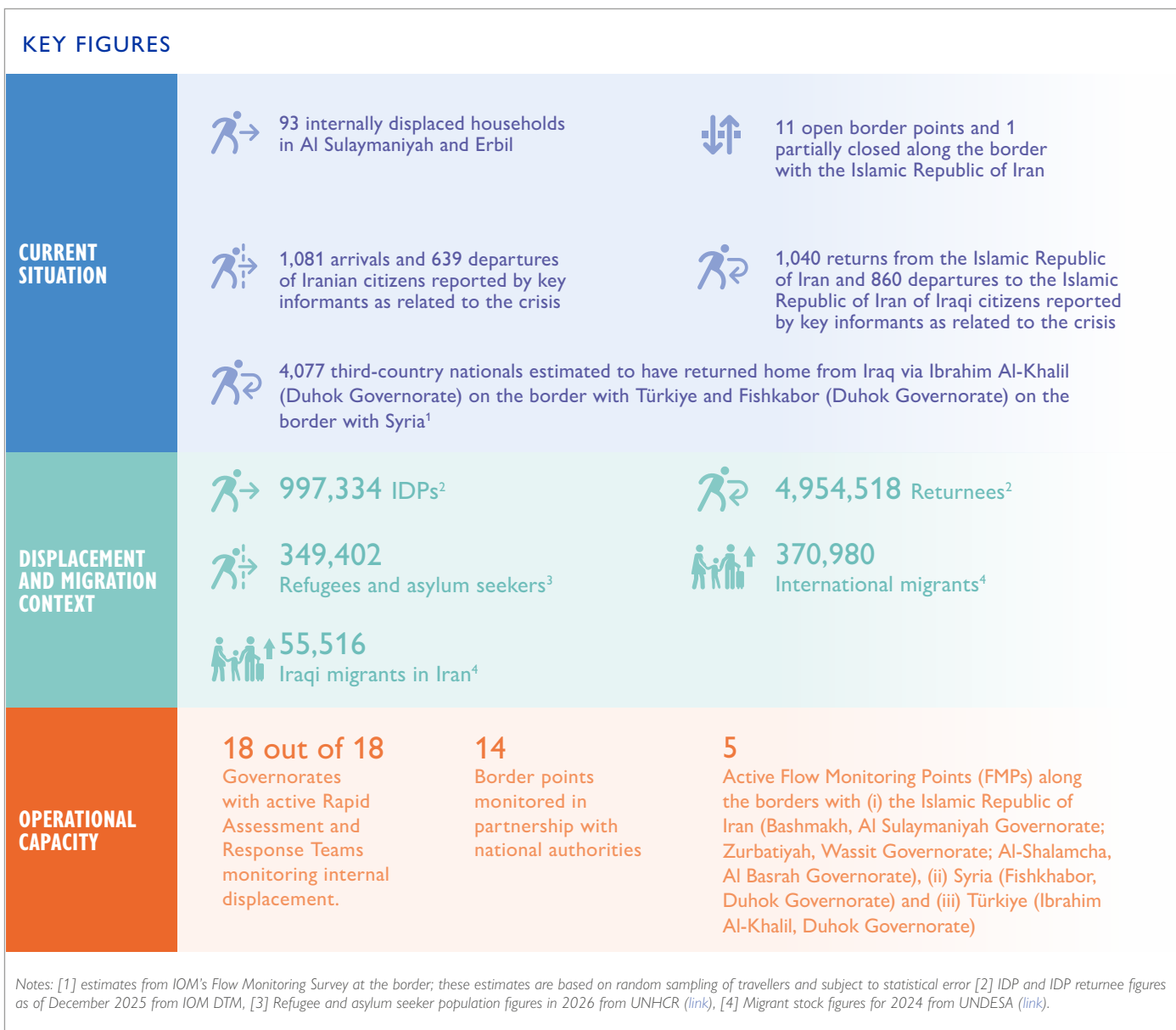


# UPDATE ON CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY AND INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN IRAQ

SITUATION AS OF 20 APRIL 2026

Regional tensions continue following escalatory actions in and around the Islamic Republic of Iran since late February 2026. Despite a two-week ceasefire in effect since 8 April, the situation remains fluid in Iraq, with disruption to airspace, travel, and lack of humanitarian access across multiple countries in the region. 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.<sup>1</sup> IOM implements its global data

collection system, the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), applying standardized methodologies to generate timely, reliable, and comparable data on population movements. 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 in Iraq**, 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 over 3,700 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.

## DRIVERS OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

Since the start of the escalations, IOM tracked 93 internally displaced households, with no additional instances of displacement recorded since 13 April. Drivers of displacement remain limited despite ongoing drone and airstrikes in two governorates (Al Sulaymaniyah and Erbil) during the reporting period. Recent developments across Iraq, particularly in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), indicate a continued pattern of low- to medium-intensity security incidents alongside gradual normalization of air and cross-border land traffic, with mixed implications for displacement and broader human mobility dynamics.

