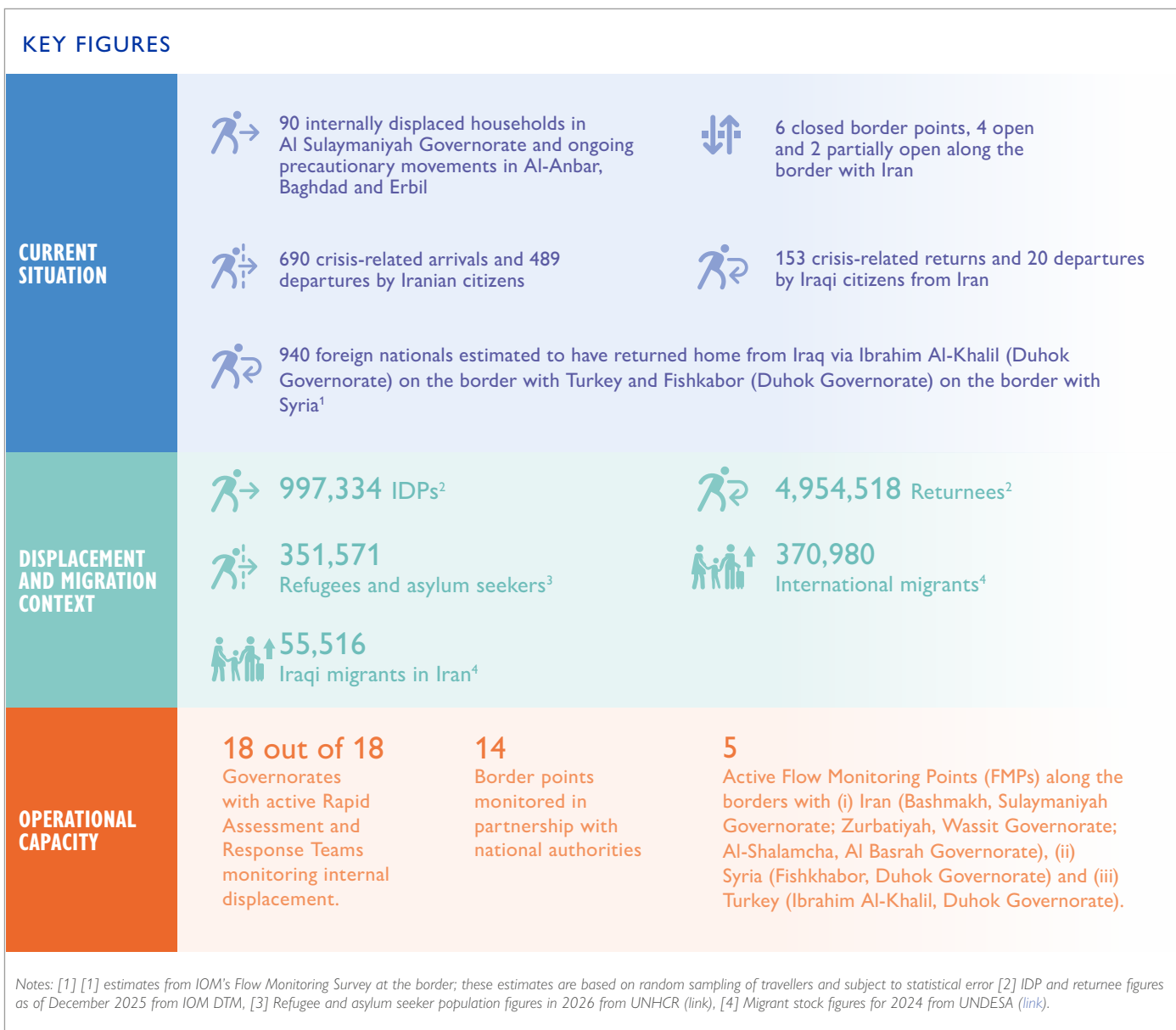


UPDATE ON CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY AND INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN IRAQ

SITUATION AS OF 24 MARCH 2026

Regional tensions continue following escalatory actions in and around the Islamic Republic of Iran since late February 2026. In Iraq, the situation remains fluid, with disruption to airspace, civilian mobility, and humanitarian access across multiple countries. This crisis compounds pre-existing vulnerabilities linked to Iraq's complex security dynamics and protracted displacement associated with the conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Continued monitoring of internal displacement and cross-border mobility dynamics remains critical to inform operational planning, preparedness and humanitarian response.



