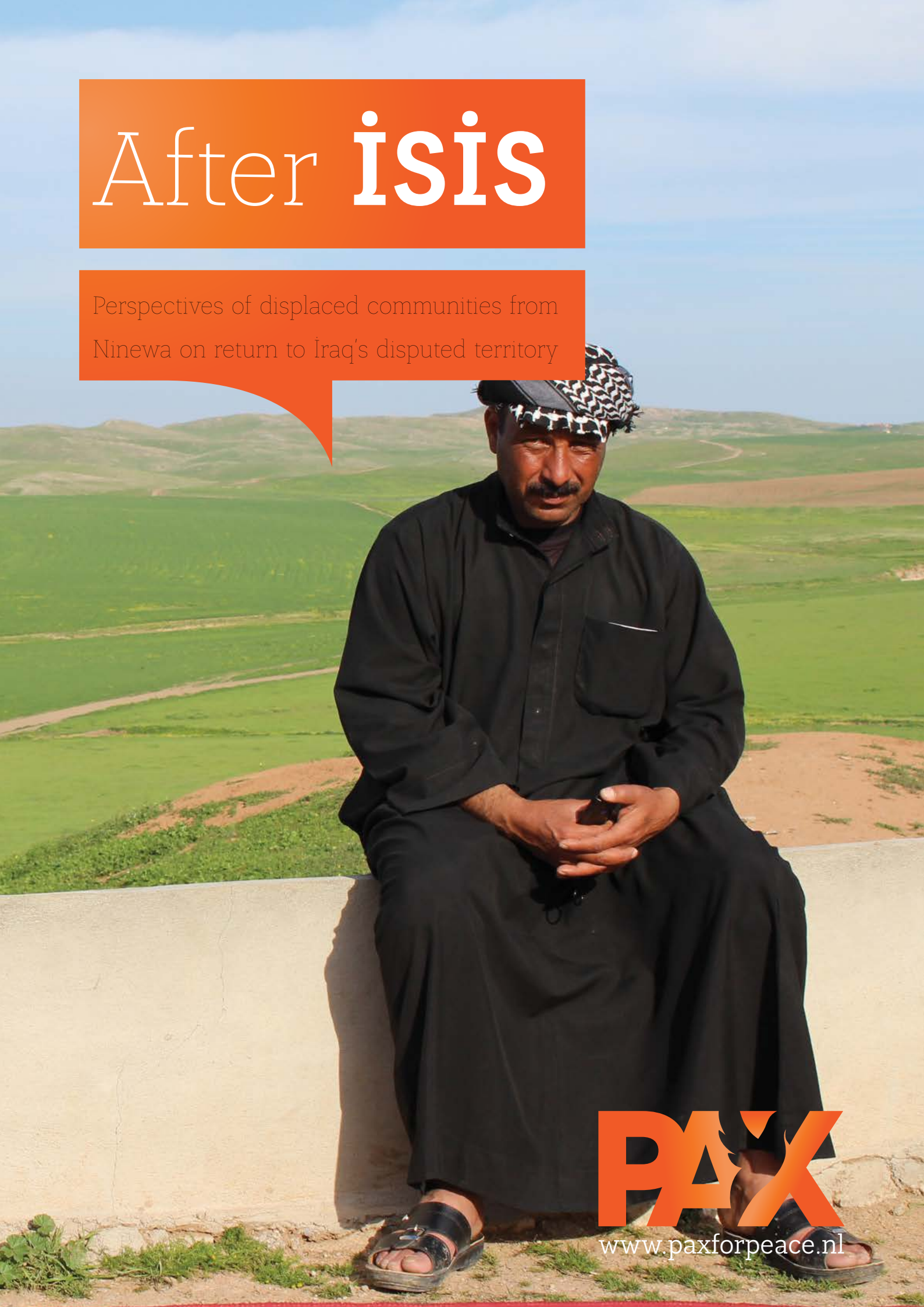
After ISIS

Perspectives of displaced communities from Ninewa on return to Iraq's disputed territory



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Main researcher: Dr Hewa Haji Khedir, Salaheddin University Erbil, Kurdish Region-Iraq
Research facilitation: Abdallah Khalid and Peshkawt Adham, Al Mesala Organization for Human Resource Development, Erbil, Kurdish Region-Iraq
Research Management: Sam van Vliet and Thirsa de Vries, PAX, the Netherlands / Iraq
English editing: Ashraf Ibrahim, London, United Kingdom
Design: Het IJzeren Gordijn, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
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For further information please contact:
PAX
PO Box 19318
3501 DH Utrecht
The Netherlands

Phone: +31 (0)30 233 33 46
E-mail: vanvliet@paxforpeace.nl

www.paxforpeace.nl
www.weareallcitizens.org

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Abbreviations

CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DIBS	Disputed Internal Boundaries
GoI	Government of Iraq
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organizations
IOM	International Organization of Migration
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, (in Arabic known as Daesh (ad-Dawlah al-Islāmiyah fīl-ʿIrāq wash-Shām)
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party (Kurdish: Partiya Demokrata Kurdistan)
KRI	Kurdistan Region-Iraq
KRG	Kurdistan Region Government (Kurdish: Hikumeti Heremi Kurdistan)
NPC	Ninewa Provincial Council
Peshmerga	Literally ‘one who confronts death’, referring to the military forces of KRI
PKK	Kurdistan Workers’ Party (Kurdish: Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan)
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (Kurdish: Yekêtiy Nişţîmaniy Kurdistan)
UN	United Nations
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq

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Executive Summary

Recently, military developments and international involvement have resulted in İSİS retreating from some areas previously under its control in İraq. As these areas become accessible again, İDP communities struggle to return while the potential for renewed conflict remains alarmingly high. İn order to understand current conflict dynamics and prepare for conflict sensitive peace building programs responding to realities on the ground, PAX has commissioned a qualitative research among Ninewa İDP communities in the Kurdish Region of İraq. The perceptions of İDP communities on return and insights from stakeholders on community relations in a post İSİS Ninewa have been used as a basis for analysis in this report.

