

# COVID-19 MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS AND PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

6 TO 19 OCTOBER 2020

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 6 to 19 October 2020, DTM, with funding from the European Union and the US Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, collected information relating to mobility restrictions both 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 30 PoEs can be found in Annex 1: 7 were reported as fully closed, 12 were partially open, 10 were open for commercial traffic only, and 1 was fully open.

Additionally, on 13 October, 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 (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 that, prior to the reporting period of 8-21 September, had been presented in two different types of COVID-19 products published by DTM. These include 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 DUE TO COVID-19

Between 6 and 19 October 2020, 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 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. On 24 September, 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. on a daily basis. Additionally, citizens remain permitted to travel between governorates, following the lifting of public health restrictions in August that had prohibited this type of movement.

Essential services are also permitted to move between governorates, so long as they adopt strict public health measures. Such measures are also required to be applied in shops and malls. Restaurants and cafes are permitted to offer take-away and delivery orders to customers, but are not allowed to welcome customers to dine in.

However, since mid-September, the federal Health and Safety Committee (the Committee) has permitted some restaurants and five-star hotels to re-open while observing strict public health measures in line with Health Ministry regulations. The Committee also approved the gradual re-opening of PoEs 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 practice social distancing and regularly use hand sanitizer.

Furthermore, since mid-September, 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 August, the KRG lifted the restrictions preventing movements between KRG governorates, as well as between KRG and Federal Iraq. This means that people can travel freely across governorate PoEs without applying for permission from the KRG. Unlike in Federal Iraq, no curfews are currently in place in KRG.

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 6 and 19 October.

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.

Up until late September, all travelers were required to quarantine at home or in a hotel upon arrival to Iraq's international airports. However, these rules have changed, with all travelers now requested to carry with them a negative PCR test result taken within 48 hours prior to arriving at any of the country's operational international airports in Erbil, Baghdad or Basra. Travelers that do not present a negative test result upon arrival to Erbil must take a PCR test at the airport, and then quarantine at home for 48 hours; only those that receive positive results will receive guidance regarding further isolation from the Ministry of Health. However, testing is not taking place at the airports in Baghdad and Basra; travelers that arrive to these airports without a negative PCR test result will not be permitted to enter. United Nations internal policy requires all staff to quarantine at home for 14 days upon arrival at any international airports, irrespective of PCR test results.

As to legal regulations, at the federal level, fees are not applied to visas that have expired after 21 February 2020. 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 KRG, 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.