OPERATIONAL CAPACITY FOR DISPLACEMENT MONITORING

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) plays a key role in the systematic collection, analysis and dissemination of data on migration and displacement in Iraq. Working in close coordination with the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD), IOM monitors mobility dynamics across the country and at its borders. It implements its global data

collection system, the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), applying standardized methodologies to generate timely, reliable, and comparable data on population movements.¹ DTM provides granular, location-level information on displacement trends, population profiles, and mobility patterns, enabling continuous monitoring of evolving dynamics. DTM data

1 See the DTM Methodological Framework.

serves as a critical evidence base for operational planning and decision-making, supporting humanitarian, recovery, and stabilization interventions. As a global public good, IOM makes DTM data available to government counterparts and humanitarian partners to inform coordinated response efforts, enhance targeting of assistance, and optimize the allocation of resources across preparedness, response, and return contexts.

To monitor **internal displacement and return**, IOM DTM relies on trained Rapid Assessment and Response Teams (RARTs), consisting of 40 local responders with over a decade of operational experience. RARTs maintain deep-rooted institutional connections to local authorities across all governorates, with the capacity for rapid scaling, and leverage a network of approximately 3,732 key informants. RARTs provide constant situational awareness and early warning, monitoring local developments and verifying any reports of displacement through Emergency Tracking assessments at the location level. Additionally, they conduct regular countrywide assessments to update displacement stock estimates and, based on need, multi-sector needs assessments.

INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

As of 24 March 2026, 90 households have been internally displaced by fear of drone strikes within Al Sulaymaniyah Governorate, from the village of Zirgwzalla in Tanjaro sub-district to the city of Sulaymaniyah. In Baghdad and Erbil, limited numbers of residents from areas affected by missile, drone or airstrikes have been leaving the cities as a security precaution, often to stay with relatives or in rented accommodation in rural areas. In the Hey-Alsikak area of Al-Qa'im District (Al-Anbar Governorate), residents continue vacating their homes at night. Additionally, historical Kurdish Iranian communities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, including some asylum seekers and refugees, fled several sites in Koya District and Degala Sub-District (Erbil Governorate). Although population movements remain relatively limited, continued security incidents are likely to result in further localized displacement, particularly in areas located near potential military targets.

Since the start of the crisis, airstrikes and drone attacks have been reported in at least fourteen governorates, with incidents in Al-Anbar, Babil, Baghdad, Al Basrah, Diyala, Duhok, Erbil, Kerbala, Kirkuk, Al-Najaf, Ninewa, Salah Al-Din, Al-Sulaymaniyah and Wassit. Nine governorates experienced new security incidents between 17-24 March 2026, although the number of incidents reported across the country decreased relative to the previous week. While these strikes have primarily been aimed at military targets, exceptions include targeted strikes on hotels in Baghdad and Erbil, on the US embassy in Baghdad, and on oil infrastructure in Al Basrah, Duhok, and Erbil governorates. In isolated incidents, falling debris from interceptions caused injuries among civilians and damage to civilian properties. Protests related to ongoing events have taken place in three governorates, highlighting the risks of the crisis for social cohesion and stability within Iraq.

The security situation continues to impact public services; notably, schools and universities have been suspended or shifted online in most governorates as a precautionary measure. Long queues at petrol stations and electricity outages have also affected households and businesses across the country. In some areas, the population has begun stockpiling essential items, resulting in localized increases in the price of food.