Ninewa Governorate, formerly known as Mosul Governorate, is wedged between Kurdish northern Iraq and Arabic Central Iraq. Large areas are part of the Disputed Internal Boundaries (DIBs) areas, contested between the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) and the Government of Iraq (GoI). This area is home to the majority of Iraq's minority groups, and is the most diverse region in the country. It is home to Christians of various denominations, Yazidis, Shabak, Turkmen, Kaka'is, Kurds and Arabs. Historically, the area has been the subject of Saddam Hussein's Arabization policies, and Arab tribes were relocated to this area to change its demographic composition. This history of demographic engineering continues to fuel land disputes today and has contributed to marginalization, lack of administrative clarity and weak social cohesion, which have been exacerbated in the years following the removal of the Saddam regime in 2003 and have ultimately paved the way for ISIS taking control in 2014.

Although IDP communities report tolerable relations between their communities prior to ISIS, the social fabric in the area is extremely fragile. A closer look reveals that multiple factors, not easily expressed by civilians in a repressive climate, are feeding tense inter-community grievances.

This **history** of demographic engineering [...] has **ultimately** paved the way for İSİS **taking control** in 2014

Ninewa's history of displacement shows a trend of uprooting civilian populations, either as a result of strategic government policies, as a consequence of the persecution of minorities or following economic incentives. The multiple displacements of minorities from the city of Mosul to other areas in Ninewa or to the Kurdistan Region-Iraq (KRI) served as a prelude to the almost complete migration of minorities out of Ninewa following the control of ISIS in June 2014.

Impacts of ISIS on the future of Ninewa's social fabric are complicated and they extend far beyond physical displacement of people from the area. Among IDP communities, apart from the general polarization between minorities and Kurds vis-à-vis Sunni Arabs (victims vs. perpetrators), many divisions exist between minorities and even within the various minority communities. This context poses a real challenge for a peaceful return and possibilities for social cohesion in Ninewa Governorate after ISIS.

IDP communities from Ninewa are highly disillusioned by the lack of protection by either the Iraqi Army or the Kurdish *Peshmerga*. The local authorities of Ninewa, the Governorate and Provincial Council, have been displaced to Erbil, Dohuk or Bagdad and prove unable to influence military developments on the ground or to provide adequate services in the IDP camps. For Ninewa communities, the national government in Bagdad is increasingly absent. They are instead depending on support within their own networks, on religious and ethnic lines. In this context, and in the absence of clear prospects for return, IDP communities look for resettlement abroad or to developing their own militias on religious or ethnic basis. This poses a serious threat to return scenarios, may facilitate revenge, and further fuelling renewed conflict. Division and militarization of Ninewa communities is also a result of a crisis of leadership within the political process. While most political leaders of Ninewa communities are following

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pro-Erbil (Kurdish), pro-Baghdad (central Iraq) or international agendas, Sunni leaders struggle to provide a strong alternative for ISIS. Many Ba'ath officials, who were removed from power since 2003, have supported waves of anti-government protests and ultimately ISIS. Accordingly, some stakeholders argue that a review of the de-baathification policy is essential for peace and stability in Ninewa.

Since last year, the international military support for the Peshmerga in their struggle against ISIS is favoring the Kurds in the DIBS areas, and further polarizing the volatile situation. Assessments and facts on the ground show that KRG has consolidated its position in Ninewa, while an official settlement on the status of the DIBs remains absent. Although many Arab IDPs from all over Iraq have found safe refuge in KRI, Sunni IDP communities from Ninewa are fearful from being portrayed as ISIS supporters. In some areas which have been recaptured by Peshmerga from ISIS, some worrying incidents have been reported of displacement of Arab Sunni communities and return of predominantly Kurdish IDPs. If these incidents turn into a trend, this may severely affect peaceful return scenarios to Ninewa.

According to International Humanitarian Law, civilians do not only have the right to seek safety in another part of a country, they are also legally entitled to protection against forcible return or resettlement. While a settlement of the DIBS issue is vital for post ISIS political and social reconstruction, the new authorities in Ninewa, as well as intervening international agencies, should carefully design conflict sensitive programming in order to contribute to post conflict resolution and the peaceful return of all IDPs.

View of Zummar district in Ninewa, considered 'newly accesible' after Peshmerga pushed out ISIS forces in the end of 2014.

PAX is highly concerned about the lack of a comprehensive peacebuilding strategy complementing military operations in Iraq. For such a peacebuilding strategy to be effective, planning should be longterm and responding to the realities and specific local histories on the ground. For the case of Ninewa, the return of all displaced communities after conflict is essential for restructuring the social fabric and building fundaments for peace and reconciliation.

Recommendations

TO THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ, THE KURDISH REGIONAL GOVERNMENT AND THE NINEWA GOVERNORATE:

In the short term

- Publicly send strong messages against retaliation by armed forces and linked armed groups and urge protection of all civilians and their property in areas re-conquered from ISIS;
- Ensure a clear and effective transitional justice system in place to be applied on the ground in areas re-conquered from ISIS in order to prevent non-state armed forces and/or armed groups linked to the government taking justice into their own hands, which includes the legal prosecution of acts of retaliation by such groups;
- Ensure the right of return for all recently displaced communities, regardless of their political, ethnic or religious background, while protecting the safety of civilians who stayed under ISIS control.

In the long term

- Agree on an inclusive negotiating process to reach a solution on the Disputed Internal Boundaries (DIBs), including the right of return for all previously displaced communities, in line with article 140 of the Iraqi constitution;
- Ensure inclusive governance and inclusive security for all communities in Ninewa Governorate in line with article 125 of the Iraqi constitution;
- Build the capacity, responsiveness and relevance of the Governorate and the Provincial Council of Ninewa through investment in public services, employment and security reform. Security reform should particularly include a code of conduct and clear mandates for local police and army;
- Actively plan and promote a post-ISIS strategy for Mosul, focusing on inclusive governance and security, integration of IDPs and demilitarization of communities and non-state armed groups;
- Review and amend de-baathification policies to facilitate integration of non-criminal former Baath members into formal institutions;

TO COUNTRIES IN THE GLOBAL COALITION TO COUNTER ISIS (THE COALITION):

- Require that the Government of Iraq (GoI), the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), and linked armed forces establish meaningful measures to prevent retaliation by armed groups through mechanisms facilitating transitional justice and reparation payments;

- Demand that the GoI and the KRG ensure the right of return for all recently displaced communities in areas re-captured from ISIS, while protecting the safety of civilians who stayed under ISIS control;

- Use the Coalition's leverage to bring the GoI, the KRG, and all relevant local stakeholders to the negotiation table to agree on a process for the two governments to find a solution on the DIBs, in particular for Ninewa Governorate. This should be an inclusive process, with the participation of women, representatives from all relevant minorities, and internally displaced persons (IDP) communities in these areas guaranteed;

- Refrain from arming communities or militias on an exclusively religious or ethnic basis;

- Encourage the GoI to review de-baathification policies and facilitate integration of non-criminal former Ba'ath members into formal institutions.

