IOM IRAQ

COVID-19 MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS AND PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

1 JANUARY TO 28 FEBRUARY 2021

Since April 2020, DTM Iraq has collected data and information relating to COVID-19 related movement restrictions and health measures being implemented across the country to curb the spread of the virus.

During this reporting period covering 1 January to 28 February 2021, DTM, with funding from the European Union and the US Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, collected information on mobility restrictions within Iraq as well as at Points of Entry (PoEs). These restrictions include limitations on mobility across governorates as well as on commercial and trade activity, curfews, government and residency office operating hours, and legal regulations. An overview of the statuses of 32 PoEs can be found in Annex 1: five were reported as fully closed, 12 were partially open, 11 were open for commercial traffic only, and four were fully open.

Additionally, on 22 February 2021, DTM collected information on health measures as well as additional details about movement restrictions at selected operating PoEs. These include Ibrahim Al-Khalil (Iraq-Turkey), Fishkhabour (Iraq-Syria), and Bashmagh, Al-Shalamcha, and Zurbatiyah (all three Iraq-Iran). Changes in health measures and movement restrictions from the previous round of data collection are detailed where appropriate.

An overview of the methodologies employed in the collection of information is available at the end of this report.

Note that this report combines information which, prior to the reporting period of 8–21 September 2020, had been presented in two different types of COVID-19 products published by DTM. These publications are: 1) Mobility Restrictions reports, and 2) Health Measures at Border Crossing Points reports, which are both available **here**. Additionally, DTM has produced a range of products related to an ongoing COVID-19 Impact Assessment which are available **here**.

Disclaimer: Information contained within this product is based upon the knowledge of authorities working at Points of Entry (PoEs), or direct observation or data collection of DTM staff. This information has not been verified or endorsed officially.

MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS WITHIN IRAQ DUE TO COVID-19

Between 1 January and 28 February 2021, the Government of Iraq (GoI) 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 continues 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. In September 2020, the GoI lifted all curfews that were in place across the country; they had previously been active between 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m daily. Additionally, citizens remain permitted to travel governorates within Federal Iraq, however people in Federal Iraq are not presently permitted to enter the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (refer to the below paragraph for further details). Those working in the market supply chains are required to practice social distancing and regularly use hand sanitizer.

Since 24 December 2020, the GoI has implemented measures to curb the spread of the new and highly contagious variant of the virus. These include the mandatory closure of all malls, cafés and restaurants between 19:00 and 6:00 daily between 24 December 2020 and 15 January 2021. On 23 February 2021, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) introduced a range of new public health measures to curb the spread of the virus, in response to growing case numbers across the region. This includes a ban on visits from people coming from outside the KRI. Exceptions to this ban include individuals working for the United Nations and other international organizations, those working with diplomatic missions, as well as those visiting the region to receive medical treatment. Trade with other Iraqi provinces is to continue, with those working in the industry required to observe public health measures. Additional measures include a prohibition on social gatherings such as parties, banquets, and visits to cemeteries, with the KRG announcing fines of IDQ 2 million for those who violate these rules.

Additionally, until further notice, schools and universities are permitted to remain open, while gatherings at mosques, churches and temples are still allowed to take place, so long as all individuals adopt strict public health measures such as social distancing and regularly applying hand sanitizer. In addition, sports activities are permitted to take place, but without the presence of spectators in stadiums and halls. Furthermore, while weddings are permitted to take place, the KRG is imposing a limit of 60 people per 500 square meters. Restaurants and cafes are advised to offer their services outdoors; in cases where no outdoor space is available, they must limit the number of guests inside and keep tables at a safe distance from each other.

Since mid-September 2020, the Committee has agreed that concerned ministers or department directors are able to request 50 per cent of their staff to return to working in the office. In addition, the Committee has 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.

