

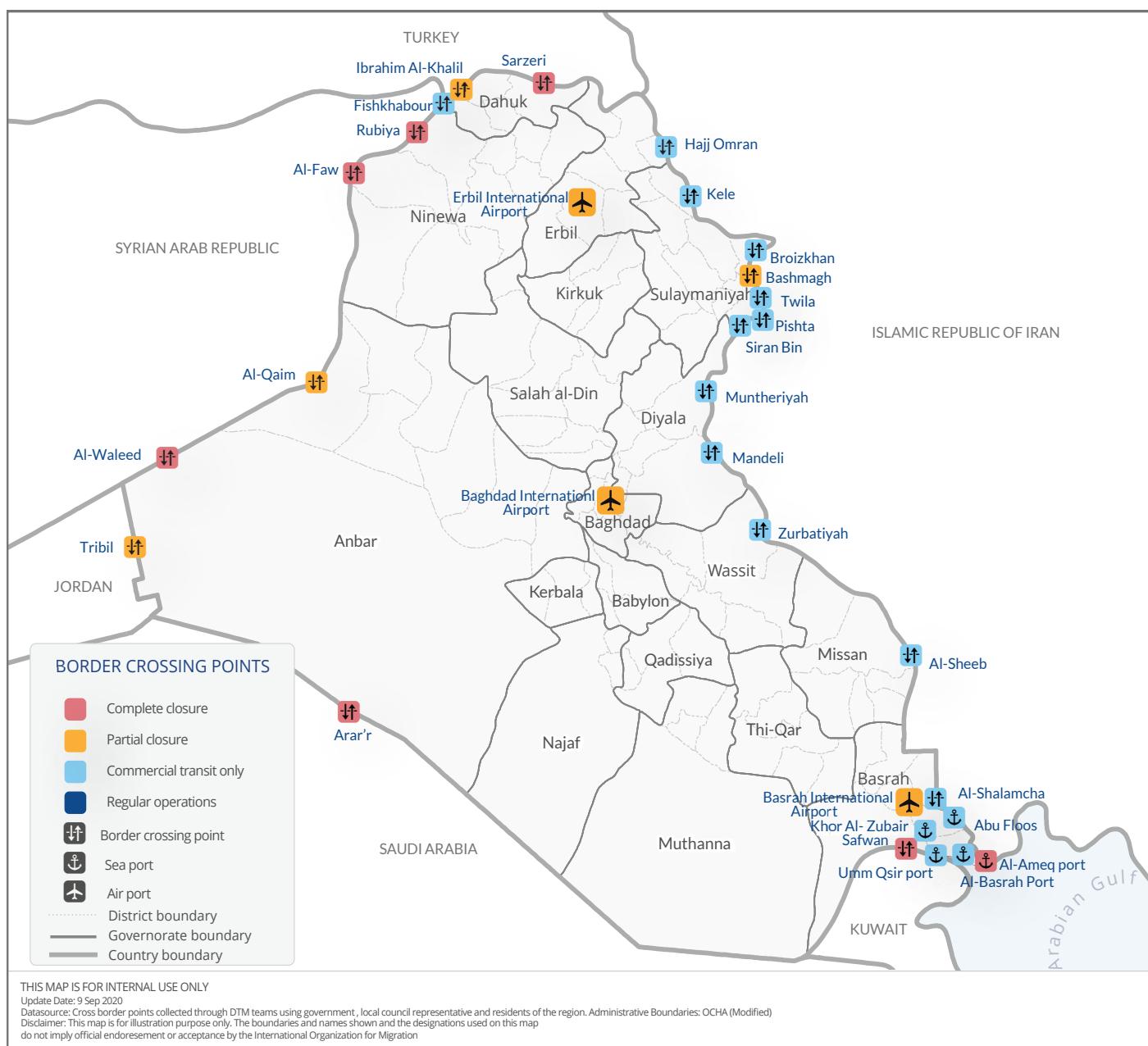
IRAQ MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS DUE TO COVID-19

25 AUGUST TO 7 SEPTEMBER 2020

In response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Iraqi authorities have imposed mobility restrictions since March 2020, aimed at curbing the spread of the virus. These measures include restrictions on travel and limitations on freedom of movement, such as the closure of airports and points of entry (PoEs) along land borders and maritime boundaries, as well as domestic movement restrictions. Between 25 August and 7 September 2020, IOM

Iraq's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), with funding from the European Union and the US Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, assessed 30 locations, of which 7 were reported as closed, 7 partially open, and 16 open for commercial traffic only. This report presents an overview of mobility restrictions for the 23 monitored PoEs that are partially open or open for commercial traffic only, as well as for Iraq in general (refer to table 1).

