# COVID-19 MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS AND PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

## 8 TO 21 SEPTEMBER 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 8 to 21 September, 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 PoEs can be found in Annex 1: 7 were reported as closed, 12 were partially open, and 11 were open for commercial traffic only.

Additionally, on 15 September, 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 has previously 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**.

# MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS DUE TO COVID-19

Between 8 and 21 September, 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. A curfew between 11:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. was in place seven days a week within all governorates. People are now able 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 12 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 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 practice social distancing and regularly use hand sanitizer.

Since 9 August, a small proportion of Federal Iraq government employees have resumed working in government offices. However, the Committee has 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.

In August, the KRG lifted the restrictions preventing movements between KRI governorates, as well as between KRI and Federal Iraq. This means that people can travel freely across governorate borders 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 8 and 21 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 hour 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 the bear the costs.

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 can obtain a travel permit from the Ministry of Interior's Residency Department. However, there must be an agreement on this between the Residency Department and the relevant embassy. 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.
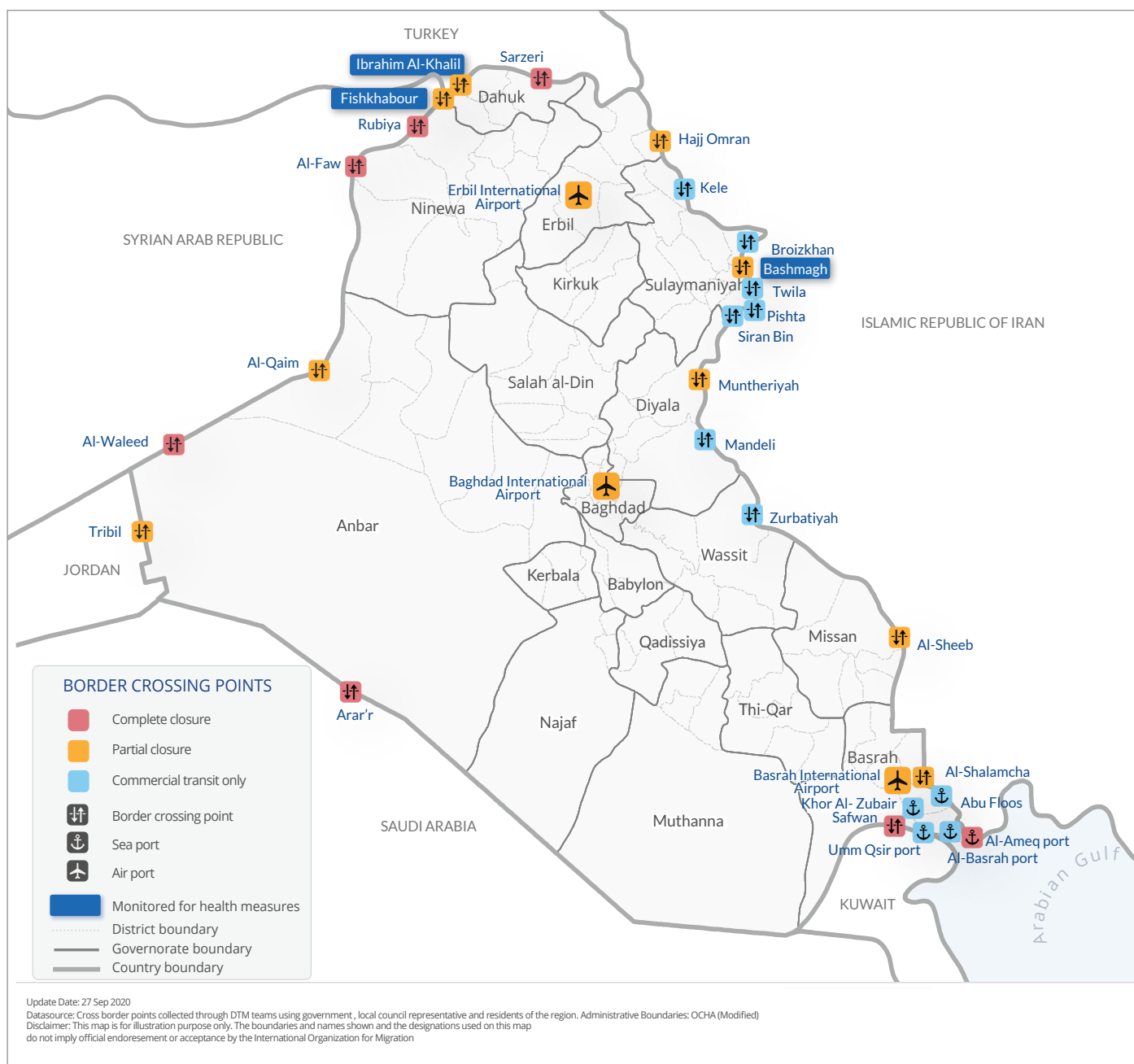
Rules surrounding the transport of goods across borders continue to differ across the country, with some authorities allowing any items to be imported or exported, while others only permit certain goods such as food or oil to be moved across. Consistent with previous months during COVID-19, some points of entry operate on certain business days only.