In terms of aviation, international airports in Baghdad, Basra, Erbil, Najaf and Sulaymaniyah remain open for commercial flights following their re-opening by the Iraq Civil Aviation Authority (ICAA) in the second half of 2020, although they are running at lower capacity than prior to the pandemic. However, at all international airports, as a measure to prevent the spread of the new variant of the virus, the GoI has introduced a ban on non-Iraqi nationals travelling from Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Finland, France, Denmark, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Spain, South Africa, and Zambia, while Iraqi nationals travelling from any of these countries must quarantine at home for 14 days. However, exemptions may be granted for non-Iraqi travellers who work with UN agencies, diplomatic missions, and other official delegations. Flights for emergencies, medical evacuations, carrying cargo and chartering also remained operational between 1 January and 28 February 2021.

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). 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.

Travellers arriving to Federal Iraq's airports must carry with them a negative PCR text taken within 72 hours prior to arrival. Those who do not have a negative PCR test are not permitted to enter the country.

In KRI, upon arrival to the airport in Erbil, travellers are requested to carry with them a negative PCR test result taken within 72 hours prior to arriving; travellers carrying a negative result are not required to undergo a quarantine period, but are requested to contact the KRG Ministry of Health if they begin to show any COVID-19 symptoms. Travellers arriving at Erbil who do not have with them a negative test result must take a test at the airport, and then quarantine at home for up to 48 hours until they receive their results from the Ministry of Health.

Otherwise, UN protocols relating to staff travel into the international airport in Erbil were revised in January 2021. UN staff must quarantine at their place of residence for a period of eight days and report to the UN health clinic if they display any symptoms. Staff are only permitted to access UN compounds to undertake essential duties and must obtain entrance permission from their supervisors.

Additionally, in terms of domestic travel, UN staff travelling from Erbil or Kirkuk to Baghdad who have made an overnight trip are required to quarantine in the UN compound for four days and take a negative PCR test. Providing the test is negative, staff are permitted to leave the compound while observing social distancing measures. In instances where tests come back positive, staff must self-isolate while accessing necessary healthcare, and they must also cooperate on contact tracing with the relevant health units to minimize further transmission of the virus. However, staff travelling from Baghdad to Erbil are not required to take a test or undergo a quarantine period.

In addition, the UN has reiterated the need for strict enforcement of public health measures in UN compounds. These include the wearing of masks at all times (both indoors and outdoors), observing two-meter social distancing, and regularly applying hand sanitizer. Social gatherings of more than five people, which are subject to the

space of the gathering and ventilation, are not allowed to take place until the end of March 2021.