Since the start of the crisis, airstrikes and drone attacks have been reported in at least 15 governorates, including Al Anbar, Babil, Baghdad, Al Basrah, Diyala, Duhok, Erbil, Kerbala, Kirkuk, Al Najaf, Ninewa, Missan, Salah Al-Din, Al Sulaymaniyah, and Wassit. Many incidents continue to target military and security forces but also displacement sites.

During this reporting period, multiple security incidents were reported in Al Sulaymaniyah. On 14 April, a drone strike targeted Surdash camp, with casualties still unconfirmed, marking a continuation of earlier attacks in March. On 16 April, a missile strike hit Zirgwez, reportedly hosting a base linked to the Komala Party, though no casualties were recorded. In Erbil governorate, the threat environment remained active: two explosive-laden drones were intercepted on 14 April, followed by three drones striking Koya on 16 April targeting an Iranian Kurdish refugee camp, and a further two drone attacks on 17 April in Rizgari sub-district (Khabat district), also targeting the Iranian Kurdish populations. These incidents highlight the continued exposure of border areas and politically sensitive sites to cross-border strikes. Strikes not only target already displaced populations, but also risk causing new and repeated displacement.

Beyond security incidents, economic stressors are also emerging as indirect drivers of vulnerability and potential displacement. In Al-Qadisiyah Governorate, a near-total shortage of cooking gas and kerosene has caused disruptions prompting strikes and significantly affecting access to staple food for the population. This follows the previous reporting period's reports on fuel shortages in Muthanna and clean water shortages in Wassit further exacerbating crises faced by the most vulnerable parts of the population.

Simultaneously, transportation infrastructure shows signs of recovery following the 8 April ceasefire. Airports in Erbil and Al Sulaymaniyah have reopened with limited operations, though international connectivity remains constrained, particularly to Türkiye and Europe. In Al Basrah, the airport is operational for domestic flights with international services expected to resume shortly, while

To monitor **cross-border mobility and displacement in Iraq**, 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 the Islamic Republic of Iran** (Bashmakh, Al 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).

Najaf airport remains technically open but largely inactive (work underway to reschedule flights for the coming days). Ninewa International Airport remains closed except for limited Umrah-related flights (pilgrimage to Mecca), while the Rabia land BCP with Syria has reopened for both commercial and passenger traffic as of 20 April. Baghdad International Airport has resumed normal operations since 12 April, with full staff presence and regular flights by all airlines, including Iraqi Airways, to multiple destinations.

Overall, while displacement linked directly to recent attacks appears limited in scale, the persistence of targeted strikes in the KRI, combined with uneven restoration of transport infrastructure and continued economic constraints, suggests a risk environment in which both sudden shocks and structural pressures may influence population movements.

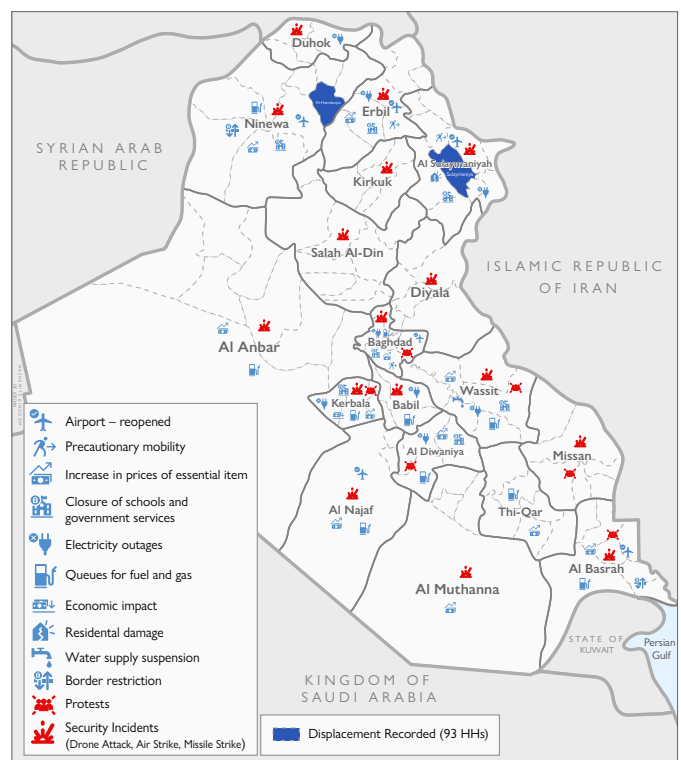


Figure 1: Humanitarian impact of the crisis and displacement risk factors inside Iraq. The information is reported at the governorate level based on reports from DTM field teams and media sources since 1 March 2026 and may not be exhaustive. This map is for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries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

## CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY<sup>2</sup>

### Islamic Republic of Iran Border Monitoring

Iraq shares a long land border with the Islamic Republic of Iran that runs across six governorates: four in Federal Iraq, Diyala, Wassit, Missan, and Al Basrah, and two in the KRI, Erbil and Al Sulaymaniyah. Regular cross-border movements take place between the two countries for trade, business, tourism, and religious activities. Notably, during this reporting period, none of the 12 BCPs were reported as fully closed with the overall trend towards reopening continuing with increased regular traveller movements since the initial closures following the start of the conflict.