TO THE COALITION WORKING GROUP ON STABILIZATION, CHAIRED BY GERMANY AND THE UAE:

- Develop plans and measures to prevent revenge operations and encourage the secure return of IDPs to areas re-conquered from ISIS;

- Invest in the (re)establishment of legitimate and responsive local authorities in areas re-conquered from ISIS.

TO THE EUROPEAN UNION:

- Building upon the EU Regional Strategy for Syria and Iraq, the EU should prioritize inclusive governance, inclusive security and inclusive citizenship in Iraq;

- Use the financial and political leverage to ensure conflict-sensitive implementation of humanitarian and development programming in the areas re-captured from ISIS in Iraq, taking into account the risks of retaliation, gender aspects and context of various waves of displacement;

- Coordinate with UNAMI, relevant UN agencies and the Coalition, in particular the Working group on Stabilization, to develop an inclusive peace building plan for the Ninewa governorate.

TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL:

- When its mandate is renewed, task UNAMI with developing inclusive peace building plans for areas/governorates currently under ISIS control, and encourage UNAMI to do so in coordination with relevant UN agencies as well as the EU, the Coalition and all relevant local stakeholders, including local civil society.

TO UNAMI AND UN AGENCIES IN IRAQ:

- Use political leverage at all levels to urge the GoI and KRG to enter a dialogue on a settlement of the DIBs;
- Invest in bottom up-reconciliation at the local level in Ninewa, rather than central planning at the national level, to ensure effectiveness and results on the ground.

TO TURKEY AND IRAN:

- Support the GoI, the KRG, and linked armed forces to establish meaningful measures to prevent retaliation by armed groups through mechanisms facilitating transitional justice and compensation;
- Refrain from arming or financially supporting militias on an exclusively religious or ethnic basis;
- Use political leverage to push for a settlement between the GoI and KRG on the DIBs, particularly in Ninewa.

Research objective

The overall objectives of this research are:

- To assess demographic dynamics and intercommunity relations in the Ninewa Governorate before and after the crisis;
- To analyze vital program requirements for post conflict resolution and peaceful dialogue to facilitate return for IDPs and map conflict factors after return;
- To include IDP narratives on return scenarios and their considerations for peace and security in a post conflict setting;
- To obtain recommendations and strategic advocacy input for local governance, peace building and IDP programming in Ninewa and policy guidelines for national and international lobbying and advocacy.

Research methodology

Secondary data analysis (Chapter I): Desk review of the Iraq population censuses, UN and INGO reports and assessments on IDPs, conflict mapping and humanitarian response, as well as academic analysis of Ninewa and the DIBs areas. The lack of reliable on demographic statistics in Iraq and the heightened political sensitivities related to the absence of a settlement regarding the Disputed Internal Boundaries have affected the scope of this research.

Focus-group Interviews (Chapter II): A total of 21 focus group interviews were conducted with Ninewa IDP communities in Erbil and Dohuk governorates (for exact locations, see Appendix 1; for list of questions, see Appendix 2) between the 28th of February and the 19th of March, 2015. Respondents in the focus group discussions were split according to religious/ethnic background and gender (in separate women and men groups).

Many years of repressive and authoritarian rule in Iraq continue to undermine individuals' comfort with speaking out freely on intercommunity tensions. Secondly, the respondents were interviewed in a setting of displacement and dependence on the support of the KRG and international actors. Thirdly, it should be noted that the place of origin of the respondents differed in terms of controlling authority prior to ISIS control, levels of service provision, and demographic composition. Other local variations in Ninewa Governorate, related to the rural-urban split, and economic and social characteristics, have also influenced the outcome. Finally, this research has not included the perceptions of IDPs or other civilians remaining in ISIS controlled areas, nor Ninewa communities displaced to other governorates of Iraq. Despite these limitations, the research was contextualized following many consultations with relevant stakeholders and serves to highlight the value of this qualitative data as a starting point for analysis. Apart from addressing politicians, policy and opinion makers, this report aims to give a voice to the many people affected by multiple crises in Iraq: citizens displaced in their own country.

Stakeholders and Key Informant Interviews (Chapter III): Numerous individual interviews were conducted with representatives of ethnic and religious minorities in Ninewa Governorate, members of the Iraqi and Kurdish parliaments, experts, and staff members of UN agencies and INGOs. Following the collection of original data during March and April, various consultative sessions were conducted in the beginning of May, where data was presented to stakeholders and their feedback contributing to the report's finalization.♦

Executive Summary Arabic

الملخص التنفيذي

أدت التطورات العسكرية والمشاركة العسكرية الدولية إلى انسحاب تنظيم داعش من بعض المناطق التي كان يسيطر عليها في العراق. ومع استعادة القدرة على دخول هذه المناطق، تواجه تجمعات النازحين صعوبات وعقبات عدة في سبيل العودة، في ضوء الاحتمالات القوية بتجدد النزاع المسلح. ومن أجل فهم ديناميات الصراع الحالية، والتجهيز لبرامج بناء سلام تتميز بالحساسية تجاه طبيعة النزاع وتستجيب للواقع على الأرض، بادرت مؤسسة PAX بتكليف الخبراء بإجراء دراسة تقييم نوعي في أوساط المجموعات من مختلف الجماعات الدينية والعرقية التي نزحت من محافظة نينوى إلى إقليم كردستان العراق. وتقوم تحليلات هذا التقرير على أساس تصورات وآراء الجماعات النازحة عن إمكانيات العودة إلى ديارها، ونظرة مختلف الأطراف المعنية تجاه العلاقات بين مختلف الجماعات الدينية والعرقية في محافظة نينوى بعد رحيل داعش.