As to legal regulations, between February 2020 and January 2021, the GoI suspended fees for migrants who overstay their visa. However, in February 2021, the GoI lifted this suspension, with all migrants who overstay their visa now required to pay IQD 500,000. Migrants in Iraq whose visas have expired do not need permission from Iraqi authorities in order to leave the country. However, in some cases, communication must take place between the Ministry of Interior's Residency Department and the relevant embassy prior to migrants traveling. 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 again 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.
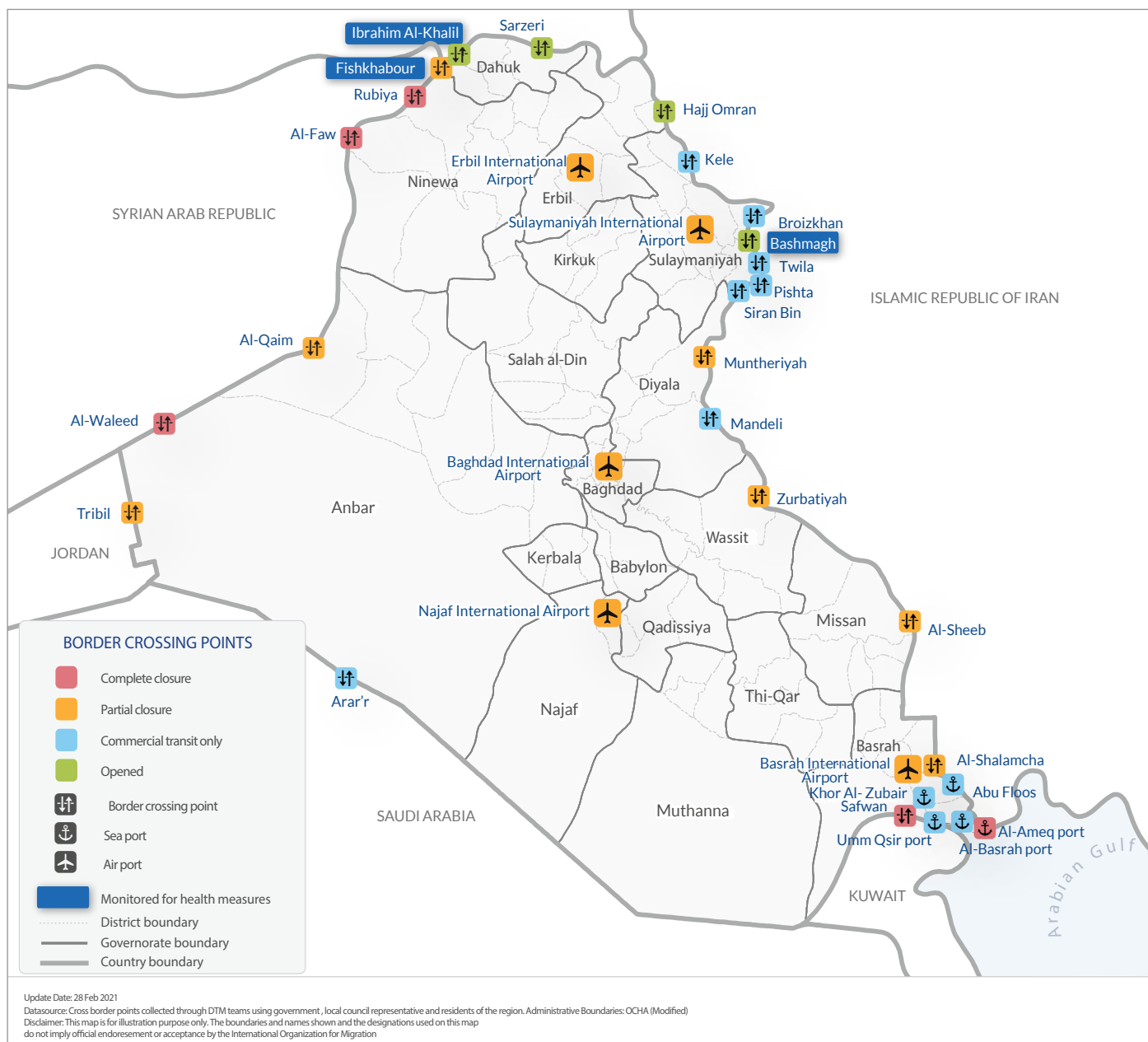
Rules surrounding the transport of goods across borders continue to differ across the country, with some authorities allowing any items to be imported or exported, while others only permit certain goods such as food or oil to be moved across. Consistent with previous months during COVID-19, some points of entry operate on certain business days only.

OVERVIEW OF STATUSES OF POINTS OF ENTRY (PoEs)

Map 1 displays the statuses of all PoEs that were fully open, partially closed to migrants, or open for commercial transit only across Iraq between 1 January and 28 February 2021. The only change to the operational status of PoEs in the January-February period took place at Sarzeri on the KRI-Turkey border, which is now opened for incoming and outgoing travellers from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily, after previously being closed.

Map 1. Status of PoEs as at 28 February 2021

Update Date: 28 Feb 2021
Datasource: Cross border points collected through DTM teams using government , local council representative and residents of the region. Administrative Boundaries: OCHA (Modified)
Disclaimer: This map is for illustration purpose only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration

MOVEMENT RESTRICTIONS AND HEALTH MEASURES AT POINTS OF ENTRY (PoEs)

Information presented in this section was collected on 22 February 2021 at five PoEs:

- Information was collected for the ninth time at: Ibrahim Al-Khalil (Iraq-Turkey), Fishkhabour (Iraq-Syria), and Bashmagh (Iraq-Iran). Changes between this round and the previous rounds are reported on below.