As of 20 April 2026, border conditions remained broadly stable compared to the previous reporting period (week ending 13 April), with most crossing points remaining open and no major restrictions observed. All BCPs reported in- and out-going movements with exceptions unrelated to the current escalations, such as border closures on Fridays and public holidays or movements being – as before the conflict – restricted to trade.

Across the Iraq–Iran border, the number of fully open crossings increased by one: Brozikhan in the Al Sulaymaniyah governorate fully opened on 16 April after being partially or completely closed since the beginning of the crisis. Fully open border points include Al Shalamcha (Al Basrah governorate), Bashmagh, Broizkhan, Kele, Pshta, Siran Bin and Twila (Al Sulaymaniyah), Muntheriya (Diyala), Hajj Omran (Erbil), Al Sheeb (Missan) and Zurbatiyah (Wassit). Travel through some BCPs such as Pshta and Sumar / Mandeli remained limited to trade movements only, as was the case prior to the crisis.

Partial closures continued to be reported at Sumar. Partial closure in Broizkhan before 14 April was reportedly due to the escalations despite the current ceasefire.

With no increase recorded during this reporting period, estimates by border officials suggest that at least 1,040 Iraqi nationals have returned by land since 6 March for reasons described by border officials as related to the current escalations (see Table 1 for daily movement estimates as of

20 April). The cumulative number of Iraqi nationals reportedly traveling to the Islamic Republic of Iran for the same reasons remained at 860 as of 13 April. Additionally, border authorities estimated 1,081 arrivals and 639 departures of Iranian nationals linked to the escalations. As of 20 April, the estimated number of third-country nationals (TCNs) who had entered Iraq due to the current escalations remained unchanged at 10, with no new arrivals reported since 29 March.

Border officials also shared general, non-escalation related movement information for Al Zurbatiyah, Al Shalamcha, Al Sheeb and Muntheriya BCPs.<sup>3</sup> IOM received reports of a total of 240,126 arrivals and 247,132 departures at Al Zurbatiyah (25% of all movements), Al Shalamcha (59% of all movements), Al Sheeb (12% of all movements) and Muntheriya (3% of all movements) between 1 March and 11 April 2026. This results in a net-outflow of 7,006 persons from Iraq, but an overall relatively balanced in- and out-flow dynamic. Where data for nationalities was available, reports show similar numbers for entries and exits at most BCPs with the exceptions of 8 and 20 per cent more Iranian entries than exits at Al Shalamcha, and Muntheriya respectively as well as 50 per cent more arrivals than departures of Iraqi nationals at Muntheriya.

Day-to-day entry versus exit data from Al Zurbatiyah shows how movements in both directions dropped at the beginning of March (see Figure 2), shortly after the start of the escalations and during a three-day period of shelling in the direct vicinity of the BCP. The Al Zurbatiyah–Mehran crossing remained partially operational during between the start of the crisis and 13 March, resulting in unusually low traffic levels.

On 16 to 17 March, Iran's decision to reopen three BCPs with Iraq's KRI led to a gradual increase in passenger movement. On 3 and 4 April, departures increased sharply at Al Zurbatiyah BCP, with fluctuations likely linked to security incidents at border points. Airstrikes on the Al Shalamcha BCP caused its temporary closure and suspension of commercial exchange, diverting some traffic to Al Zurbatiyah. After Al Shalamcha reopened on 5 to 6 April, traffic gradually normalized as the backlog cleared.

<sup>2</sup> Border monitoring relies on key informant estimates from border officials across all BCPs.

<sup>3</sup> Since the start of the escalations, DTM teams have collected data on general migration flows through these targeted BCPs previously without access to exact data at each crossing point and without coverage during the night. As of this issue of the update, IOM has received more comprehensive numbers from the border point commission for four major BCPs. This concerns general cross border movements without specific information on crisis- versus non-crisis related mobility to inform readers about movement trends between 1 March and 11 April 2026.