# OVERVIEW OF STATUSES OF POINTS OF ENTRY (PoEs)[1]

Map 1 displays the status of all PoEs that were partially closed to migrants or opened for commercial transit only across Iraq between 8 and 21 September. Changes to operational status from the previous period (25 August to 7 September) took place at Al Shalamcha and Al-Sheeb, which are now open for outgoing travellers after previously allowing commercial traffic only. Otherwise, three additional border crossings – Muntheriyah, Fishkhabour, and Hajj Omran – are now allowing incoming and outgoing travellers on some days during the week, after all previously permitting commercial traffic only to pass.[2]

Map 1. Status of border points as at 21 September 2020



## BORDER CROSSING POINTS

- Complete closure
- Partial closure
- Commercial transit only
- Border crossing point
- Sea port
- Air port
- Monitored for health measures
- District boundary
- Governorate boundary
- Country boundary

Update Date: 27 Sep 2020
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 endoresement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration

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1   Please refer to the Annex on page 6 for an overview of all statuses and restrictions imposed at PoEs between 8 and 21 September 2020.
2   The operational status of Fishkhabour has changed on several occasions between July and September. While it was opened for incoming and outgoing movements between 4 June and 30 July, a significant number of Syrian nationals crossed the border (around 5,232 KRI to Syria, and 225 from Syria to KRI).

## OVERVIEW OF HEALTH MEASURES AT POES

Information presented in this section was collected on 15 September 2020 at three crossings: Ibrahim Al-Khalil (Iraq-Turkey), Fishkhabour (Iraq-Syria), and Bashmagh (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 travellers in the week that data collection took place for this period – consistent with the previous two rounds. Also consistent with the last round, for incoming movements, foreigners need permission from the Ministry of Interior prior to entering, and all travellers residing in the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI) are required to take a COVID-19 test at the border point. For outgoing movements, Iraqis must obtain permission from the Ministry of Interior or a Turkish residence permit in order to exit; however, those visiting Turkey for educational, medical or business purposes are exempt from this rule and do not require permission before travelling. Additionally, Iranian nationals remain permitted to enter KRI at this crossing, and unlike the previous round they are now allowed to cross it to enter Turkey.

**Fishkhabour** was open between 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. for incoming and outgoing travellers on one day only (Tuesday 15 September) in the week that data collection took place, after being open for commercial traffic only in the week of the previous round. For incoming movements, only Syrians could enter, however they must be travelling for urgent reasons such as medical treatment or special occasions such as weddings or funerals, and travellers with dual citizenship (Iraq-Syria) are also permitted to enter. This border crossing was closed for outgoing movements in the week that data collection took place for this round.

**Bashmagh** was open for 24 hours for outgoing travellers (consistent with the last two rounds) in the week that data collection took place. However, for incoming travellers it now opens two hours later, at 8:00 a.m. and still closes at 11:00 p.m – aligning with the opening hours of the COVID-19 testing laboratory that is now on-site. As with the previous round, Iranians entering Iraq and Iraqis entering Iran must obtain permission from the Ministry of Interior prior to travelling; other nationalities are also permitted to enter Iran. In addition, all incoming travellers are required to take a COVID-19 test at the border point.

### Public Health Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

As with the first two rounds, all three monitored border crossing points have official public health SOPs on site, outlining measures that should be taken during the pandemic. Procedures covered in the documents at the three locations are mostly consistent with the first two rounds, covering preventative measures for staff, health screening, and registration of travellers, as well as processes for the notification of suspected cases and medical referrals for unwell travellers.

Fishkhabour's SOPs include information on managing flows of travellers to minimize the spread of the virus (as observed in the last round), and Ibrahim Al-Khalil's SOPs now feature this type of information (unlike the last round), while Bashmagh's SOP still does not feature it. Despite Fishkhabour and Ibrahim Al-Khalil now having SOPs detailing processes for managing flows, only the latter is actively implementing mechanisms to reduce overcrowding – including the use of additional caravans that have recently been brought to the crossing, and the appointment of new border staff to assist in minimizing the presence of large groups of people. Additionally, consistent with the last round, training on the facilitation of procedures is conducted for border point staff at Ibrahim Al-Khalil and Bashmagh, but not for those working at Fishkhabour.