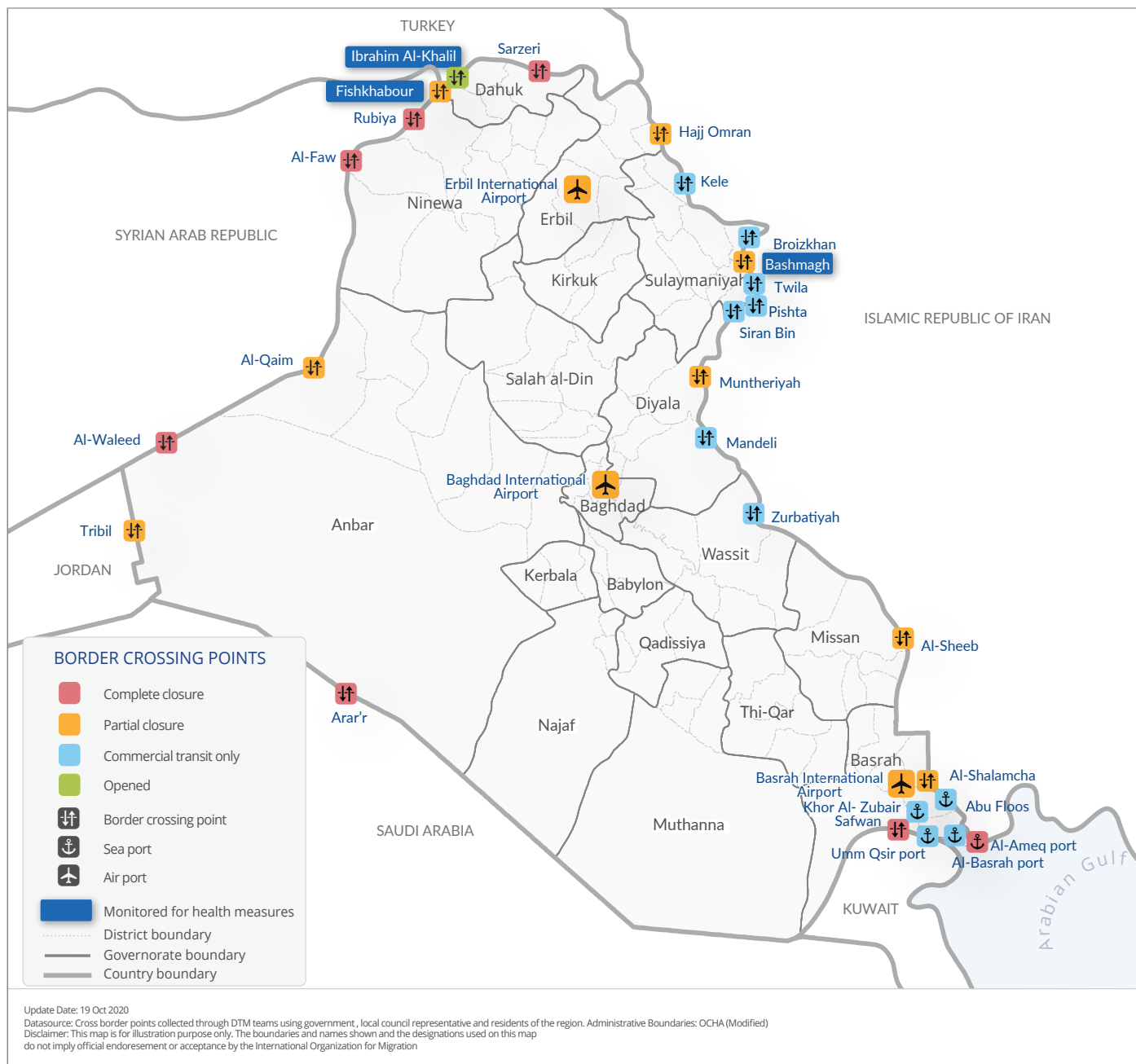
Rules surrounding the transport of goods across borders continue to differ across the country, with some authorities allowing any items to be imported or exported, while others only permit certain goods such as food or oil to be moved across. Consistent with previous months during COVID-19, some points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

## OVERVIEW OF STATUSES OF POINTS OF ENTRY (PoEs)

Map 1 displays the statuses of all PoEs that were partially closed to migrants or open for commercial transit only across Iraq between 6 and 19 October 2020. A change to the operational status took place at Ibrahim Al-Khalil, which is now the country's

only fully open PoE, after previously being only partially open for migrants. Additionally, the status of Zurbatiyah has changed from only previously allowing commercial traffic, to now permitting incoming and outgoing Iraqi citizens and diplomats to cross.

Map 1. Status of PoEs as at 19 October 2020



## OVERVIEW OF STATUSES OF POINTS OF ENTRY (PoEs)

Information presented in this section was collected on 13 October 2020 at five PoEs:

- Information was collected for the fourth 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 first time at: Zurbatiyah (Iraq-Iran) and Al-Shalamcha (Iraq-Iran).

Refer to Map 1 for locations of monitored PoEs.

### Operational status and movement restrictions

**Ibrahim Al-Khalil** was open for 24 hours for incoming and outgoing travelers in the week that data collection took place for this period – consistent with the previous four rounds. Also consistent with the previous rounds, for incoming movements, foreigners need permission from the Ministry of Interior prior to entering, while all Turkish travelers require official permission from the companies they work with in Iraq, and Iranians are still prohibited from entering. In addition, all incoming travelers are still required to take a COVID-19 test at the PoE. Otherwise, Iraqi citizens are permitted to travel to Turkey for educational, medical or business purposes.