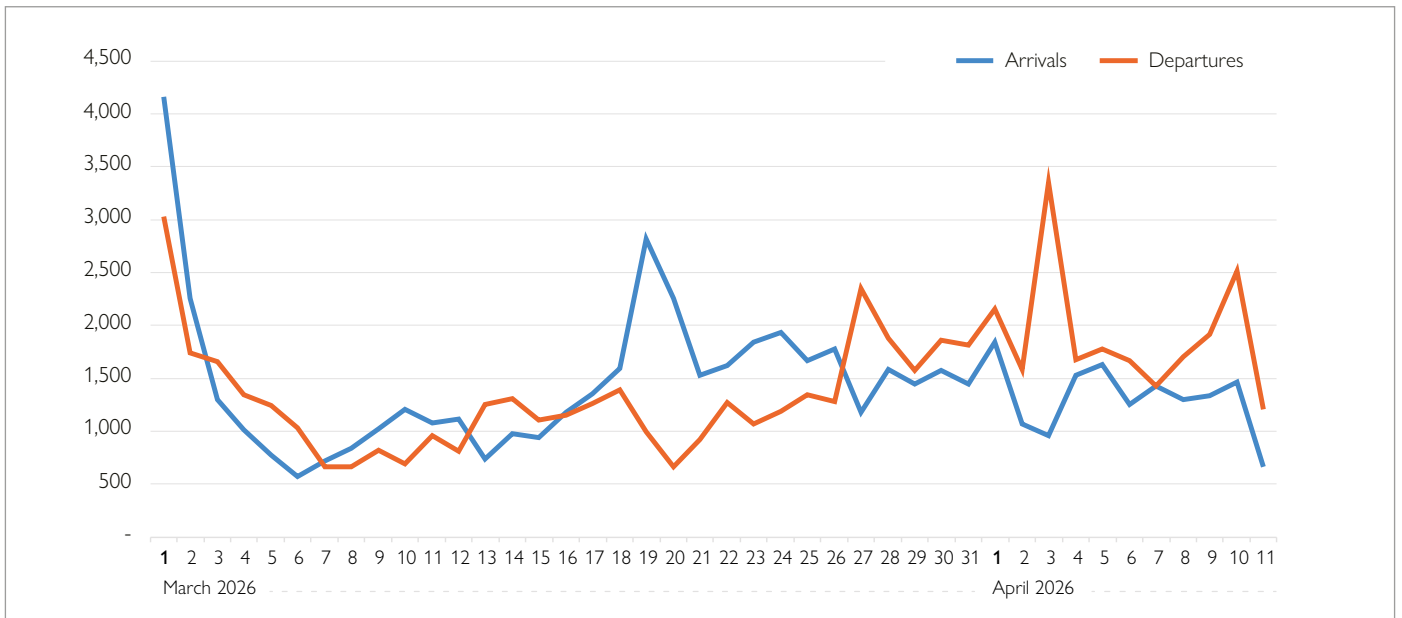


Figure 2: Zurbatiyah incoming and outgoing migration 1 March - 11 April 2026 according to the Border Point Commission

Key informants reported no drastic changes in flows on most days during the reporting period at most BCPs where data was available, with some BCPs in Al Sulaymaniyah indicating increases in incoming (“higher” in Figure 3 and 4) and outgoing migration reported between 15 and 18 April.