To **monitor cross-border mobility and displacement**, IOM DTM operates flow monitoring points (FMPs) at key transit locations, such as border crossings and major travel routes. At these points, trained enumerators conduct short interviews with travellers to collect data on population movements, including routes, demographics, mode of travel, and reasons for crossing. IOM currently operates three FMPs along the borders with Iran (Bashmakh, Sulaymaniyah Governorate, active since 15 March 2026; Zurbatiyah, Wassit Governorate, and Al-Shalamcha, Al Basrah Governorate, active since 17 March 2026), one on the border with Syria (Fishkhabor, Duhok Governorate) and one on the border with Türkiye (Ibrahim Al-Khalil, Duhok Governorate), collecting data on a daily basis. Additionally, IOM works closely with the Ministry of Interior and the Border Commission to monitor mobility dynamics across a broader set of border crossing points (BCPs).

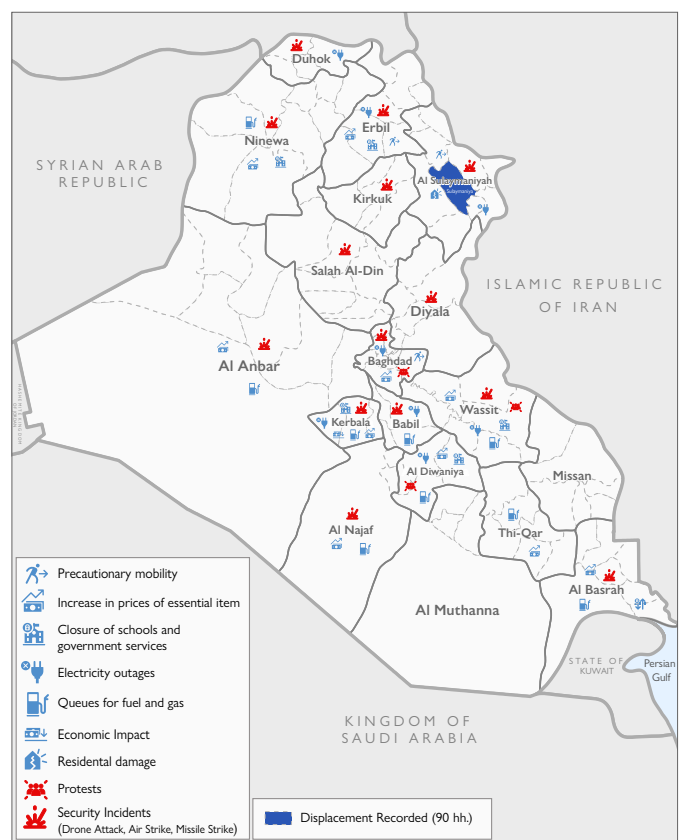


Figure 1: Humanitarian impact of the crisis and displacement risk factors inside Iraq. The information is reported at the governorate level based on reports from DTM field teams and media sources since 1 March 2026 and may not be exhaustive. This map is for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY

Iran border monitoring

Iraq shares a long land border with Iran that runs across six governorates: four in Federal Iraq, Diyala, Wassit, Missan, and Al Basrah, and two in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), Erbil and Al Sulaymaniyah. Usually, regular cross-border movements take place between the two countries for trade, business, tourism, and religious activities. Since the start of the crisis, staff shortages, disruptions to information systems, and nearby air strikes have affected border operations on the Iranian side, resulting in temporary closures.

As of 24 March, border conditions became more restrictive compared to the previous reporting period (16 March). Across the Iraq-Iran border, four BCPs remained fully open, but their composition changed. While Al-Sheeb (Missan Governorate), Zurbatiyah (Wassit Governorate), and Hajj Omran (Erbil Governorate) remained open, Bashmagh (Al Sulaymaniyah Governorate) transitioned from partially closed to fully open. However, Al-Shalamcha (Al Basrah Governorate), previously fully open, is now fully closed after a missile strike targeted the Iranian side of the crossing on 24 March.