**Fishkhabour** was open between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. for incoming and outgoing travelers – and as with the week of the previous round, it was open for three days in the week of data collection in this round (Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday). Also, consistent with the previous round, only Syrians are permitted to enter, however they must be travelling for urgent reasons such as to receive medical treatment, for special occasions such as weddings or funerals, or they must be en route to another country (i.e. in transit). Under exceptional circumstances, Syrians remain permitted to leave – including for business purposes; Iraqis are unable to cross at this PoE to Syria.

**Bashmagh** was open for 24 hours for incoming and outgoing travelers in the week that data collection took place (consistent with the last three rounds). As with the previous rounds, Iranians entering Iraq and Iraqis entering Iran must obtain permission from the Iraqi Ministry of Interior prior to travelling; other nationalities are also permitted to enter Iran. In addition, the requirement remains for all incoming travelers to take a COVID-19 test at the PoE.

**Zurbatiyah** (Wassit Terminal) was open for 24 hours for incoming and outgoing travelers in the week that data collection took place. Additionally, Iraqis are permitted to enter Iran for medical or educational purposes, while all travelers entering Iraq do not require permission. No COVID-19 testing facilities are in place at this PoE; however, all travelers must carry with them a negative PCR test result in order to cross.

**Al-Shalamcha** was open for 24 hours for selected incoming and outgoing travelers in the week that data collection took place. However, with the exception of diplomats who can travel freely,

only Iraqis are permitted to cross at this PoE for educational or health purposes. As with Zurbatiyah, no COVID-19 testing facilities are in place at this PoE; however, all travelers must carry with them a negative PCR test result in order to cross.

### Public Health Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

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 travelers, as well as processes for the notification of suspected cases and medical referrals for unwell travelers. However, only SOPs at Fishkhabour and Ibrahim Al-Khalil contain information concerning the health screening of travelers, while guidance for managing migration flows is only featured in the SOPs at Zurbatiyah and Al-Shalamcha. Additionally, while Ibrahim Al-Khalil (incoming gate), Al-Shalamcha and Zurbatiyah have in place a mechanism to reduce overcrowding (i.e. ropes, queues), Bashmagh, Fishkhabour and Ibrahim Al-Khalil (outgoing gate) do not have one in place. Otherwise, staff at all PoEs except Fishkhabour have been trained on implementing the procedures included in the SOPs.

### Health staffing

The number of health staff at the monitored PoEs are mostly unchanged from the last round: Bashmagh and Fishkhabour still have respectively 11 and three present. In addition, while the number at Ibrahim Al-Khalil's incoming gate remains the same as the last round (6), the number of staff at the incoming gate has jumped significantly from 30 to 49 in this round. Regarding the newly monitored PoEs, four staff were present at Zurbatiyah and three staff were present at Al-Shalamcha.

### Infection prevention and control

In terms of infection prevention and control, as with the previous rounds, Ibrahim Al-Khalil and Fishkhabour have on site a functional handwashing station with chlorinated water or soap – and for the first time Bashmagh also now contains one. The two newly monitored PoEs – Zurbatiyah and Al-Shalamcha – also both have functional handwashing facilities on site.

Moreover, as with previous rounds, supplies of surgical masks were observed at all monitored crossings; they are made available to travelers suspected as having contracted COVID-19 as well as their travel companions. Otherwise, as with the previous rounds, most or all workers at the five 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, thermometers are still present at Fishkhabour, Bashmagh and Ibrahim Al-Khalil (outgoing), but not at Ibrahim Al-Khalil (incoming). Regarding the

newly monitored PoEs, thermometers are present at Zurbatiyah but not at Al-Shalamcha. As with the last round, all travelers entering Iraq via Ibrahim Al-Khalil (incoming), Fishkhabour and Bashmagh must take a COVID-19 test upon arrival. However, there are no testing facilities at Zurbatiyah and Al-Shalamcha; travelers entering at these PoEs must carry with them negative PCR test results in order to enter. Travelers in transit are not required to take a test at the PoEs; all of these travelers are escorted by security forces to the international airports, where they are required to take a test prior to flying out of the country.