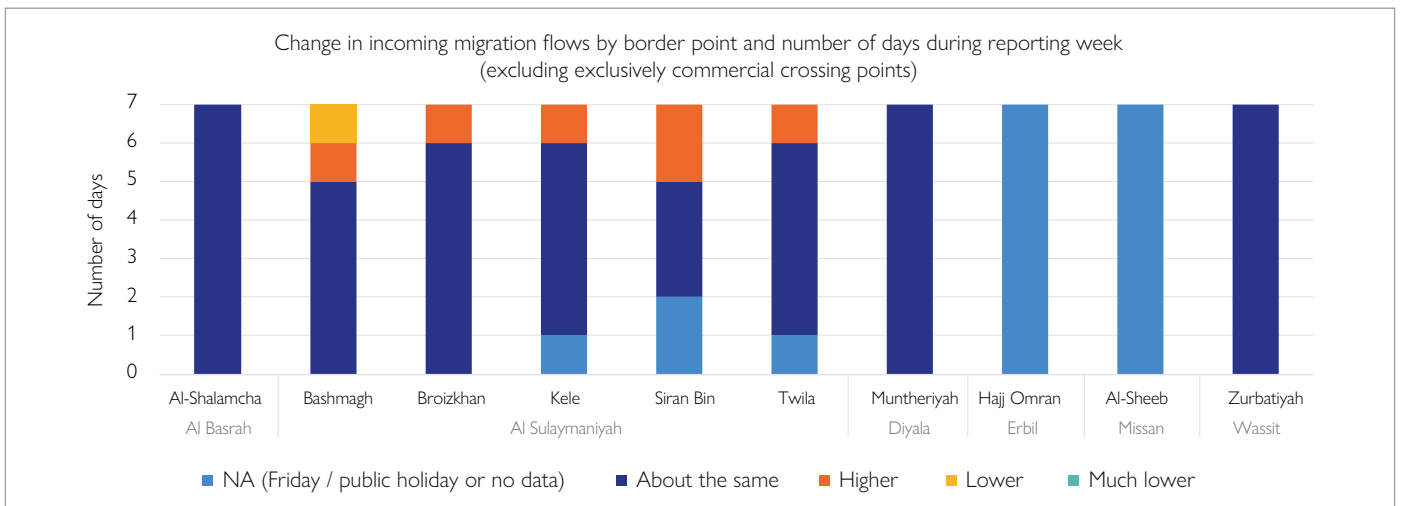


Figure 3 Change in incoming migration flows

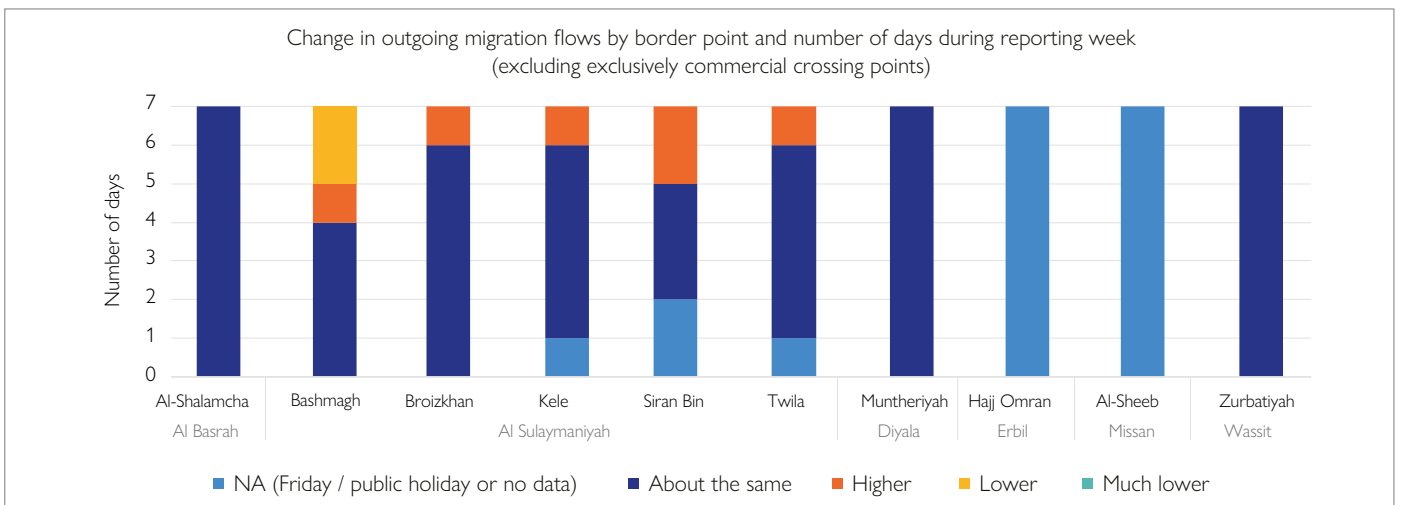


Figure 4 Change in outgoing migration flows

In addition, border authorities reported that two BCPs, namely Zurbatiyah and Al Shalamcha continued reporting preparedness measures for a potential emergency. Led by authorities, this included support to border health facilities in both BCPs, and improvements to water, hygiene, and sanitation services in Zurbatiyah. No BCPs reported emergency response or security incidents during the reporting period. IOM enumerators observed convoys of Iraqi aid supplies crossing the Al Shalamcha border to reach areas in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

## Islamic Republic of Iran Flow Monitoring<sup>4</sup>

Between 14 and 20 April, DTM flow monitoring points in Bashmagh (Al Sulaymaniyah Governorate), Al Zurbatiyah (Wassit Governorate),<sup>5</sup> and Al Shalamcha (Al Basrah Governorate) recorded 3,667 incoming and 3,474 outgoing movements representing a 31 increase in incoming movements and 12 per cent increase in outgoing movements compared to the previous reporting period. Iranian nationals accounted for 81 per cent of incoming and 67 per cent of outgoing movements.<sup>6</sup>

Among incoming Iranian movements, the main reported purposes were employment (31%), family visits (27%), religious activities (20%), and business or trade (12%). Meanwhile, no travellers reported movement linked to conflict or insecurity. DTM tracked a total of 413 individuals reporting conflict and insecurity as a reason for entering Iraq along these monitored FMPs since 15 March. A noticeable drop can be seen starting 8 April, the day the ceasefire came into effect. Outgoing movements of

Iranian nationals were primarily driven by returns to the Islamic Republic of Iran following short-term (48%, more than 3 months) or longer-term (40%, 3 months or more) stays. Incoming movements by Iraqi citizens were overwhelmingly instances of return by migrants who had been residing in the Islamic Republic of Iran for over three months (76%) and under three months (19%). In this round of flow monitoring, IOM also recorded 16 TCNs entering Iraq and six TCNs exiting Iraq from China, the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon with the purpose of renewing their visas and for employment. TCNs reported Iraq as final destination except one person who was transiting to Kuwait.