جغرافياً، تنحصر محافظة نينوى، التي كانت تعرف باسم محافظة الموصل، بين المناطق الكردية بشمال العراق والمناطق العربية بوسط العراق. وتدخل مساحات شاسعة من نينوى ضمن مناطق الحدود الداخلية المتنازعة بين حكومة إقليم كردستان وحكومة العراق. وهذه المنطقة هي موطن غالبية الأقليات في العراق، وتعدّ أكثر مناطق البلاد تنوعاً، إذ أنها موطن للمسيحيين من مختلف الطوائف، واليزيديين والشبك والتركمان والكاكائيين والأكراد والعرب، وقد تعرضت المنطقة في التاريخ الحديث لسياسات التعريب التي فرضها صدام حسين، وتم نقل القبائل العربية إلى هذه المنطقة بغرض تغيير تركيبتها السكانية. وقد أدت تركة الهندسة الديموغرافية إلى التأجيج المتواصل لنار النزاعات على الأرض إلى يومنا هذا، وساهمت في تفشي ظاهرة التهميش، والخلط والإبهام في خطوط السلطة الإدارية، وهشاشة التماسك الاجتماعي، وكلها ظواهر تفاقمت في السنوات التي أعقبت الإطاحة بنظام صدام حسين عام 2003، ومهدت الطريق في نهاية المطاف لنجاح تنظيم داعش في بسط سيطرته على المنطقة في عام 2014.

على الرغم من أن المشاركين من مختلف الجماعات النازحة أفادوا بأن العلاقات بينها كانت مقبولة قبل ظهور تنظيم داعش، فإن النسيج الاجتماعي في المنطقة لا يزال هشاً للغاية. وبتدقيق النظر نجد عدة عوامل تغذي التوترات والمظالم بين هذه الجماعات، رغم أنها عوامل يصعب على المدنيين التعبير عنها بحرية في ظل بيئة القمع التي طالما وسمت العراق. ويستدل من تاريخ النزوح في نينوى على نمط مستمر لاقتلاع السكان المدنيين من ديارهم، إما بتنفيذ السياسات الحكومية الاستراتيجية، أو من جراء اضطهاد الأقليات، أو نتيجة للحوافز الاقتصادية. وقد كانت عمليات النزوح المتعددة للأقليات من مدينة الموصل إلى مناطق أخرى في محافظة نينوى أو إلى إقليم كردستان العراق بمثابة التوطئة لهجرة الأقليات شبه الكاملة من نينوى إثر سيطرة تنظيم داعش عليها في حزيران/يونيو من عام 2014.

لتنظيم داعش عواقب وتبعات معقدة على مستقبل النسيج الاجتماعي في نينوى، وهي عواقب تتجاوز نزوح الناس من المنطقة، حيث تنتشر الانقسامات بين مختلف الأقليات النازحة، بل وداخل الجماعة الواحدة، بالإضافة إلى حالة الاستقطاب العام بين الأقليات والأكراد من جهة، والعرب السنة من جهة أخرى (قطبية الضحية والجلاد). ويشكل هذا السياق الشائك تحدياً جدياً لفرص العودة السلمية والتماسك الاجتماعي في محافظة نينوى بعد رحيل داعش.

تشعر الجماعات الدينية والعرقية النازحة من محافظة نينوى بخيبة أمل شديدة من جراء انعدام الحماية لهم، سواء من قبل الجيش العراقي أو قوات البيشمركة الكردية. كما أن السلطات المحلية، ومجلس محافظة نينوى نزحت إلى أربيل ودهوك وبغداد، والواضح أنها لا تستطيع التأثير على التطورات العسكرية الميدانية أو توفير الخدمات الملائمة في مخيمات النازحين. كذلك ترى مختلف الجماعات الدينية والعرقية في نينوى أن الحكومة العراقية في بغداد باتت غائبة على نحو متزايد، وقد باتت هذه الجماعات تعتمد على الدعم من شبكة علاقاتها

الداخلية. وفي هذا السياق، ونظراً لغياب آفاق واضحة للعودة، تأمل الجماعات النازحة أن توطّن في الخارج أو أن تؤسس ميليشيات خاصة بها على أسس دينية وعرقية، مما يطرح تهديداً خطيراً لاحتمالات العودة، إذ أن هذه الميليشيات قد تيسر أعمال الانتقام وتغذو وقوداً للنزاع المتجدد.

يضاف إلى ما تقدم أن انقسام وعسكرة مختلف أقليات وجماعات نينوى يعود أيضاً إلى أزمة القيادة في العملية السياسية. ففي حين أن معظم القادة السياسيين في جاليات نينوى يتبعون أجندات مؤيدة لإربيل (كردية) أو موالية لبغداد (وسط العراق) أو دولية، فإن زعماء السنة يجدون صعوبة في تقديم بديل قوي لتنظيم داعش في الوسط السني. فالعديد من مسؤولي حزب البعث، الذين أخرجوا من السلطة منذ عام 2003، دعموا موجات الاحتجاج المناهضة لحكومة بغداد، وفي نهاية المطاف دعموا تنظيم داعش. وفي ضوء ذلك، تنادي بعض الأطراف المعنية بإعادة النظر في سياسة اجتثاث البعث باعتبار ذلك خطوة ضرورية لإحلال السلام والاستقرار في محافظة نينوى.

منذ العام الماضي، أصبح الدعم العسكري الدولي للبيشمركة في نضالهم ضد تنظيم داعش يعطي الأكراد ميزة في مناطق الحدود الداخلية المتنازعة، ويزيد الاستقطاب في هذه الظروف الحرجة. وتشير التقديرات والحقائق على الأرض إلى أن حكومة إقليم كردستان قد عززت مواقعها في نينوى في غياب تسوية رسمية لمشكلة المناطق المتنازعة. وعلى الرغم من أن أعداداً كبيرة من النازحين العرب الآتين من مختلف أنحاء العراق قد وجدوا ملاذاً آمناً في إقليم كردستان العراق، فإن النازحين السنة من محافظة نينوى يخشون من اتهامهم بمناصرة تنظيم داعش، كما ظهرت تقارير مقلقة من بعض المناطق التي حررتها قوات البشمركة من أيدي داعش، عن حالات تهجير للعرب السنة، وكذلك فإن الأكراد شكّلوا أغلبية النازحين العائدين إلى هذه المناطق. وإذا انتشرت هذه الحالات وباتت ظاهرة واسعة، فإنها قد تضر ضرراً شديداً بإمكانات العودة السلمية إلى نينوى.