### Health staffing

After increases in the number of staff at the border crossings between the first and second round, no changes were recorded during this third round: Bashmagh has 11, while Ibrahim Al-Khalil has 36 – including 30 at the incoming gate and 6 at the outgoing gate. As with the last round, no medical staff were present at Fishkhabour in the week of this round of data collection; however, four staff were previously recorded there in the first round. As with the previous round, most or all workers at the three crossings were recorded as using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to minimize transmission of the virus, including disposable gloves and surgical masks.

### Infection prevention and control

Infection prevention and control measures are unchanged from the previous round – Ibrahim Al-Khalil and Fishkhabour crossings were recorded as having a functional handwashing station containing chlorinated water or soap, while Bashmagh crossing still does not have one. Also consistent with the last round, supplies of surgical masks were observed at each of the crossings; they are made available to travellers suspected as having contracted COVID-19 as well as their travel companions.

### Health screening

In the last round all three monitored border crossing points had non-contact thermometers for temperature checking of travellers, as well as dedicated spaces for health screening (caravans, sheds, umbrellas, etc). Thermometers are still present at Fishkhabour and Bashmagh, however mandatory COVID-19 testing was introduced for all incoming travellers at Ibrahim Al-Khalil, and therefore thermometers are not used at this location. Bashmagh also still has a COVID-19 testing facility on-site, while Fishkhabour's testing facility is only operational when there is a significant number of travellers crossing through.

Additionally, as with the last round, none of the crossings have an isolation space for further evaluation of suspected cases amongst travellers. Otherwise, travellers crossing at Bashmagh (incoming

and outgoing) and Ibrahim Al-Khalil (incoming) are required to submit a health declaration form, but this is not the case at Fishkhabour.

Otherwise, after entering Iraq via Ibrahim Al-Khalil, travellers that are planning to stay in KRI are required to quarantine at home for 14 days – consistent with the last round. In addition, travellers entering KRI via Fishkhabour that are heading to Dahuk must quarantine at a hotel for 48 hours and take a COVID-19 test there, and those in transit must take a test at the airport prior to flying out, while those visiting other parts of KRI are to be escorted by security forces to their destination and take a test upon arrival. As with the last round, all travellers entering via Bashmagh must quarantine at home for 48 hours. There is still no rule in place requiring truck drivers to quarantine after carrying goods across the border

## Risk communication

No changes to risk communication were observed in this round compared with previous rounds. The presence of COVID-19 information products containing advice on symptoms and prevention strategies were still present Ibrahim Al-Khalil and Fishkhabour crossings. Additionally, there is still none of these information products present at Bashmagh. Consistent with previous rounds, enumerators at all three locations recorded

that staff do not provide this information directly to travellers.

## Registration

Processes for the registration of travellers are also unchanged from the previous round at each of the three crossings. At all three monitored border crossings, the names and contact details of all travellers are recorded in an electronic system, and all three crossings except Ibrahim Al-Khalil's outgoing area also use a paper-based logbook.

## Notification and referral system

No changes were recorded in this round to the notification/referral systems that are in place at the three crossings. An ambulance was observed at each of the three monitored border crossings, and at each of the locations border point staff refer incoming travellers suspected as having contracted COVID-19 to nearby health facilities. Travellers arriving to KRI through Bashmagh are referred to the hospital in Penjwen, and those arriving through Ibrahim Al-Khalil and Fishkhabour are referred to hospitals in Azadi, Kavin, or Azadi. Burn units within some hospitals are now being used to provide treatments for patients that have contracted COVID-19.

# ANNEX. STATUS OF IRAQ POINTS OF ENTRY (8 TO 21 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 | 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 | 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 | 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 | 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 | Commercial transit only | Incoming |

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

# METHODOLOGY

## MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS WITHIN IRAQ DUE TO COVID-19

Since April 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 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 Methodology Framework.

## MOVEMENT RESTRICTIONS AND HEALTH MEASURES AT BORDER CROSSING POIINTS

DTM Iraq collects data at border crossing points 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 15 September 2020 through face-to-face interviews with key informants (government and health employees) as well as direct observation at three border crossing points: Ibrahim Al-Khalil, bordering Turkey, Fishkhabour, bordering the Syrian Arab Republic and Bashmagh, bordering the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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