Meanwhile, the number of partially closed crossings decreased from four to two. Broizkhan (Al Sulaymaniyah Governorate) remained partially closed,² while Muntheriyah (Diyala Governorate) shifted from fully closed to partially closed, now permitting only the return of Iraqis from Iran and the departure of Iranians currently in Iraq. In contrast, Twila and Siran Bin (both Al Sulaymaniyah Governorate), previously partially closed, are now fully closed. Sumar/Mandeli (Diyala Governorate), Kele (Al Sulaymaniyah Governorate), and Pshta (Al Sulaymaniyah Governorate) remain closed.

While large-scale cross-border displacement has not been observed, estimates by key informants at the borders suggest that at least 153 Iraqis have returned to Iraq via land as a result of the crisis since 6 March (see table 1 for estimates of daily movements on 24 March), while 20 returned to their place of residence in Iran. During the same period, key informants also reported 690 crisis-related arrivals and 489 departures by Iranian citizens.

Across open and partially open BCPs, key informants reported ongoing regular commercial and non-commercial movements, both incoming and outgoing. Since 6 March, a total of 29,364 incoming movements and 29,354 outgoing movements were recorded. On 24 March alone, 530 incoming and 560 outgoing regular movements were reported, all unrelated to the crisis. Data on movements were unavailable for some open or partially open BCPs, meaning the reported figures likely underestimate movement flows.

Among the four open BCPs reporting incoming movements, two (Bashmagh and Zurbatiyah) indicated that flows were unchanged compared to the previous day, while the remaining two (Hajj Omran and Al-Sheeb) reported significantly lower levels. A similar pattern was observed for outgoing movements, with Bashmagh and Zurbatiyah reporting stable flows, and Hajj Omran and Al-Sheeb indicating much lower volumes.

Consistent with the previous reporting period, the only BCP that reported preparedness measures for a potential emergency was Zurbatiyah (Wassit Governorate), led by border authorities. These included support to border health facilities, improvements to water,

hygiene, and sanitation services, the deployment of ambulances and fire trucks, and the establishment of an emergency response and evacuation plan.

Iran flow monitoring

Between 17 and 19 March, DTM flow monitoring points in Bashmagh (Al Sulaymaniyah Governorate), Zurbatiyah (Wassit Governorate), and Al-Shalamcha (Al Basrah Governorate) recorded 1,324 incoming and 1,600 outgoing movements. Iranian citizens accounted for 96 per cent of incoming and 93 per cent of outgoing movements. Their incoming movements were mostly linked to routine mobility, including family visits (35%), employment (27%), and business activities (15%), while 10 per cent were displaced by the conflict (see Figure 3). Outgoing movements of Iranian nationals were primarily driven by returns to Iran following short-term (52%, under 3 months) or longer-term (28%, 3 months or more) stays. Incoming movements by Iraqi citizens were overwhelmingly instances of return by Iraqi migrants who had been residing in Iran for over three months (86%). Most crisis-related arrivals, including displaced Iranians and Iraqi returnees, moved to locations within Al Sulaymaniyah Governorate, with smaller numbers going to Al Basrah, Babil, Erbil, Kerbala, Al Najaf and Wassit (see Figure 4). Flow monitoring along the border with Iran also recorded five incoming movements of other nationals (Chinese) during the reporting period, all for visa renewals.