- Information was collected for the sixth time at: Zurbatiyah (Iraq-Iran) and Al-Shalamcha (Iraq-Iran). Changes between this round and the previous rounds are reported on below.

Refer to Map 1 for locations of monitored PoEs

Operational status and movement restrictions

In January 2021, the GoI introduced restrictions on travellers due to the presence of the new and highly contagious strain of COVID-19 in certain countries. Until further notice, nationals from the following countries are prohibited from entering Iraq via any PoE: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Finland, France, Denmark, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Spain, South Africa, United States of America, and Zambia. However, Iraqi nationals are permitted to return to Iraq and must follow the relevant testing and quarantine rules.

Ibrahim Al-Khalil was open for 24 hours for incoming and outgoing travellers in the month that data collection took place, consistent with the previous rounds. Additionally, Iranian nationals are permitted to enter after previously being disallowed. All incoming travellers except those who are under 12 years of age are required to undertake a PCR test at this PoE. Additionally, upon arrival to this PoE, all incoming travellers are required to quarantine at home for a period of 14 days. All outgoing travellers are required to provide a negative PCR test taken within 72 hours prior to arrival at the PoE; however, Turkish citizens and Iraqis with Turkish residence cards are exempt from this rule. Additionally, in January, a new rule was introduced at this PoE, requiring foreign nationals who have not obtained a pre-arrival visa to pay 100,000 Iraqi dinar for an entry visa. Nationals from Iran and Turkey, as well Iraqis returning home, are exempt from this rule.

Fishkhabour was open between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. for incoming and outgoing travellers – and as with the previous two rounds, it was open for three days in the week of this round (Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday). Consistent with the last round, only Syrian nationals, including those with dual citizenship, are permitted to enter Iraq via this PoE. Additionally, only Iraq nationals travelling for business purposes as well as Syrian nationals are permitted to enter Syria via this PoE. All travellers over 11 years of age must take a COVID-19 test at this PoE. In addition, upon arrival to KRI, all incoming travellers are required to undergo a 14 day quarantine period at home; travellers with dual nationality who are in transit (en route to another country) are exempt from this rule.

Bashmagh was open from 7:00 a.m. until 12:00 am for incoming and outgoing travellers seven days per week. As with the last round, Iraqi and Iranian nationals can enter Iraq and they do not need travel permission from the Iraqi Ministry of Interior. Otherwise, nationals of both countries may enter Iran, with Iraqis required to obtain a visa from the Iranian consulate prior to travelling. In addition, the requirement remains in place for all incoming travellers over the age of 10 to take a COVID-19 test at this PoE. In addition, the same new rule that was introduced at Ibrahim Al-Khalil also commenced in Bashmagh in January, with travellers required to pay 100,000 dinar for an entry visa. Those who have a pre-organised visa as well as nationals of Iraq, Turkey and Iran are exempt from this rule.

Zurbatiyah (Wassit Terminal) was open for 24 hours for incoming and outgoing travellers for reasons related to health or education, consistent with the last three rounds. Additionally, in February, the Iranian Government imposed a ban on Iraqi travellers entering Iran via this PoE due to rising COVID-19 case numbers being recorded across the country; only Iranians were permitted to cross into Iran. In addition, only Iraqis are allowed to enter Iraq via this PoE. As with the last round, outgoing travellers are required to sign a pledge committing to not return to Iraq via this PoE. No COVID-19 testing facilities are in place at this PoE; however, in order to cross, all travellers must carry with them a negative PCR test result taken within 72 hours prior to arriving. However, travellers who are under 10 years old are not required to take a PCR test.