Map 1: Status of border crossing points as of 7 September 2020



Data has been collected on the following geographic units:

- **Three airports** (functioning airports with designated International Air Transport Association codes): Baghdad, Basra and Erbil International Airports.
- **Twenty-four land border** crossing points (international border crossing points on land): Abu Floos, Al-Shalamcha, Al-Sheeb, Al-Waleed, Al-Qa'em, Arar'r, Broizkhan, Bashmagh, Fao, Fishkhabour, Ibrahim Khalil, Haji Omran, Kele, Muntheriyah, Mandeli, Pshta, Rabia, Safwan, Sarzeri, Siran Bin, Trebil, Twila, and Zurbatiyah.
- **Four sea border** crossing points (international border crossing points on the sea, rivers or lakes): Umm Qasr, Al-Basra, Khor Al Zubair, and Al-Ameq.

MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS

Between 25 August and 7 September, the Government of Iraq (Gol) extended the nationwide lockdown measures to curb the spread of COVID-19. These measures include restrictions on commercial activity as well as civilian movements across the country. The approach of local authorities to the enforcement of these restrictions continue to vary across governorates.

Across Federal Iraq, in response to local epidemiological situations, authorities continue to impose different measures across governorates, to prevent further spread of the virus. A curfew between 11:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. is in place seven days a week within all governorates. People are now able to travel between governorates whilst following public health measures, following the lifting of restrictions that had prohibited this type of movement in August. Meanwhile, from 21 August to 2 September, Kerbala Governorate authorities temporarily blocked visitors from other governorates, to minimize the size of gatherings throughout the Muharram ceremony period.

Across the country, essential services relating to health and food are able to continue operating, so long as they adopt strict health regulations. These regulations apply in shops and malls, while restaurants and cafes have not been permitted to offer take-away and delivery orders to customers, but are not allowed to welcome customers to dine in.

However, on 7 September, the federal Health and Safety Committee (the Committee) announced that from 12 September some restaurants and five-star hotels will be permitted to re-open while observing strict public health measures in line with Health Ministry regulations. The Committee also approved the gradual re-opening of border crossing points for commercial transit between Sundays and Thursdays, to assist in meeting the demands of local markets across Iraq. Those working in the market supply chains will be required to follow health protocols.

Since 9 August, a small number of Federal Iraq government employees have resumed working in government offices. However, the Committee agreed that concerned ministers or department directors will be able to request 50 per cent of their staff to return to working in the office, starting from 12 September. In addition, the Committee announced a number of measures in relation to elections, enabling the electoral commission to establish biometric registration cards, and exempting their staff and the transportation of election materials from existing curfews across the country.

Citizens within KRI are permitted to travel between governorates as well as between KRI and Federal Iraq, following the lifting of previous movement restrictions in August. As with Federal Iraq, a curfew is in place across KRI's governorates, from 11:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. seven days a week.

In terms of aviation, international airports in Baghdad, Basra and Erbil remain open for commercial flights following their re-opening by the Iraq Civil Aviation Authority (ICAA) in late July. These three airports are all open for domestic and international flights; however, they are running at lower capacity than prior to the pandemic. Flights for emergencies, medical evacuations, carrying cargo, and chartering also remained operational between 25 August and 7 September.

Additionally, the ICAA has established public health measures that all staff and passengers are required to follow at airports, to limit the spread of the virus. These measures include a requirement for all people to wear face masks and use hand sanitizer whilst moving through terminals, as well as practice social distancing (1-metre) from others. Additionally, travel authorities have advised those planning to depart from Iraq on international flights to present a negative Covid-19 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) swab test conducted within 96 hours prior to flying.

Upon arrival to Erbil International Airport, all passengers are required to submit a negative PCR swab test conducted within 48 hours prior to flying, as well as a memo outlining a commitment to undergo a 14-day quarantine at their place of residence. Those arriving without this documentation will instead be tested at the airport and will be required to bear the costs.

As to legal regulations, at the federal level, fees are not applied to visas that have expired after 21 February 2020. Moreover, migrants in Iraq whose countries of origin do not have a diplomatic presence in Iraq can apply for a travel permission letter from the federal Ministry of Interior. Migrants whose countries of origin do have a diplomatic presence can only travel with a permission letter from relevant embassy offices. In both cases, there must be an agreement between Iraq and the concerned countries of origin. Additional permits are required for workers in essential services, such as health-care workers and suppliers of essential goods, showing that they have the right to move freely for work-related purposes.