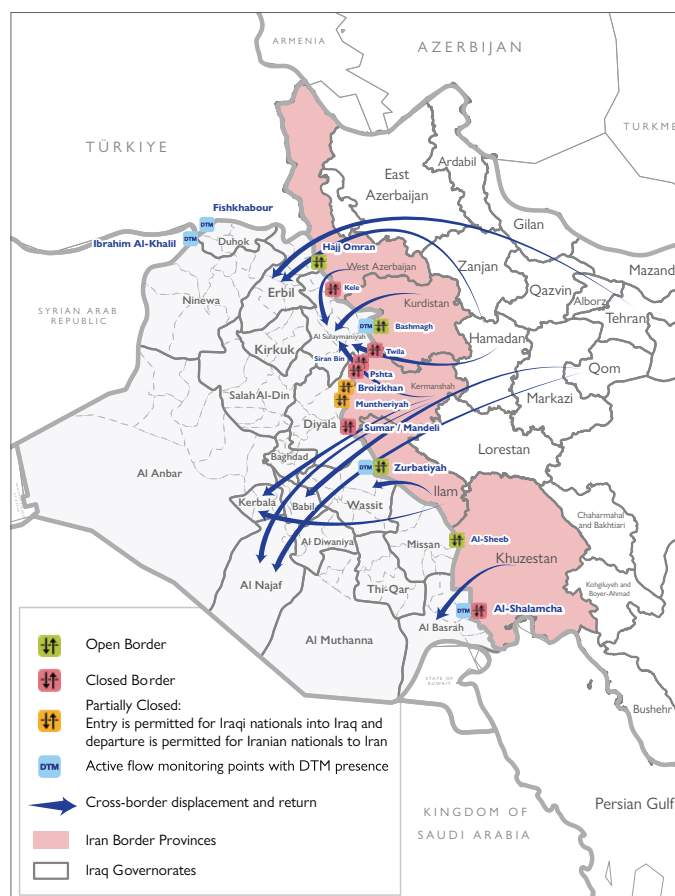


Figure 2: Status of border crossing points along the Iraq-Iran border and location of DTM flow monitoring points. This map is for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

2 With further restrictions, limited to commercial transit only where previously the return of nationals was also permitted.