Quarantine rules vary across the monitored PoEs. After entering Iraq via Ibrahim Al-Khalil, travelers entering KRI are required to quarantine at home for 14 days – consistent with the previous three rounds. In addition, Syrian travelers entering KRI via Fishkhabour are still required to quarantine in a hotel for 48 hours – except those with dual nationality who are in transit, for whom there is no quarantine requirement. Also, as with the last round, all travelers entering via Bashmagh must quarantine at home for 48 hours. Finally, travelers entering via Zurbatiyah and Al-Shalamcha must quarantine at home for 14 days.

Furthermore, as with the last round, none of the crossings have an isolation space for further evaluation of suspected cases amongst travelers. Otherwise, in previous rounds, travelers crossing at most PoEs were required to submit a health declaration form upon arrival. However, this requirement is only currently in place at Zurbatiyah, with COVID-19 testing facilities or rules requiring travelers to submit negative PCR test results considered sufficient at the other four PoEs.

### Risk communication

The presence of COVID-19 information products containing advice on symptoms and prevention strategies are still present Ibrahim Al-Khalil and Fishkhabour crossings, while there is still none of these information products present at Bashmagh.

Additionally, both Zurbatiyah and Al-Shalamcha have these types of information products on-site. However, enumerators at all five PoEs recorded that staff do not provide this information directly to travelers.

### Registration

Concerning registration, the names and contact details of all incoming and outgoing travelers are recorded at Fishkhabour, Bashmagh, Zurbatiyah and Ibrahim Al-Khalil's incoming gate – however only these details are recorded of Iraqi citizens at Ibrahim Al-Khalil's outgoing gate, as well as at Al-Shalamcha. As with the last round, the PoEs at Ibrahim Al-Khalil (incoming and outgoing gates), Fishkhabour and Bashmagh all use an electronic traveler registration system, while Zurbatiyah and Al-Shalamcha rely on a paper-based logbook system only.

### Notification and referral system

With regards to notification and referral systems at the monitored PoEs, an ambulance was observed at each of the three monitored PoEs. Additionally, in cases where travelers are suspected of having contracted COVID-19, staff at Zurbatiyah notify the Department of Health, while staff at the other four PoEs notify the nearest health facilities. At all five PoEs, following the notifications taking place, unwell travelers are referred to the nearest health facilities for further health screening. Those arriving through Ibrahim Al-Khalil and Fishkhabour are referred to hospitals in Azadi, Kavin, or Lalav, while those arriving at Al-Shalamcha are sent to hospitals in Al-Sader, Al-Jimhory, or Al-Faihaa. Furthermore, travelers arriving via Bashmagh and Zurbatiyah are sent to hospitals in Penjwen and Al-Zahraa, respectively. Burn units within some hospitals are now being used to provide treatments for patients that have contracted COVID-19.

## ANNEX. STATUSES OF IRAQ POINTS OF ENTRY (PoEs): 22 SEPTEMBER TO 5 OCTOBER 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	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-Shalamja	Iran	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Basra	Basra International Airport	Airport	Partially open	Incoming and outgoing
Diyala	Baladruz/Mandeli	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Diyala	Muntheriyah	Iran	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Dahuk	Ibrahim Khalil	Turkey	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Dahuk	Fishkhabour <sup>1</sup>	Syria	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Erbil	Hajj Omran	Iran	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Erbil	Erbil International Airport	Airport	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Missan	Al-Sheeb	Iran	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	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Sulaymaniyah	Pshta	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Wassit	Zurbatiyah	Iran	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing

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

<sup>1</sup> The operational status of Fishkhabour has changed on several occasions between July and September. It being 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

## 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 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 [Methodology Framework](#).

## MOVEMENT RESTRICTIONS AND HEALTH MEASURES AT 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 13 October 2020 through face-to-face interviews with key informants (government and health employees) as well as direct observation at three PoEs: Ibrahim Al-Khalil, bordering Turkey, Fishkhabour, bordering the Syrian Arab Republic and Bashmagh, bordering the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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