Al-Shalamcha was open daily on Sundays to Thursdays from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. for incoming travellers, but was closed for outgoing travellers. As with previous rounds, only Iraqi nationals are permitted to enter via this PoE. However, incoming and outgoing vehicles travelling for trade purposes are permitted to cross in both directions via this PoE. In addition, unlike the previous round, no travellers of any nationality were permitted to enter Iran via this PoE. In the previous rounds, travellers were required to have their temperature taken at this PoE; however, this rule was no longer in place in this round, with all travellers instead required to carry with them a negative PCR test result taken within 72 hours prior to travelling.

Public Health Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

As with the previous rounds, all five monitored PoEs have official public health SOPs on site, outlining measures that should be taken during the pandemic. All five PoEs contain guidance on preventative measures for staff, registration of travellers, as well as processes for the notification of suspected cases. Consistent with the last two rounds, SOPs at all monitored PoEs except Zurbatiyah (Wassit) include instructions for referring unwell travellers to medical facilities. Otherwise, only SOPs at Fishkhabour, Bashmagh and Ibrahim Al-Khalil contain information concerning the health screening of travellers, while guidance for managing migration flows is only featured in the SOPs at Ibrahim Al-Khalil, Fishkhabour and Zurbatiyah. Additionally, Ibrahim Al-Khalil (incoming gate), Al-Shalamcha and Zurbatiyah have in place a mechanism to reduce overcrowding (i.e. ropes, queues), while Basghmagh, Fishkhabour, and Ibrahim Al-Khalil (outgoing gate) do not have one in place. Otherwise, consistent

with the last rounds, staff at all PoEs except Fishkhabour have been trained on implementing the procedures included in the SOPs. This training took place in February-March 2020 at Ibrahim Al-Khalil, Zurbatiyah and Bashmagh, while at Al-Shalamcha it was delivered in July 2020.

Health staffing

The number of health staff present at the monitored PoEs are generally consistent with the last three rounds, as follows: Ibrahim Al-Khalil (53 at the incoming gate, and six at the outgoing gate), Bashmagh (11), Fishkhabour (4 up from 3 in the previous round), Al-Shalamcha (4), and Zurbatiyah (4).

Infection prevention and control

In terms of infection prevention and control, as with the previous rounds, Ibrahim Al-Khalil, Fishkhabour, Al-Shalamcha and Zurbatiyah all have on site a functional handwashing station with soap and water or chlorinated water; Bashmagh remains the only PoE that does not contain one.

Moreover, as with previous rounds, supplies of surgical masks were observed at all five monitored PoEs; they are made available to travellers suspected as having contracted COVID-19 as well as their travel companions. Consistent with the last round, most or all workers at all PoEs were recorded as using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to minimize transmission of the virus, including disposable gloves and surgical masks.

Health screening

In terms of health screening measures, as with the last round, thermometers are only present at Fishkhabour, Ibrahim Al-Khalil (outgoing), and Zurbatiyah. In the previous rounds, travellers in transit were not required to take a COVID-19 test at PoEs, and were instead required to be escorted by security forces to the airport and get tested there before flying out. However, in January and February, all travellers entering Iraq via Fishkhabour were required to take a COVID-19 test upon arrival to the PoEs, and they are permitted to stay in KRG for 15 days only before continuing their travels.

Rules surrounding quarantining are unchanged from the previous round, and continue to vary across the monitored PoEs. After entering Iraq via Fishkhabour, Ibrahim Al-Khalil, Zurbatiyah and Al-Shalamcha, travellers are required to quarantine at home for 14 days. In addition, there is no quarantine requirement for travellers with dual citizenship who are in transit after crossing via Fishkhabour. As well, all travellers entering via Bashmagh must quarantine at home for 48 hours.

Furthermore, as with the previous rounds, none of the crossings have an isolation space for further evaluation of suspected cases amongst travellers. Prior to December 2020, travellers at some PoEs were required to submit a health declaration form upon arrival. However, this requirement is no longer in place at any of the monitored PoEs, with on-site COVID-19 testing or rules requiring travellers to submit negative PCR test results considered sufficient as a health screening measure.

