

# FINDINGS ROUND TWENTY-TWO – IRAQ

DATA COLLECTION PERIOD: MAY–AUGUST 2024

OCTOBER 2024

## CONTEXT

The Return Index is a tool designed to measure the severity of conditions in locations of return. Data collection for the **Return Index Round 22** took place during **May and August 2024** across **9 governorates, 39 districts and 2,206 locations** in Iraq. During this round, an additional 14 locations of return were assessed.

## RETURNEE POPULATION IN SEVERE CONDITIONS

- Out of the 2,206 return locations assessed, **446 present severe conditions and host 12 per cent of the returnee population, or 593,898 individuals.**
- **A decrease of 31,338 returnees** living in severe or poor conditions has been observed since the round collected in January–April 2024, when the share of returnees in severe conditions was 13 per cent (625,236 individuals).

## DETERIORATION OF CONDITIONS

The largest increases were recorded in **Salah al-Din Governorate** (8,718 individuals). The most noticeable increase was observed in **Balad** (6,198 individuals) and **Al-Fares** (4,296 individuals) districts, mainly due to the return of families from Ashti IDP camp in Sulaymaniyah to their place of origin located in these two districts, which are still experiencing severe or poor conditions.

- **Balad District** reports that residents remain concerned about violence, particularly ISIL attacks in Al-Duloeyah, Al-Eshaqi, Markaz Al-Balad and Yathreb subdistricts with some residents still blocked from returning. Additionally, businesses are recovering slowly and some houses are destroyed and not yet reconstructed in Al-Eshaqi, Markaz Al-Balad and Yathreb subdistricts.
  - Residents in Al-Eshaqi and Markaz Al-Balad subdistricts are still experiencing limited access to employment and slow recovery of agriculture. Moreover, concerns about uncleared mines and explosives are ongoing in Al-Eshaqi subdistrict, along with unresolved conflicts that need attention to prevent future violence, though minimal efforts are being made to address these conflicts in Markaz Al-Balad subdistrict, which also faces a lack of government services provision and electricity.
  - Al-Eshaqi and Yathreb subdistricts continue to suffer from illegal occupation of some properties and the presence of armed groups other than local security forces at checkpoints, which raises concerns among residents about the potential for harassment.
- **Al-Fares District** keeps suffering from limited access to employment, slow recovery of agriculture and business with a lack of government services provision and electricity in Al-Dujeel Centre subdistrict. Additionally, some residents are still blocked from returning. Concerns about violence are also ongoing, particularly ISIL attacks and the presence of armed groups, other than local security forces at checkpoints, which raises concerns among residents about the potential for harassment.

## IMPROVEMENT OF CONDITIONS

The largest decrease in the number of returnees living in severe conditions was recorded in **Ninewa Governorate (30,096 individuals)**, followed by **Anbar (7,230 individuals)** and **Diyala (3,018 individuals)** governorates.

- The decrease in **Ninewa Governorate** was mainly observed in **Sinjar District** (17,088 individuals), mostly due to a reconciliation initiative that was launched in August upon the recommendation of the Supreme Religious Authority and the Prime Minister’s office in Al-Shamal subdistrict between the Al-Juhash tribe and the Yazidi community. This initiative aimed to prevent further tensions and conflicts in the region; it significantly improved daily life and strengthened peaceful relations in Al-Shamal and Qaeyrrawan subdistricts, where most residents feel safe carrying out daily activities. Furthermore, following the return of the families from camps, **Sinjar District** started experiencing economic improvements that have created more job opportunities in Al-Shamal, Markaz Sinjar and Qaeyrrawan subdistricts, benefiting the local community. Additionally, some destroyed houses in Markaz Sinjar subdistrict have been reconstructed, contributing to the recovery of the area.
  - However, **Sinjar District** keeps suffering from slow recovery of business, bad provision of governmental public services and insufficient provision of water. Residents are still concerned about possible ISIL attacks in Al-Shamal, Markaz Sinjar and Qaeyrrawan subdistricts. Recovery of agriculture is slow in Al-Shamal and Qaeyrrawan subdistricts and electricity provision is insufficient in Al-Shamal subdistrict; as well, tensions need to be resolved to prevent future violence in Markaz Sinjar subdistrict.
- The improvement in **Anbar Governorate** was observed in **Heet District** as residents feel safer with the area having been cleared of mines and explosives by specialized security forces in Al-Forat and Markaz Heet subdistricts. Furthermore, owners of some of the destroyed houses have rebuilt them in Al-Forat and Markaz Heet subdistricts.
  - Nevertheless, the security situation remains poor in **Heet District**, with major concerns about possible ISIL attacks and cases of blocked returns. Armed groups other than local security forces are still present at checkpoints, which raises concerns among residents about the potential for harassment.
- In **Diyala Governorate**, the decrease was recorded in **Khanaqin District**, mainly due to the reconstruction of destroyed houses by their owners in As-Saadia and Jalula subdistricts.
  - Additionally, there is poor provision in governmental services and insufficient water supply in Markaz Khanaqin subdistrict. **Khanaqin District** continues to report safety and security concerns, as residents remain concerned about possible ISIL attacks. Furthermore, the presence of armed groups other than local security forces at checkpoints raises concerns among residents about the potential for harassment.

## METHODOLOGY

The Return Index is based on 16 indicators across two domains: (1) livelihoods and basic services, and (2) social cohesion and safety perceptions. A regression model is used to assess the impact of each of the indicators in facilitating or preventing returns and to calculate scores. The scores of each domain and overall index are grouped into three categories: low, medium and high severity of living conditions. For more information on the methodology, please refer to the [Methodological Overview](#).