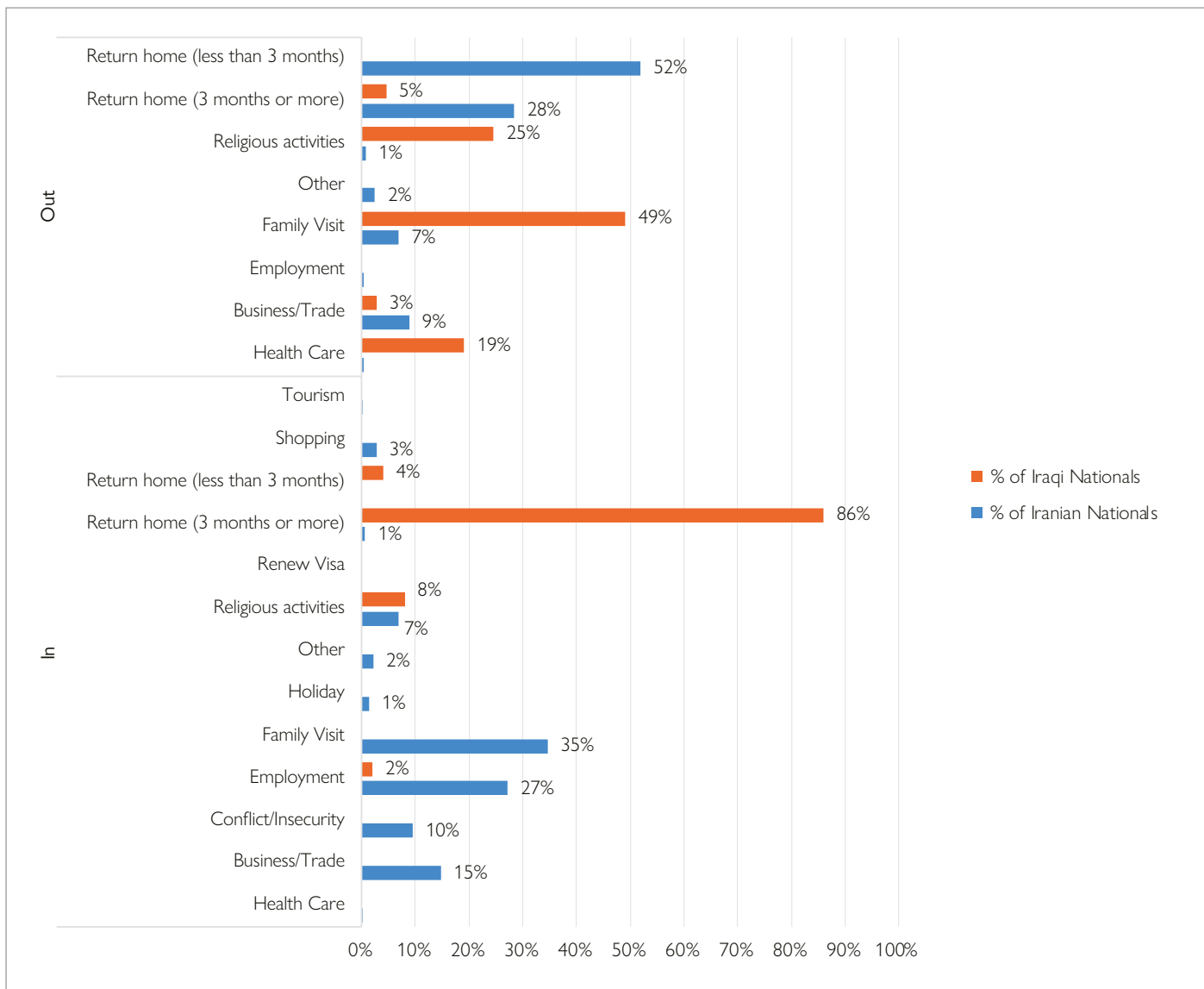


Figure 3 : breakdown of arrivals from and departures to Iran by reason for movement