Iraqi nationals who returned home (over 3 months) moved to locations within Al Sulaymaniyah Governorate (93%), with smaller numbers going to Al Basrah and Erbil (see Figure 7).

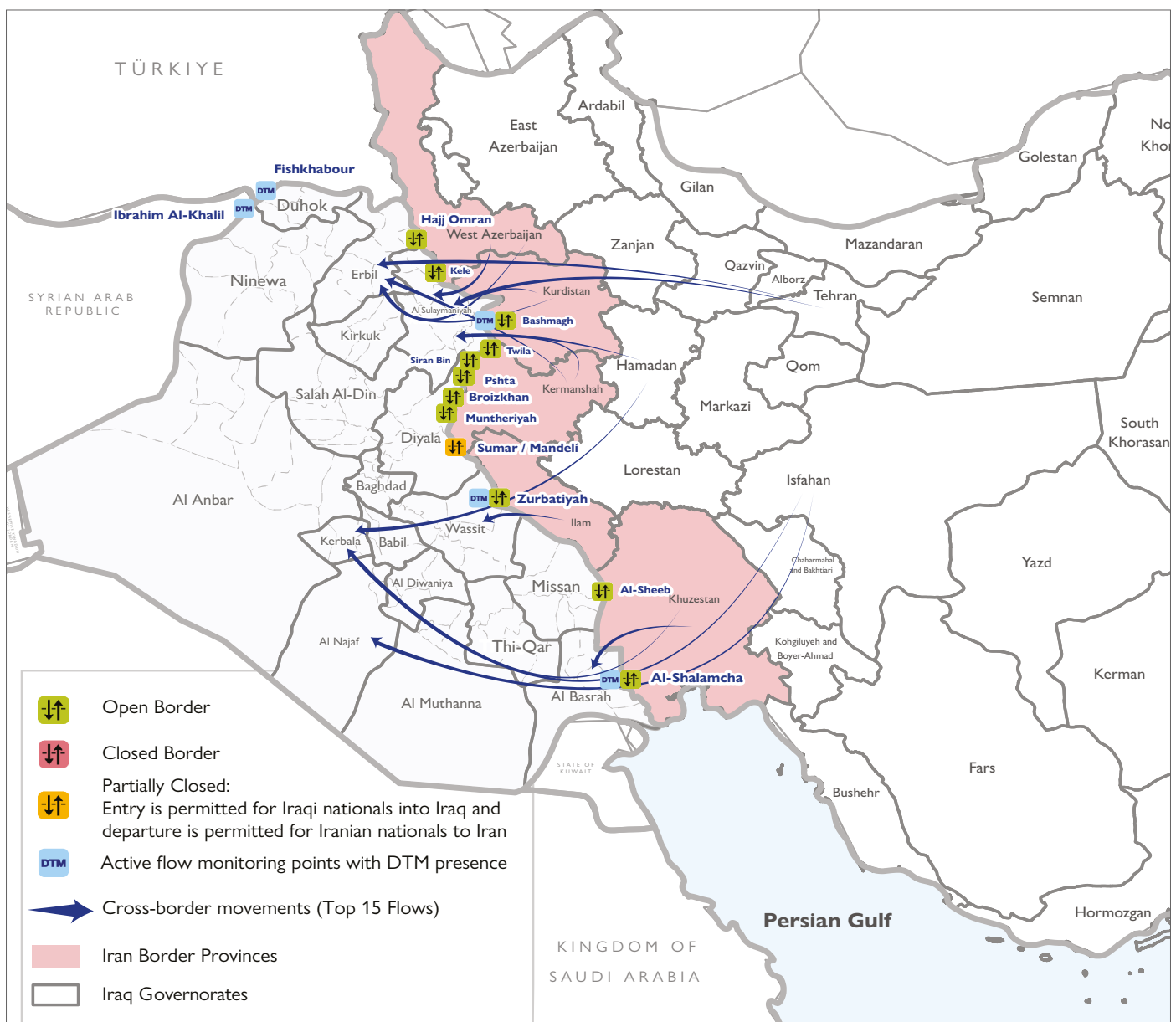


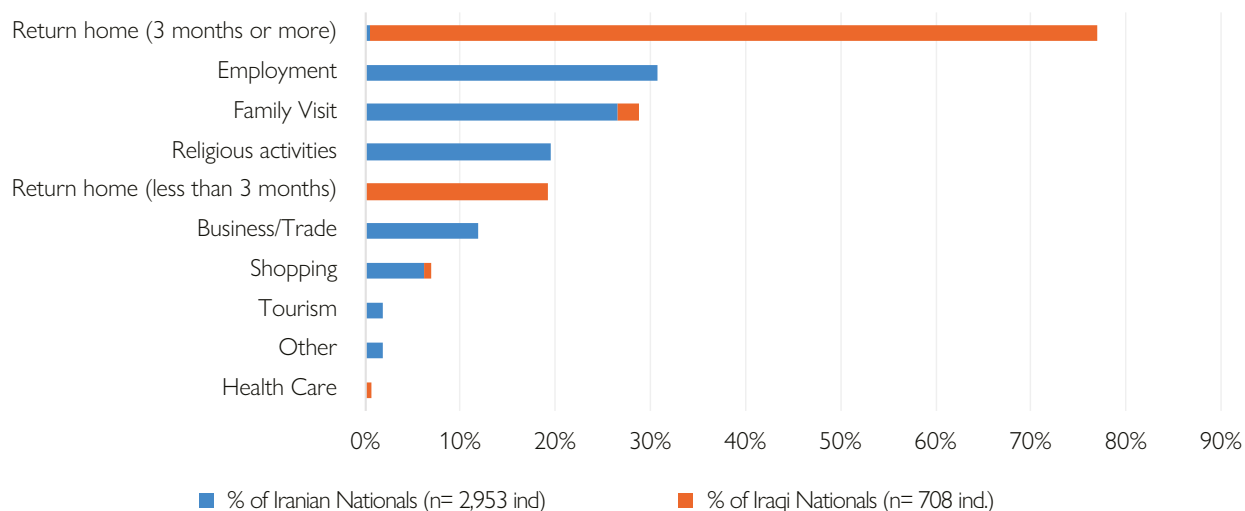
Figure 5: Status of border crossing points along the Iraq-Iran border and location of DTM flow monitoring points. This map is for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

4 Flow monitoring is implemented by DTM at three BCPs, limited to working hours and subject to security conditions. Unlike border monitoring, which