Figure 1. Proportion and number of returnees by category of severity

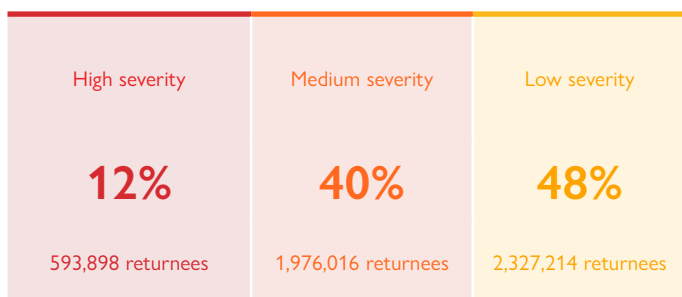


Table 1. Number of returnees and locations per governorate by category of severity

Governorate	HIGH		MEDIUM		LOW		TOTAL	
	No. of returnees	No. of locations	No. of returnees	No. of locations	No. of returnees	No. of locations	No. of returnees	No. of locations
Anbar	57,558	14	720,078	201	773,118	116	1,550,754	331
Babylon	2,160	2					2,160	2
Baghdad	972	5	14,754	16	80,022	101	95,748	122
Dahuk					744	1	744	1
Diyala	49,590	47	159,468	121	32,772	57	241,830	225
Erbil	4,890	15	12,288	30	46,266	24	63,444	69
Kirkuk	2,526	13	67,296	68	122,106	119	191,928	200
Ninewa	259,362	270	641,178	479	1,074,006	260	1,974,546	1,009
Salah al-Din	216,840	80	360,954	106	198,180	61	775,974	247
Total	593,898	446	1,976,016	1,021	2,327,214	739	4,897,128	2,206

GOVERNORATE HOTSPOTS OF SEVERITY

Subdistricts are classified as 'hotspots' if they score highly in terms of severity on at least one of the two scales (either livelihoods and basic services, or safety and social cohesion) or if they score medium in terms of severity but also host relatively large numbers of returnees, at least 60,000 returnees in a subdistrict.

Thirty-one hotspots were identified across five governorates in this round. The same number of hotspots were reported in the round collected in January – April 2024.

**Markaz Al-Ba'aj subdistrict in Al-Ba'aj District, Ninewa Governorate** was removed from the hotspot list in this round, mainly because returnees have been allowed to return to some locations that were previously blocked in the last round, after having obtained security clearance to return from the Government of Iraq.

**Markaz Tikrit subdistrict in Tikrit District, Salah al-Din Governorate** was added to the hotspot list in this round due to the worsening of conditions, driven by a decrease in electricity supply hours because of the hot weather, resulting in reduced water supply from water projects.

SALAH AL-DIN: 649,878 returnees in hotspots

- Al-Amerli
- Al-Dujeel Center
- Al-Eshaqi
- Al-Moatassem
- Al-Siniya
- Markaz Al-Balad
- Markaz Al-Daur
- Markaz Al-Shirqat
- Markaz Baiji
- Markaz Samarra
- Markaz Tikrit
- Suleiman Beg
- Yathreb

NINEWA: 586,980 returnees in hotspots

- Al-Qahtaniya
- Al-Qayara
- Al-Shamal
- Ayadiya
- Hamam al Aleel
- Markaz Sinjar
- Markaz Telfar
- Qaeyrrawan
- Zummar

ANBAR: 401,826 returnees in hotspots

- Al-Amirya
- Al-Forat
- Al-Garma
- Husaibah Al-Sharqiah
- Markaz Al-Ka'im
- Markaz Heet

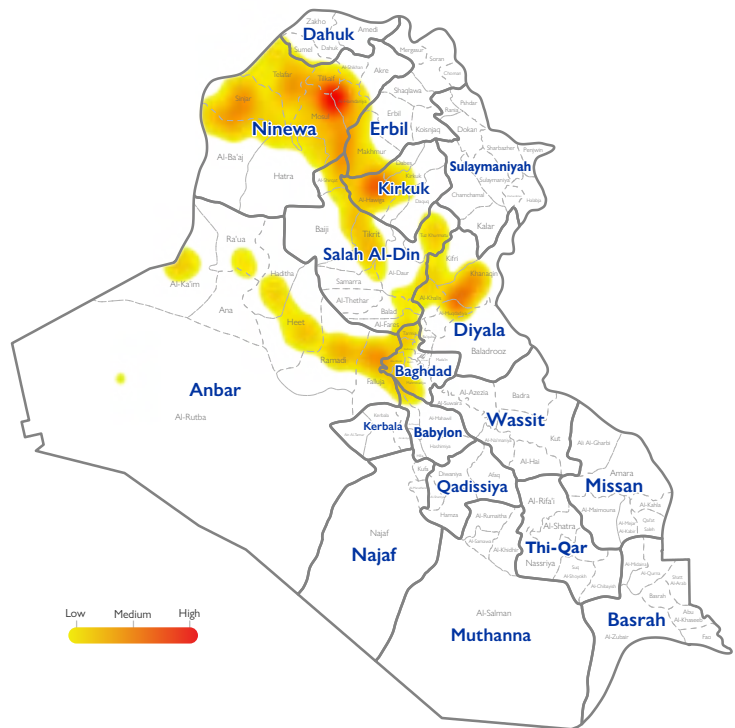
DIYALA: 84,084 returnees in hotspots

- Jalula
- Qara Tabe

BABYLON: 2,160 returnees in hotspots

- Al-Iskandaria

Map 1. Returnee population density by overall severity score



This map is for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM. The map shows conditions of severity based on population size and severity score of each assessed location. The darker colours indicate a larger concentration of families living in severe conditions of return, while the brighter colours indicate lower severity conditions or areas with low levels of returns.

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IOM Iraq thanks the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) for its continued support.