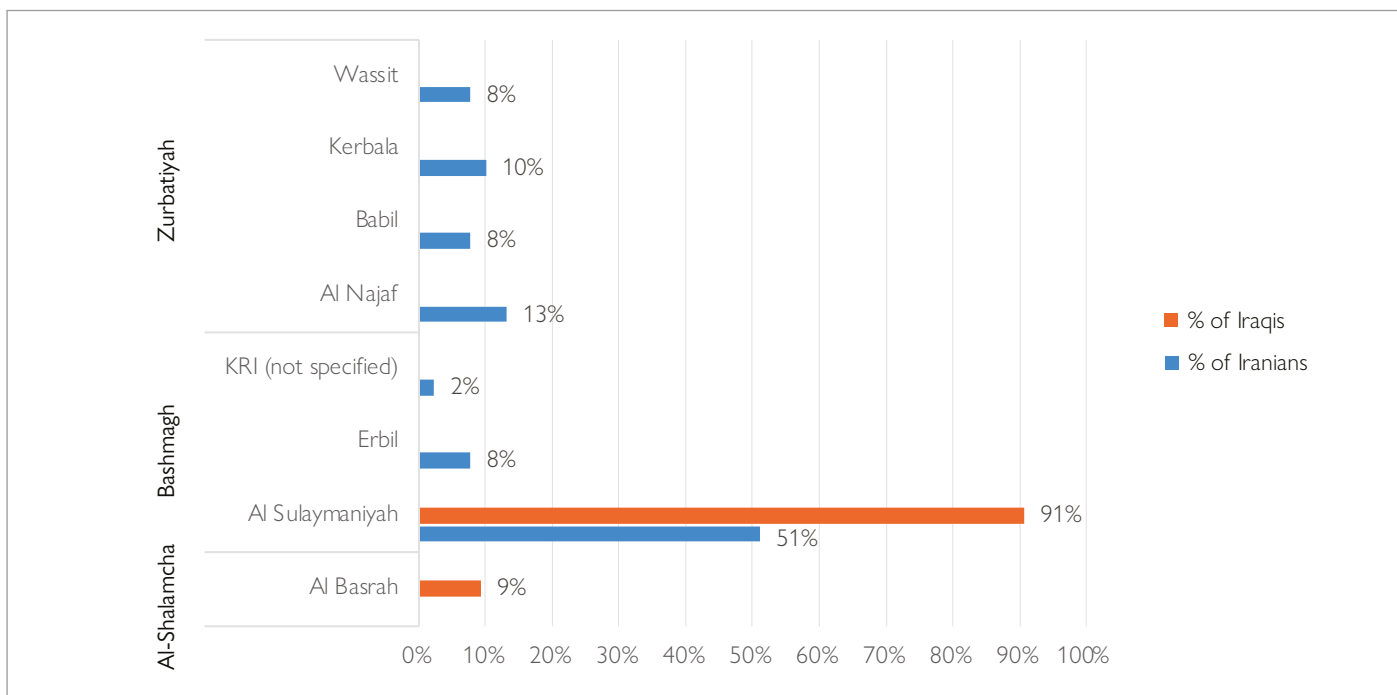


Figure 4: breakdown of arrivals from Iran by displaced or returning (after stay of over three months) Iranian and Iraqi citizens by Flow Monitoring Point and governorate of destination

Türkiye and Syria flow monitoring

IOM is also conducting Flow Monitoring Surveys at Ibrahim Al-Khalil (Duhok Governorate), on the border with Türkiye, and Fishkabor (Duhok Governorate), on the border with Syria. Due to the volume of traffic, these surveys are conducted with a random sample of travellers using interval sampling and are therefore subject to data limitations. Based on

this data, IOM estimates that 940 foreign nationals returned home from Iraq via these two land crossings between 10-24 March.³ The countries of nationality of these travellers included Türkiye, Germany, Syria, France, Italy, Portugal, and the United Kingdom.

Table 1: status of border crossing points along the Iraq-Iran border and estimated flows based on reports by border authorities: 24 March 2026

GOVERNORATE	BORDER POINT	TYPE	STATUS	INCOMING MOVEMENTS DAILY ESTIMATE ON 24 MARCH	OUTGOING MOVEMENTS DAILY ESTIMATE ON 24 MARCH
Al Basrah	Al-Shalamcha	Formal	Closed on both sides	None reported	None reported
Diyala	Sumar / Mandeli	Formal	Closed on both sides	None reported	None reported
Diyala	Muntheriyah	Formal	Partially open (restrictions on both sides)	None reported; permitted return of Iraqis from Iran	None reported; permitted departure of Iranians currently in Iraq
Erbil	Hajj Omran	Formal	Open	Movements noticeably decreased	Movements noticeably decreased
Missan	Al-Sheeb	Formal	Open	Movements noticeably decreased	Movements noticeably decreased
Al Sulaymaniyah	Bashmagh	Formal	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement flows stayed consistent with the previous day • No crisis related movements • 450 ind. regular movements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement flows stayed consistent with the previous day • No crisis related movements • 470 ind. regular movements
Al Sulaymaniyah	Broizkhan	Formal	Partially open (restrictions on the Iranian side)	None reported; commercial transit permitted	None reported; commercial transit permitted
Al Sulaymaniyah	Twila	Formal for KRI only	Closed on the Iranian side since 24 March 2026	None reported	None reported
Al Sulaymaniyah	Kele	Formal for KRI only	Closed on the Iranian side since 28 February 2026	None reported	None reported
Al Sulaymaniyah	Siran Bin	Formal for KRI only	Closed on the Iranian side since 24 March 2026	None reported	None reported
Al Sulaymaniyah	Pshta	Formal for KRI only	Closed on the Iranian side since 28 February 2026	None reported	None reported
Wassit	Zurbatiyah	Formal	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement flows stayed consistent with the previous day • 25 ind. Iranian crisis related • 80 ind. regular movements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement flows stayed consistent with the previous day • No Iranian or Iraqi crisis related • 90 ind. regular movements

³ The estimates are based on a sample size of 295 respondents (62 at Ibrahim Al-Khalil and 233 at Fishkabor), out of whom 40 were foreign nationals returning home, weighted for the overall volume of traffic at each location. Data collection takes place only during regular working hours and was suspended 1-9 March as a security precaution.