وفقا للقانون الدولي الإنساني، فإن المدنيين يتمتعون ليس فقط بحق التماس السلامة في موقع آخر داخل بلدهم، بل لهم أيضاً الحق القانوني في حمايتهم ضد العودة القسرية أو التوطين في مناطق غير مواطنهم الأصلية. وفي حين أن تسوية قضية الحدود الداخلية المتنازعة يعدّ شرطاً ضرورياً لإعادة الاعمار السياسي والاجتماعي بعد إجلاء تنظيم داعش من المنطقة، فإن السلطات الجديدة في محافظة نينوى، وكذلك الوكالات الدولية المتدخلة ، يجب أن تتوخى العناية في إعداد البرامج الحساسة لطبيعة النزاع إن كان لها أن تسهم في إيجاد تسوية بعد النزاع وعودة جميع النازحين داخلياً بشكل سلمي.

وتشعر مؤسسة PAX بقلق بالغ إزاء غياب استراتيجية بناء سلام شاملة لمواكبة العمليات العسكرية في العراق. إن نجاح وفعالية استراتيجية بناء السلام يستدعي التخطيط الذي يراعي الأجل الطويل ويستجيب للواقع على الأرض وللخصوصيات التاريخية في المنطقة. وفي حالة نينوى تحديداً، فإن عودة جميع جاليات النازحين بعد انتهاء النزاع ستكون ضرورية لإعادة بناء النسيج الاجتماعي وإرساء دعائم السلام والمصالحة.

التوصيات

إلى حكومة العراق وحكومة إقليم كردستان ومحافظة نينوى:

في الأجل القصير

- إطلاق رسائل علنية قوية برفض الانتقام على أيدي القوات المسلحة، والجماعات المسلحة المرتبطة بها، والحث على حماية جميع المدنيين وممتلكاتهم في المناطق التي يتم تحريرها من تنظيم داعش.

- ضمان إعداد نظام للعدالة الانتقالية يتميز بالوضوح والفعالية ليتم تطبيقه على الأرض في المناطق المستعادة من تنظيم داعش بغرض منع القوى المسلحة غير التابعة للدولة و/أو الجماعات المسلحة المرتبطة بالحكومة، من أخذ العدالة بيدها، على أن يشمل ذلك النظام الملاحقة القانونية لمرتكبي الأعمال الانتقامية من تلك الجماعات.

- ضمان حق العودة لجميع الجماعات النازحة في الفترة، بغض النظر عن خلفياتها السياسية أو العرقية أو الدينية، مع حماية أمن المدنيين الذين بقوا في المناطق الخاضعة لسيطرة تنظيم داعش.

في الأجل الطويل

- الاتفاق على عملية تفاوض تشمل الجميع من أجل التوصل إلى حل بشأن الحدود الداخلية المتنازعة، بما في ذلك حق العودة لجميع الطوائف التي نزحت في السابق، بما يتفق مع المادة 140 من الدستور العراقي.

- ضمان أن ترتيبات الحوكمة والأمن تشمل جميع الجماعات الدينية والعرقية في محافظة نينوى وفقاً للمادة 125 من الدستور العراقي.

- بناء القدرات وتعزيز دور وسرعة الاستجابة سلطات المحافظة ومجلسها في نينوى، من خلال الاستثمار في الخدمات العامة وفرص العمل وإصلاح النظام الأمني. ويجب أن تشمل الإصلاحات الأمنية، على وجه الخصوص، وضع مدونة لقواعد السلوك وصلاحيات واضحة للشرطة المحلية والجيش.

- بذل الجهود النشطة لتخطيط وتعزيز استراتيجية للموصل ما بعد داعش، مع التركيز على ترتيبات الحوكمة والأمن الشاملة للجميع، وإدماج النازحين، ونزع سلاح مختلف الجاليات والمجموعات المسلحة غير التابعة للدولة.

- مراجعة وتعديل سياسات اجتثاث البعث لتسهيل دمج أعضاء حزب البعث السابقين ممن لم يرتكبوا الجرائم في المؤسسات الرسمية.

إلى بلدان التحالف الدولي لمكافحة تنظيم داعش (التحالف):

- اشتراط أن تضع حكومة العراق وحكومة إقليم كردستان والقوات المسلحة المرتبطة بهما تدابير مجدية لمنع الأعمال الانتقامية بواسطة الجماعات المسلحة من خلال تطبيق الآليات الكفيلة بتسهيل تحقيق العدالة الانتقالية ودفع التعويضات.

- مطالبة الحكومة العراقية وحكومة إقليم كردستان بضمان حق العودة لجميع الجماعات الدينية والعرقية التي نزحت مؤخراً إلى المناطق المستعادة من تنظيم داعش، مع حماية أمن المدنيين الذين بقوا تحت سيطرة تنظيم داعش.

- استخدام نفوذ التحالف من أجل إعادة الحكومة العراقية وحكومة إقليم كردستان، وجميع الأطراف المحلية المعنية، إلى طاولة المفاوضات للاتفاق على آلية تجد من خلالها الحكومتان حلاً لمشكلة الحدود الداخلية المتنازعة، ولا سيما في محافظة نينوى. وينبغي أن تكون هذه الآلية شاملة للجميع، وتضمن مشاركة المرأة وممثلين عن جميع الأقليات ذات الصلة وجاليات النازحين داخلياً في هذه المناطق.

- الامتناع عن تسليح الجاليات أو الميليشيات على أساس ديني أو إثني حصراً.

- تشجيع الحكومة العراقية على إعادة النظر في سياسات اجتثاث البعث وتسهيل إدماج أعضاء حزب البعث السابقين من غير مرتكبي الجرائم في المؤسسات الرسمية.

إلى مجموعة العمل "الاستقرار في إطار التحالف الدولي ضد تنظيم (داعش) الإرهابي"، برئاسة ألمانيا ودولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة:

- وضع الخطط والتدابير الكفيلة بمنع عمليات الانتقام وتشجيع العودة الآمنة للنازحين إلى المناطق المستعادة من تنظيم داعش.