In KRI, residency offices are now operating back at regular working hours, and individuals with temporary visas, residency cards and

work permits that have expired during lockdown are not incurring any penalties. Given the high number of requests from migrants for document renewals, fee waivers have been granted for those who were not able to renew their documents within the first few days after residencies re-opened.

Rules surrounding the transport of goods across borders continue to differ across the country, with some authorities allowing any items to be imported or exported, while others only permit certain goods such as food or oil to be moved across. Consistent with previous months during COVID-19, some points of entry operate on certain business days only.

Table 1 displays the status of all PoEs that were partially closed to migrants or opened for commercial transit only across Iraq between 25 August and 7 September. Changes to operational status from the previous period (11-24 August) took place Fishkhabour crossing, which is now open for commercial traffic after previously being partially open for incoming migrants.¹ Similarly, Hajj Omran is now open for commercial traffic after previously allowing incoming and outgoing migrants to cross, while incoming commercial traffic is now also permitted to enter Iraq through Al Sheeb after its full closure since March.

Table 1. Status and restrictions imposed at selected points of entry (25 August to 7 September 2020)

GOVERNORATE	NAME OF THE POINTS OF ENTRY	BORDERING COUNTRY	OPERATIONAL STATUS	TYPE OF MOVEMENT ALLOWED
Anbar	Trebil	Jordan	Partial closure	Incoming
Anbar	Al-Qa'em	Syria	Partial closure	Incoming
Baghdad	Baghdad International Airport	Airport	Partially open	Incoming and outgoing
Basra	Abu Floos	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Basra	Khor Al Zubair	Seaport	Commercial transit only	Incoming and outgoing
Basra	Umm Qasr	Seaport	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Basra	Al-Basra	Seaport	Commercial transit only	Outgoing
Basra	Al-Shalamja	Iran	Commercial transit	Incoming
Basra	Basra International Airport	Airport	Partially open	Incoming and outgoing
Diyala	Baladruz/Mandeli	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Diyala	Muntheriyah	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming and outgoing
Dahuk	Ibrahim Khalil	Turkey	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Dahuk	Fishkhabour	Syria	Commercial transit only	Incoming and outgoing
Erbil	Hajj Omran	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming and outgoing
Erbil	Erbil International Airport	Airport	Partially open	Incoming and outgoing
Missan	Al-Sheeb	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Sulaymaniyah	Kele	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Sulaymaniyah	Broizkhan	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming and outgoing
Sulaymaniyah	Twila	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Sulaymaniyah	Siran Bin	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Sulaymaniyah	Bashmagh	Iran	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Sulaymaniyah	Pshtha	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Wassit	Zurbatiyah	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming

Information that has been updated since the last reporting period is highlighted in yellow

¹ The operational status of Fishkhabour has changed on several occasions between July and September. When it was opened for incoming and outgoing movements between 4 June and 30 July enabled the movements of a significant number of Syrian nationals across the border (around 5,232 KRI to Syria, and 225 from Syria to KRI).

METHODOLOGY

Since March 2020, DTM Iraq has been supporting the DTM Global Team in a new data collection exercise aimed at better understanding how COVID-19 affects global mobility. This assessment has involved 171 IOM Country Missions worldwide with the objective to provide information on the capacity of current PoEs to mitigate and/or respond adequately and in a targeted manner to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

This data collection exercise has been led by DTM HQ and coordinated with other IOM departments, and relevant data has been collected and updated at the country level on an ongoing basis using a web application.

In Iraq, data has been collected through the IOM DTM field team, composed of over 100 staff members deployed across Iraq (20% of enumerators are women) and supplemented with IOM Migration Management Unit (MMU) information. Where border points operate, IOM's field staff collect data in person through interviews with Key Informants (KIs). In instances where border points are closed to population movement, the teams collect the data by phone using a large, well-established network that includes local authorities, security forces and customs employees. The KIs' responses aim to represent the situation at the monitoring points, and are not based on their opinions, unless phrased otherwise. Whenever possible, triangulation of findings was conducted with more than one KI per monitoring point.

To systematically capture the status of each location, the following operational statuses for border crossing points are defined as follows:

- Partial closure (indicating that only a reduced number of individuals can use the border crossing point to exit and enter the country, territory or area, due to limited hours of operation or partial closure for specific nationalities)
- Closed (for both entry and exit)
- Open for entry and exit
- Open for commercial traffic only
- Other
- Unknown

For further information on the methodology, definitions and explanation please refer to the to the [Methodology Framework](#).

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Co-funded by
the European Union

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