is based on estimates from border officials, flow monitoring relies on interviews with individuals crossing the border.

5 Data collection was suspended on 31 March 2026 in Zurbatiyah BCP due to the security situation at the border point.

6 Other nationalities accounted for less than one per cent each way

### Incoming reasons proportional to nationality\*



### Exiting reasons proportional to nationality\*

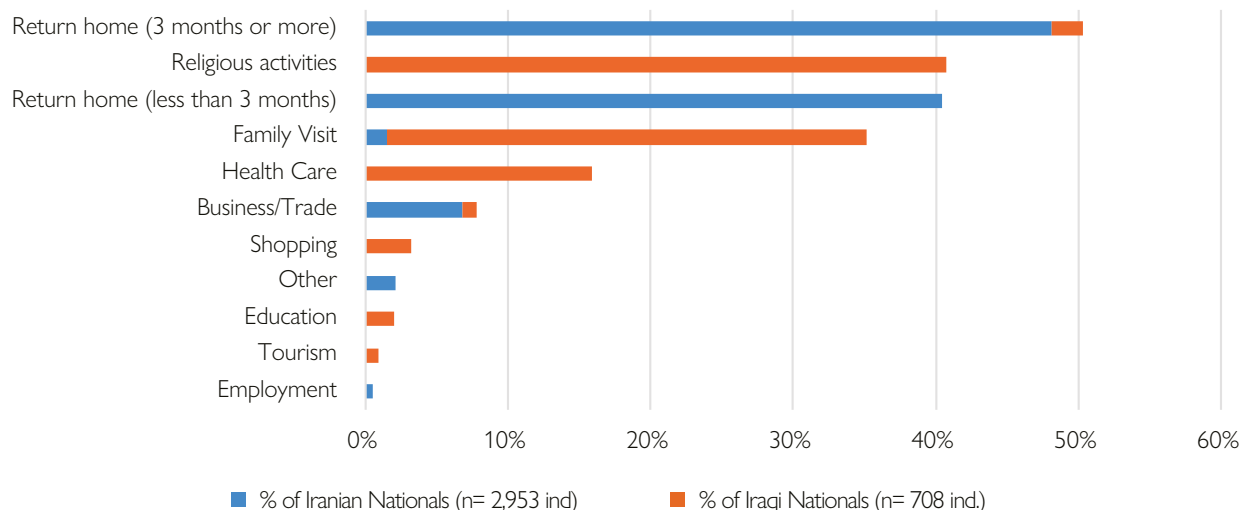


Figure 6 : breakdown of arrivals from and departures to the Islamic Republic of Iran by reason for movement

\*TCNs are not represented.