- الاستثمار في (إعادة) إنشاء السلطات المحلية المشروعة والمتجاوبة في المناطق المستعادة من تنظيم داعش.

إلى الاتحاد الأوروبي:

- تولي دور رائد في تحقيق نوايا استراتيجية الاتحاد الأوروبي الإقليمية لسوريا والعراق، مع التركيز على الترتيبات الشاملة للجميع فيما يتعلق بالحوكمة والأمن، وكذلك التركيز على المواطنة الشاملة.

- استخدام النفوذ المالي والسياسي لضمان تنفيذ البرامج الإنسانية والتنموية في المناطق المستعادة من تنظيم داعش في العراق بحيث تكون حساسة مع تعقيدات النزاع، وتأخذ في الاعتبار مخاطر الأعمال الانتقامية، والجوانب المتعلقة بالمساواة بين الجنسين، والسياق العام لموجات النزوح المختلفة.

- التنسيق مع بعثة الأمم المتحدة لتقديم المساعدة إلى العراق (يونامي)، ووكالات الأمم المتحدة ذات الصلة، والتحالف الدولي، ولا سيما الفريق العامل المعني بتحقيق الاستقرار، من أجل وضع خطة شاملة لبناء السلام في محافظة نينوى.

إلى مجلس الأمن التابع للأمم المتحدة:

- عندما يتم تجديد ولاية بعثة الأمم المتحدة لتقديم المساعدة إلى العراق (يونامي)، تضاف إلى مهامها مهمة وضع خطط بناء سلام شاملة للجميع في المناطق والمحافظات الخاضعة حالياً لسيطرة تنظيم داعش، وتشجيع بعثة يونامي على إنجاز هذه المهمة بالتنسيق مع وكالات الأمم

المتحدة ذات الصلة، وكذلك مع الاتحاد الأوروبي والتحالف وجميع الأطراف المعنية المحلية، بما في ذلك المجتمع المدني المحلي.

إلى بعثة الأمم المتحدة لتقديم المساعدة إلى العراق (يونامي) ووكالات الأمم المتحدة في العراق:

- استخدام نفوذها السياسي على جميع المستويات لحث الحكومة العراقية وحكومة إقليم كردستان على إقامة الحوار اللازم بشأن تسوية مشكلة الحدود الداخلية المتنازعة.
- الاستثمار في جهود المصالحة على المستوى المحلي في محافظة نينوى وذلك باتباع نهج "من أسفل إلى أعلى"، بدلاً من التخطيط المركزي على المستوى الوطني، وذلك لضمان الفعالية والنتائج الناجحة على أرض الواقع.

إلى تركيا وإيران:

- دعم الحكومة العراقية وحكومة إقليم كردستان، والقوى المسلحة المتصلة بهما، في وضع تدابير مجدية لمنع الأعمال الانتقامية بواسطة الجماعات المسلحة من خلال تطبيق الآليات الكفيلة بتحقيق العدالة الانتقالية ودفع التعويضات؛
- الامتناع عن تسليح الجاليات أو الميليشيات على أساس ديني أو إثني حصراً.
- استخدام نفوذهما السياسي للضغط من أجل التوصل إلى تسوية بين الحكومة العراقية وحكومة إقليم كردستان بشأن مشكلة الحدود الداخلية المتنازعة، ولا سيما في محافظة نينوى.

1. Displacement & demographic change in Ninewa

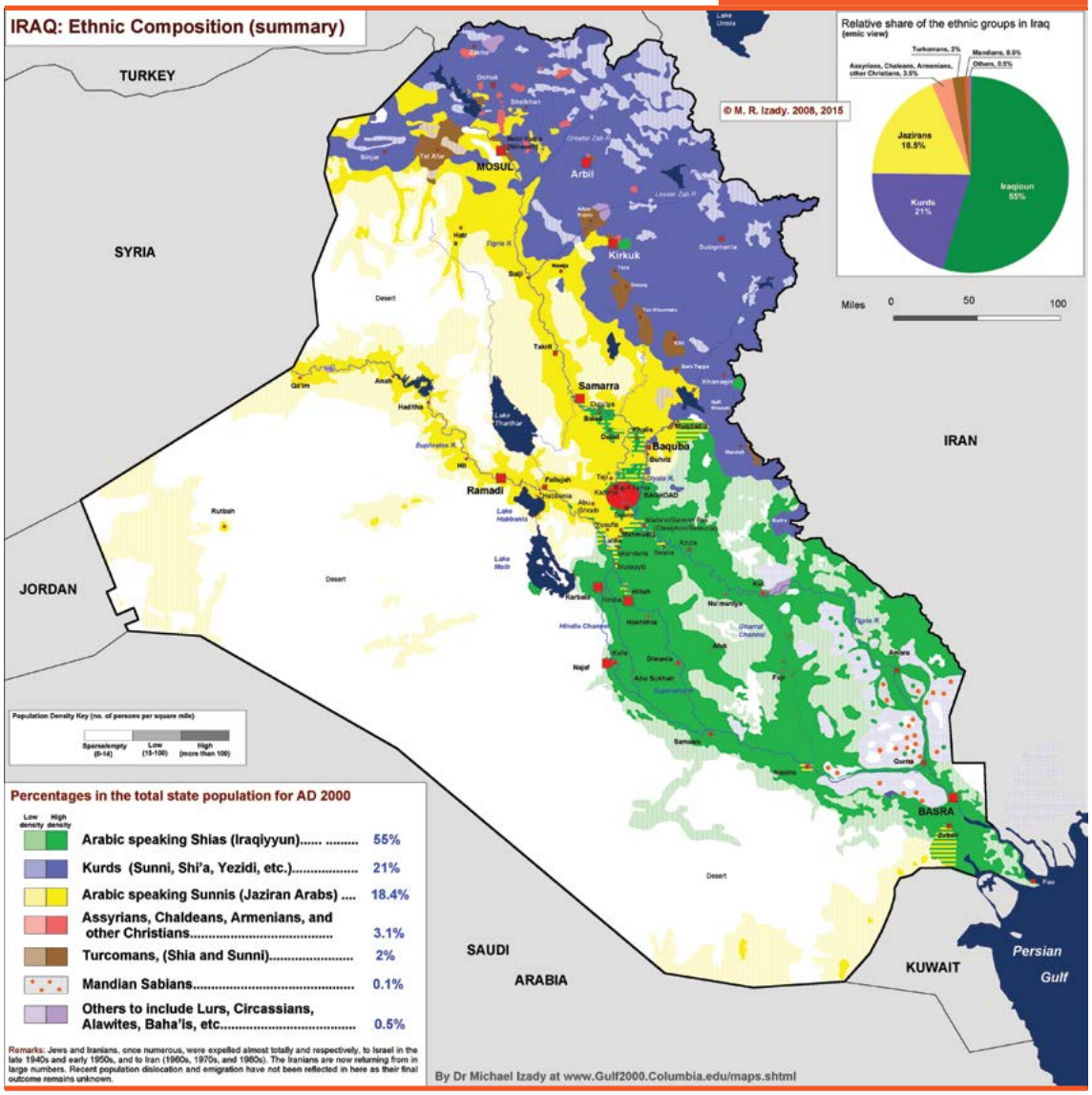
1.1 Ethnic and religious minorities in Ninewa Governorate

Ninewa Governorate has historically been home to a variety of ethnic and religious minorities. This section briefly introduces ethnic and religious minorities in Ninewa Governorate in terms of identity, geographic distribution and estimated population size. It should be noted that in the current context, ethnic and religious identity is highly politicized in Iraq. This report does not aim to make any judgment on communities' identity or ethnic-religious affiliation, but rather to introduce their identities and backgrounds in the context of demographic change and intercommunity relations in Ninewa [1].

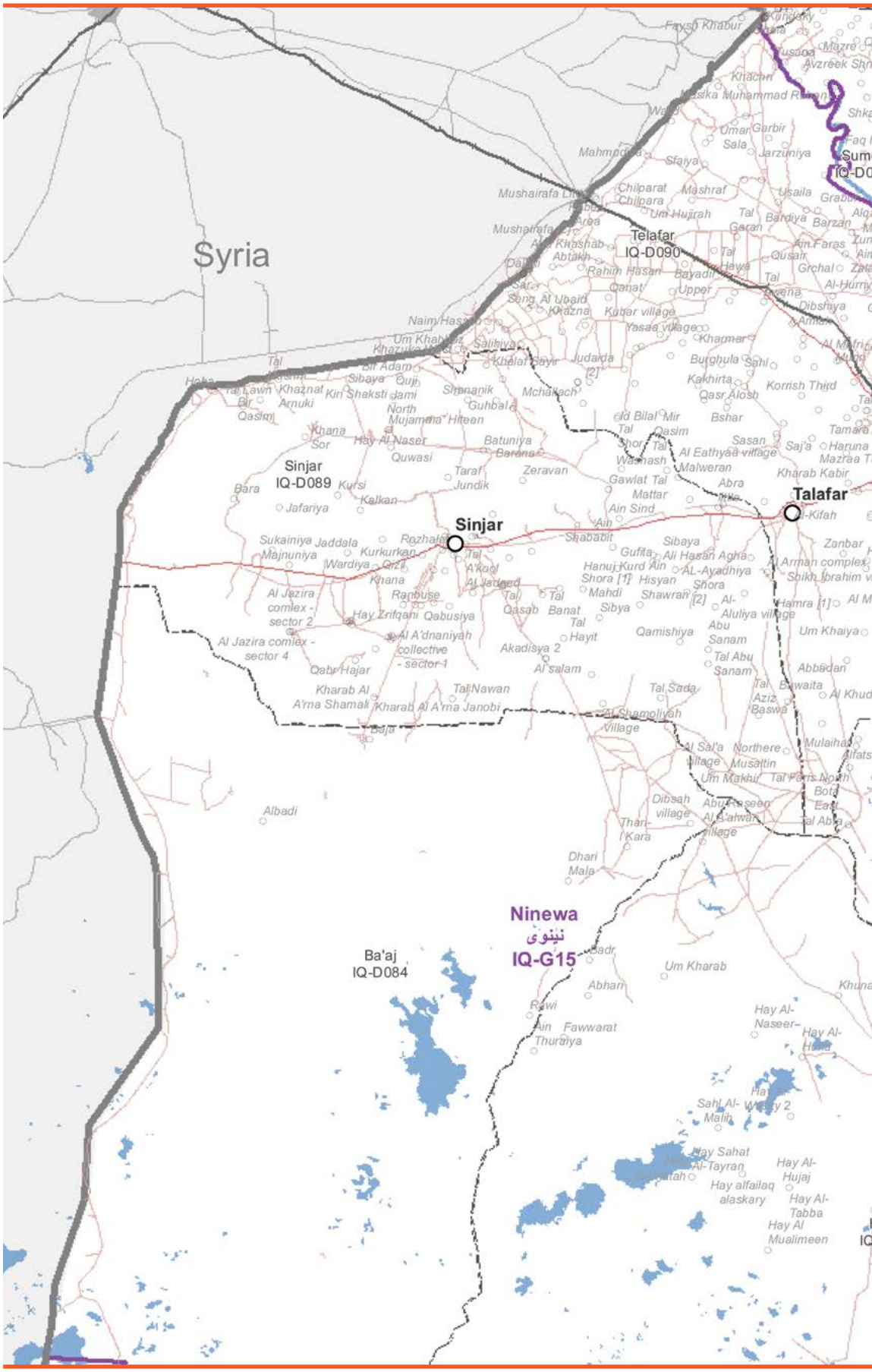
Christians: *Academics make a distinction between a Christian identity based on ethnicity [2] and a Christian identity based on denomination [3]. Ethnically, the vast majority of the Iraqi Christians are Assyrians, with small minorities of Armenians and Syriacs. In terms of religious denomination, Chaldean Catholics constitute the majority, with smaller communities of Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican Christians. Christians are scattered across Iraq and have concentrations in Baghdad, Erbil (Ainkawa Sub-district) and Ninewa Governorate. After Baghdad, with its sixty-two churches[4], the Ninewa is the area with the second largest number of churches (twenty) in Iraq. Ninewa's towns with the largest Christian populations are Qaraqosh (or Hamdaniya), Bartella and the city of Mosul. Due to relatively widespread historical persecution of Christians, their relatively limited family size, and sectarian violence and subsequent migration waves of Christians after 2003, the Christian community in Iraq has steadily decreased. In this regard, the proportion of Christians to Iraq's total population has declined from 3.1% in 1947 to 2.1% in 1977[5]. However, other sources (Alshaikh 2014[6] and Lalani 2010[7]) point to 8% (1.4 million) in 1987 and 6% (1.5 million) in 2003 respectively.*

Map 01.