Risk communication

In terms of risk communication, COVID-19 information products containing advice on symptoms, prevention strategies and accessing healthcare are present at most monitored PoEs, with Bashmagh the only exception. However, enumerators recorded that staff at all PoEs do not provide this information directly to travellers.

Registration

Concerning registration, the names and contact details of all travellers are recorded at Fishkhabour, Bashmagh, Al-Shalamcha, Zurbatiyah and Ibrahim Al-Khalil's incoming gate – however this information is not collected at Ibrahim Al-Khalil's outgoing gate. The PoEs at Ibrahim Al-Khalil, Fishkhabour and Bashmagh all use an electronic traveller registration system, while Ibrahim Al-Khalil (outgoing gate), Al-Shalamcha and Zurbatiyah rely on a paper-based system only.

Notification and referral system

Processes for notifications and referrals at the five monitored PoEs are mostly unchanged from the previous round. An ambulance was observed at each of the PoEs. Additionally, in cases where travellers are suspected of having contracted COVID-19, staff at all PoEs refer them to the nearest health facility for further screening; this now includes Zurbatiyah, which throughout 2020 did not have a referral system in place. Those arriving to Iraq through Ibrahim Al-Khalil are referred to hospitals in Lalaf or Zakho, while those arriving via Fishkhabour are referred to a hospital in Lalaf. Otherwise, travellers arriving through Al-Shalamcha are referred to hospitals in Al-Sadr , Al-Ta'limim, Al-Alaemi, or Al-Faiha, and those arriving via Bashmagh are referred to the hospital in Penjwen. Burn units within some hospitals in Dahuk, where migrants arriving via Ibrahim Al-Khalil and Fishkhabour are referred to, are now being used to provide treatment for patients that have contracted COVID-19.

ANNEX. STATUSES OF IRAQ POINTS OF ENTRY (PoEs): 1 JANUARY TO 28 FEBRUARY 2021

Note that the only change to the status of PoEs in January-February 2021 took place at Sarzeri, which is now fully opened after previously being closed.

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
Anbar	Ara'r	Saudi Arabia	Commercial transit only	Incoming and outgoing
Baghdad	Baghdad International Airport	Airport	Partial closure	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-Shalamcha	Iran	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Basra	Basra International Airport	Airport	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Diyala	Baladruz/Mandeli	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Diyala	Muntheriyah	Iran	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Dahuk	Sarzeri	Turkey	Fully open	Incoming and outgoing
Dahuk	Ibrahim Al-Khalil	Turkey	Fully open	Incoming and outgoing
Dahuk	Fishkhabour	Syria	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Erbil	Hajj Omran	Iran	Fully open	Incoming and outgoing
Erbil	Erbil International Airport	Airport	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Missan	Al-Sheeb	Iran	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Najaf	Najaf International Airport	Airport	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
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	Fully open	Incoming and outgoing
Sulaymaniyah	Pshta	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Sulaymaniyah	Sulaymaniyah International Airport	Airport	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Wassit	Zurbatiyah	Iran	Partial closure	Incoming

Information that has been updated since the last reporting period (December 2020) is highlighted in yellow

METHODOLOGY

MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS WITHIN IRAQ DUE TO COVID-19

Since March 2020, DTM Iraq has been supporting the DTM Global Team in this 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 PoEs operate, IOM's field staff collect data in person through interviews with Key Informants (KIs). In instances where PoEs 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 PoEs are defined as follows:

- Partial closure (indicating that only a reduced number of individuals can use the PoE 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.

MOVEMENT RESTRICTIONS AND HEALTH MEASURES AT POINTS OF ENTRY (PoEs)

DTM Iraq collects data at PoEs with neighboring countries to better understand movement restrictions and public health measures being implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data featured within this report was collected on 22 February 2021 through face-to-face interviews with key informants (government and health employees) as well as direct observation at five PoEs: Ibrahim Al-Khalil, bordering Turkey; Fishkhabour, bordering the Syrian Arab Republic; and Bashmagh, Zurbatiyah, and Al-Shalamcha, bordering the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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