Point of entry Gov. of destination

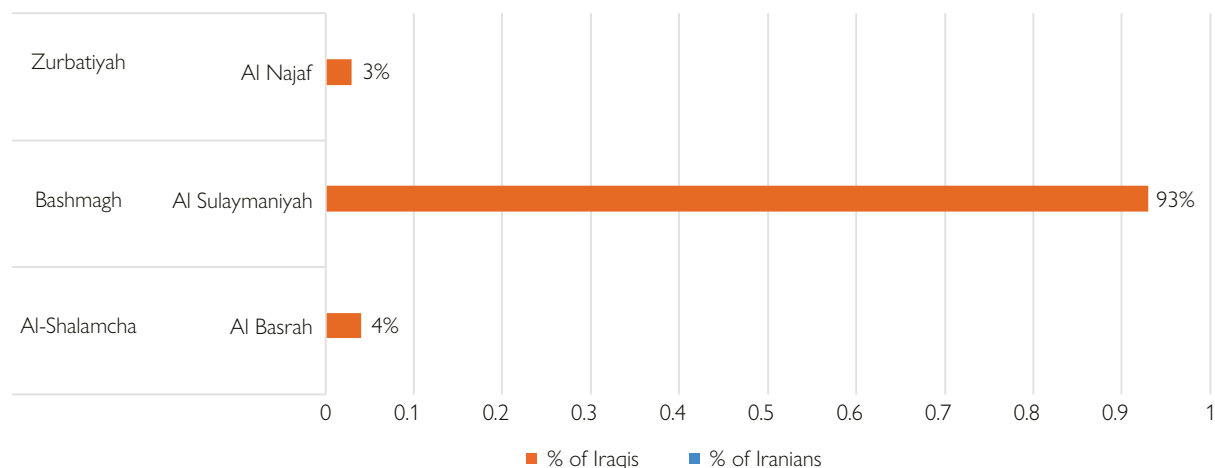


Figure 7: breakdown of arrivals from the Islamic Republic of Iran of Iranian citizens (movements related to the crisis) and Iraqi citizens returning home (3 months or more) by Flow Monitoring Point and governorate of destination.

## 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 statistical error. Based on

this data, IOM estimates that 4,077 TCNs returned home from Iraq via these two land crossings between 10 March and 20 April 2026.<sup>7</sup> The countries of nationality of these travellers included Türkiye, Germany, Syria, Sweden, China, Portugal, South Africa, Italy, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

**Table 1: status of border crossing points along the Iraq-Iran border and estimated flows based on reports by border authorities: 13 April 2026**

GOVERNORATE	BORDER POINT	TYPE	STATUS	INCOMING MOVEMENTS <i>DAILY ESTIMATE ON 20 APRIL</i>	OUTGOING MOVEMENTS <i>DAILY ESTIMATE ON 20 APRIL</i>
Al Basrah	Al-Shalamcha	Formal	Open	Active with similar flows to the previous reporting period	Active with similar flows to the previous reporting period
Diyala	Sumar / Mandeli	Formal	Partially open	None reported; commercial transit permitted (as before the conflict)	None reported; commercial transit permitted (as before the conflict)
Diyala	Muntheriyah	Formal	Open	Active with similar flows to the previous reporting period	Active with similar flows to the previous reporting period
Erbil	Haji Omran	Formal	Open	Active with much lower flows compared to the previous reporting period	Active with much lower flows compared to the previous reporting period
Missan	Al-Sheeb	Formal	Open	Active with much lower flows compared to the previous reporting period	Active with much lower flows compared to the previous reporting period
Al Sulaymaniyah	Bashmagh	Formal	Open	Active with similar flows to the previous reporting period	Active with similar flows to the previous reporting period
Al Sulaymaniyah	Broizkhan	Formal	Open	Active with similar flows to the previous reporting period	Active with similar flows to the previous reporting period
Al Sulaymaniyah	Twila	Formal for KRI only	Open	Active with similar flows to the previous reporting period	Active with similar flows to the previous reporting period
Al Sulaymaniyah	Kele	Formal for KRI only	Open	Active with similar flows to the previous reporting period	Active with similar flows to the previous reporting period
Al Sulaymaniyah	Siran Bin	Formal for KRI only	Open	Active with similar flows to the previous reporting period	Active with similar flows to the previous reporting period
Al Sulaymaniyah	Pshta	Formal for KRI only	Open	None reported; commercial transit permitted (as before the conflict)	None reported; commercial transit permitted (as before the conflict)
Wassit	Zurbatiyah	Formal	Open	Active with similar flows to the previous reporting period	Active with similar flows to the previous reporting period

<sup>7</sup> The estimates are based on a sample size of 1,033 respondents (835 at Ibrahim Al-Khalil and 198 at Fishkabor), out of whom 165 were TCNs 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.