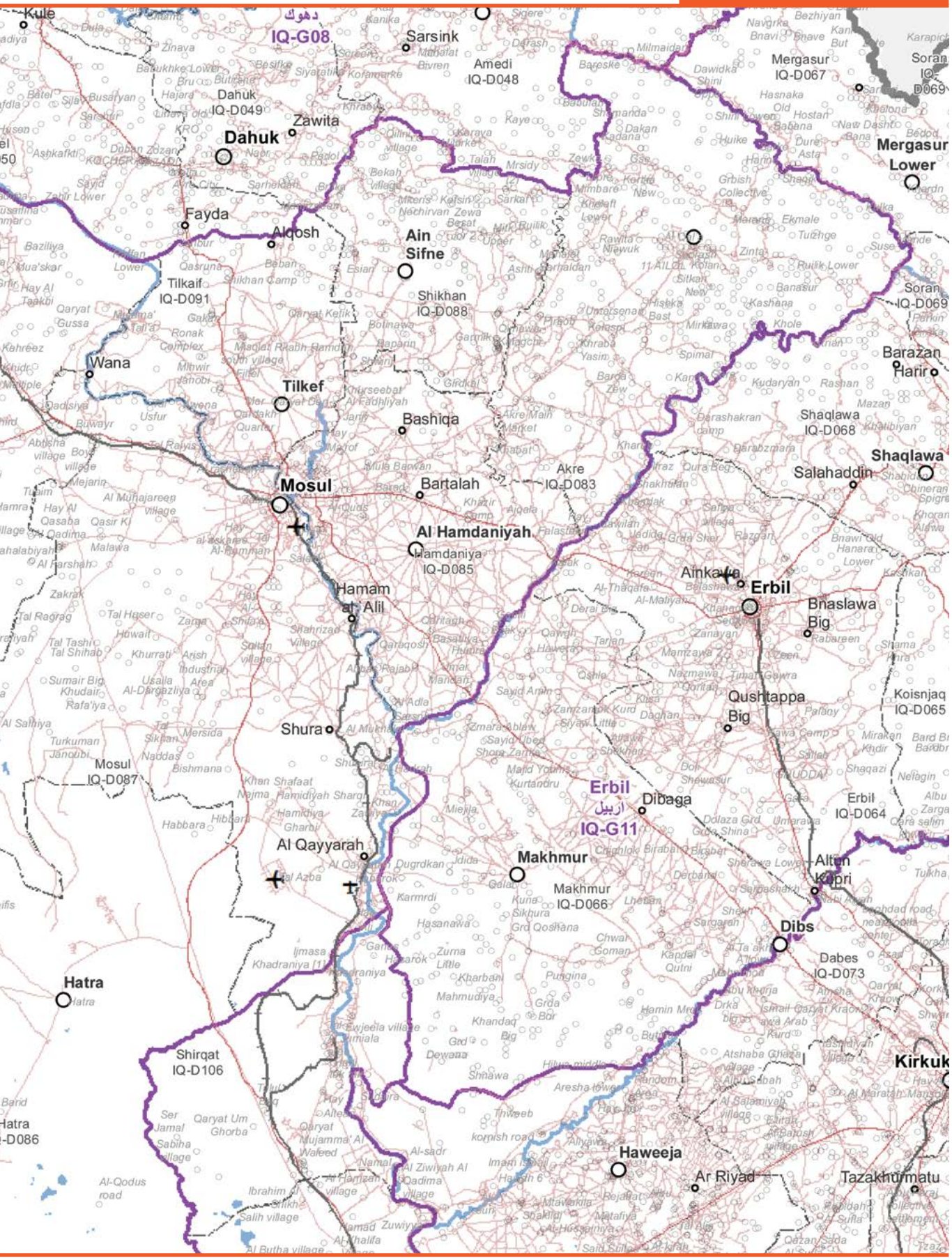
Ethnic composition Iraq



Source: Gulf 2000/Columbia University, M. Izady, 2008


Syria
Telafar
IQ-D090
Sinjar
IQ-D089
Sinjar
Talafar
Ninewa
نینوی
IQ-G15
Ba'aj
IQ-D084

Map 02.
Ninewa Governorate



Source: OCHA, Iraq, July 2014

Kaka'is: *The Kaka'is, also known as Ahl-e Haqq, are ethnically a Kurdish subgroup, speaking a distinct language, called Macho[8]. While concentrated in a number of villages to the southeast of Kirkuk, Kaka'is also live in other areas, including the governorates of Ninewa, Sulaymaniyah, Diyala, Erbil, Dohuk and Baghdad. In Ninewa Governorate, Kaka'is populate the homogeneous villages of Wardak, Tel Allabin, Kazkan and Majidyah. However, in the two villages of Zankil and Kabarli they co-exist with Sunni Arabs and with Shi'a Shabak and Baktashi[9] respectively. Kaka'is are not registered in Iraqi formal documents. The 1977 census registered the Kaka'is as Arab residents. Nevertheless, Lalani, naming them Ahl-e Haqq, points to a 200,000 Kaka'i population in Iraq[10].*

Shabaks: *Shabaks have been attached to several identities. Although they have been recognized as a distinct ethnic group of Iraq in 1952, their identity is the subject of political dispute. They are culturally different from Arabs and Kurds and speak a different language to both groups. Kurdish authorities consider Shabaks as Kurdish, an issue which is contested among the Shabaks themselves. Shabaks are Muslims, divided between the majority Shi'a communities (roughly 60-70%) and Sunni communities (almost 30- 40%)[11]. Shabaks inhabit a number of villages to the east of Mosul city, the Ninewa Plain, on the main roads from Mosul to Kirkuk, Erbil and Dohuk[12]. Their main villages are Bajabbara, Basurin, Ba'dra, Bafke, and Khazir[13]. