

3.2 Fear of population change in area of origin

In ILA III, key informants reported that for 20% of IDPs, fear of ethno-religious change in place of origin is a first, second or third reason for not returning.[59] This is particularly true for those originally from Kirkuk, Baghdad, and Ninewa governorates – a finding that roughly aligns with data presented above related to districts where discrimination is perceived as high.

4 SECURITY

The links between security and displacement are crosscutting, connecting protection, stabilization, rule of law and several key dimensions of social cohesion. Equally, solutions for resolving security-related continued displacement are multi-faceted and varied. Thus, IDPs may require some combination of the following: reinforcement of security and protection; more trust in the forces that are to protect them; reconciliation and formal justice processes; and/or the cessation of violent attacks or incidents. To address this complexity, security is divided here into two broad dimensions encompassing different aspects that affect IDPs: security-related issues that involuntarily prevent people from moving and security-related issues that discourage people from moving.

4.1 Blocked from returning

The involuntary inability of an IDP to return to their place of origin due to security circumstances can occur for a variety of reasons. The primary two, for which data is available, are: security forces not allowing returns due to safety concerns, and families prevented from returning due to perceived affiliation to extremist groups who may also be detained or at risk for it. For the first case, key informant data from ILA III indicates that about 14% of IDPs may be involuntarily stuck in displacement because authorities will not allow returns in their places of origin in general due to security concerns.[60] By geographical area of origin, 72% of the IDPs from Babylon reportedly pointed to this reason, followed by 53% of those from Diyala and 44% of those from Salah al-Din. A recent RWG assessment identified 10 conflict-affected districts that have witnessed no returns, mostly in the governorates of Babylon and Diyala.[61] However, there is no accurate data at the location level of places with no returns (or potentially blocked returns) in other governorates that are experiencing people coming back, such as in Ninewa or Kirkuk.

For the second case, there is very limited to no data on the numbers of individuals or families potentially blocked due to perceived affiliation to extremist groups or who may be in some form of detention. Rather, there are emerging reports that this is occurring in places of displacement from protection monitoring and human rights reporting in Iraq.[62] This identity-based blockage may also interlink with the above with regard to security: those who are not allowed to return due to security concerns in their places of origin may also be blocked because they themselves may be seen as the security threat based on their identity and perceived affiliations. Therefore, analysis on how and why these blockages may put IDPs in or at risk of protracted displacement will require further information about which actors are blocking returns (for example, local authorities in place of origin and/or in place of displacement, security actor(s) in place of origin and/or displacement, tribal authorities, etc.).

4.2 Perceived insecurity

There are multiple intervening dimensions as to the IDPs' perception that return to their places of origin is unsafe. Some triggers include fear of the re-emergence of ISIL or a similar group, or alternatively, concerns about the conduct and ensuing lack of trust in the current security configuration and governance composition present in these locations. Qualitative and more targeted quantitative studies indicate that people seem to view ISIL or the emergence of other similar armed groups as in some ways connected to how well security actors operate

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59 IOM, *ILA III.*

60 Ibid.

61 RWG, "Districts of Origin Having Witnessed No Returns," Factsheet September 2018 (Erbil: IOM, 2018).

62 See, for example, Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Report 2017/2018,* 203-204.

and treat residents.[63] There is currently no available data from nationwide assessments to better elucidate this; however, there are specific indicators linked to security actors within these datasets.

MCNA VI data, for instance, indicates that 26% of IDPs cite a lack of security forces in their areas of origin – which may be linked to perceived insecurity more generally – as one of the reasons for not planning to return in the next year. This, however, can be looked at inversely as well. Results from the Return Index indicate that a location with the presence of a multiplicity of security actors is significantly less likely to have returns than a location with a smaller number of actors – this holds particularly true within the districts of Khanaqin, Telafar, Muqdadiya, Khalis and Tooz Khormatu.[64] Multiplicity oftentimes brings confusion as to who is in control of locations and which protocols residents need to follow,[65] issues ultimately linked to safety perceptions and affecting likelihood to return.

Looking at insecurity another way, key informant responses in ILA III highlight that 29% of IDPs would reportedly remain in displacement due to insecurity in their places of origin caused by a broad combination of circumstances, from ongoing clashes to militias operating to the presence of landmines, among others.[66] IDPs from Kirkuk and Salah al-Din governorates indicate this as a factor at a significantly higher rate than other governorates, at 62% and 51%, respectively. Ninewa remains close to the average, at 24%, and Anbar and Diyala are significantly below the average at 15% and 7%, respectively.

Finally, of interest is the fact that 94% of the IDPs surveyed in the Longitudinal Study indicate that, if they were to return, they would require a good security situation in their places of origin to do so.[67]

5 MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AND PSYCHO-SOCIAL DISTRESS

Individuals experiencing high levels of trauma are seen to be at risk of continued displacement in post-conflict settings.[68] The extreme violence perpetrated by ISIL and the ensuing military operations to remove them impacted large swathes of the population and it is likely that some proportion experienced or continues to experience symptoms of trauma and psychological distress, including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This may be further compounded by the repeated cycles of violence that people, including those growing up in the post-2003 era, experienced in the country prior to the ISIL conflict.[69] The nature of mental health concerns and trauma is that they often affect individuals and families regardless of other factors. Rather, the severity of symptoms may be determined by experiences of conflict and their impacts on daily life may be influenced by the conditions one is currently experiencing. A recent study of displaced children and their families found that children affected by this conflict by and large experienced some form of trauma and psychological distress. The symptomology of this trauma among children varied depending on when they displaced: more severe and pervasive symptoms were found in children who had lived under ISIL for long periods than those who displaced earlier in the conflict.[70] Furthermore, parents also reported concern for their children's wellbeing given these symptoms and for the effects their own trauma may be having on their children.[71] Such findings align in part with the large-scale datasets under analysis here as well.

While the MCNA VI does not disaggregate between fear and trauma, 31% of IDPs indicate that fear or trauma is a reason for not returning to their places of origin within the coming year. This is most prevalent among IDPs from Diyala Governorate.[72] In addition, 13% of IDPs report that their children (under 18 years of age) exhibit signs of psychological distress. This rate is significantly higher for out-of-camp IDPs (17%) than in-camp (5%).

63   USIP and Social Inquiry, "Conflict and Stabilization Monitoring Framework;" and DRC and Social Inquiry, *Social Dynamics in Tikrit and Al-Alam for Early Recovery Programming* (Tikrit: DRC, 2017).
64   IOM, RWG, and Social Inquiry, "Return Index Findings Round 1."
65   Sanad for Peacebuilding and Social Inquiry, *Conflict Fragility and Social Cohesion in Diyala Governorate.*
66   IOM, *ILA III.*
67   IOM and Georgetown, *Longitudinal Study, Round III.*
68   Mooney and Hussain, "Unfinished Business: IDPs in Bosnia and Herzegovina," 23.
69   International Crisis Group, *Fight or Flight: The Desperate Plight of Iraq's 'Generation 2000,'* Middle East Report No. 169 (Brussels: ICG, 2016).
70   Save the Children, *An Unbearable Reality: The Impact of War and Displacement on Children's Mental Health in Iraq* (Erbil: Save the Children, 2017).
71   Ibid.
72   REACH, *MCNA VI.*

Those displaced in and originally from Kirkuk report distress among their children twice as frequently as those from other governorates. Longitudinal study data of non-camp IDPs at the individual level in targeted locations of displacement finds that 29% of respondents self-reported having fair to poor mental health status.[73]

6 SURROUNDING FACTORS

These are conditions that interact with the categories (and each other), making solutions to displacement slower and more complicated. These conditions are institutional and individual but also actionable, making it possible to mitigate their impact on a household's ability to eventually progress toward a durable solution be it return, integration or relocation. There is not enough available data to examine these in detail, but they are listed here as flags for further investigation.

6.1 Institutional gaps and shortcomings

Resolving displacement does not happen in a vacuum and is not the sole responsibility of households. Rather, it entails specific policies, interventions, and bureaucratic processes by the state and partners, which would benefit from further monitoring and analysis. Thus, this overarching factor relates to shortfalls within and between different government structures as well as the international response that may hinder IDPs' progress towards return or other solutions. Such issues include:

- Lack of planning and coordination between government ministries in their interventions in areas of return;
- Lack of coordination and cooperation between central and local authorities as well as unclear jurisdiction over which entities carry out which tasks;
- Coordination and implementation gaps between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors.

This may slow processes related to housing, land and property claims, and compensation, reconciliation and replacement of documents, among others.

6.2 Potential exacerbating conditions

While institutional factors play a role in expediting or impeding resolution of displacement, it is important to highlight the fact that certain individual household factors make some IDPs more vulnerable than others. This includes their ability to progress toward return or other durable solutions. Based on the Iraq context (as well as other comparable contexts of protracted displacement), these conditions include:

- Low socio-economic level
- Female-headed households
- Child-headed households
- Households with members who have disabilities
- Certain ethnic, religious and/or tribal identities

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73 IOM and Georgetown, *Longitudinal Study, Round III.*

This study sought to propose a base for classifying reasons why IDPs remain in displacement across five measurable categories, based on existing large-scale datasets. The below provides insights as to what has been found, what is missing and what needs to be taken into further consideration:

- In general, population movement in Iraq is slowing down. Most IDPs report planning to stay where they are over the next 12 months, with only slightly more than 1 in 10 displaced families stating that they have plans to either return to their places of origin or resettle out of Iraq. The range of potential reasons for remaining displaced is broad and similar to other established contexts of protracted displacement. Among IDPs assessed in Iraq, house destruction seems to be the most prevalent self-reported reason for staying displaced. Livelihood availability (or lack thereof) in their place of origin as well as broadly conceived perceptions of insecurity reportedly also play an important role in IDPs' decision to remain displaced. It is also more widely cited as a factor than the availability of public services (which very few people seem concerned about) or housing, land, and property disputes (which, while hard to resolve, only affects a minority of IDPs).

- In addition, there are other critical, though less tangible, reasons why people may remain displaced that lack accurate-enough data to properly assess or are hard to estimate. Social cohesion in general is complex and involves many dimensions; it is even more so in a context like Iraq, where recent conflict preyed upon longstanding social and political grievances. Thus, it is difficult to capture adequately in multi-topic assessment issues related to community tensions (including revenge or retaliatory acts) and unwillingness to return to areas where perceived demographic change has taken place. More precise indicators for these factors exist in the Iraq context though they have not been used in nation-wide assessments. Rule of law and justice-related issues such as the blocking of families from returning due to alleged ISIL affiliation or the conduct of security forces in places of origin are also factors for which no extended data is available. Finally, while mental health and trauma reportedly affected a non-negligible segment of the IDP population, the effects trauma has on resolving displacement remain unclear. Traumatic experiences in place of origin may influence the decision not to return (as yet) and/or these symptoms, particularly when left untreated, make coping in displacement difficult and achieving any form of displacement resolution more complicated.

- Taking into account the above caveats related to the findings, it is also important to bear in mind potential gaps between the IDP-stated reasons for their continued displacement and actual household-level decision-making. This means that to better understand why people remain in displacement, self-reported obstacles need to be complemented with an analysis of people's actual behavior. For example, providing shelter repair to an in-camp IDP household who indicates that housing damage is a reason for their remaining displaced is not indicative of actual household return patterns – a factor humanitarian actors are aware of and thus do not target shelter assistance in this manner. Data also seems to support this: a comparison of rounds in

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74 The expected behavior would be that respondents whose houses were destroyed would be less likely to return after some time than those whose houses were intact. Similarly, respondents relying on a public salary, thus enjoying relative economic security, would be more likely to return as they would have to worry less on livelihoods in their place of origin. Finally, respondents with self-reported mental health issues, potentially linked with conflict and displacement-related trauma, would also be less likely to return. Running a simple linear regression, that is, without additional controls, did not validate these hypotheses.

the Longitudinal Study indicated that respondents whose houses were destroyed in their places of origin in round one (year 2015) were as likely to have returned in round three (year 2017) as those respondents with undamaged housing in their places of origin. A similar pattern was found between those respondents who reported a public salary as their main income source pre-conflict versus those who did not and between those respondents who self-reported mental health conditions versus those who did not report such conditions.[74]

- Critically, and linked to behavior, a family's reasons for not returning have to be weighed against their reasons for remaining in displacement. While a minority of IDPs claim to be willing to integrate in their place of displacement or elsewhere in the country, the reality is that many families in displacement are able to cope – postponing their return without necessarily meaning they decline ever to do it eventually, but exhibiting behaviors linked to integration to be able to get by where they are now. Such coping strategies, including interim displacement solutions that families make themselves, should not be underestimated or overlooked. How well IDPs are able to cope in displacement, though, does seem to depend on when they displaced and where. This temporal and geographical aspect indicates the more localized nature of factors influencing decision-making, considering conditions in both places of origin and displacement.

Given all of this, further in-depth and precise data and analysis will allow for better understanding of the differences between attitude and behavior in relation to return. It also ensures that the complexities of social cohesion within areas of displacement and return, including how these connect to security and blocked returns and mental health and psycho-social distress among IDPs is clarified. Finally, and perhaps most critically, it will facilitate the exploration of factors that may influence integration as means IDPs may actually seek to resolve their displacement.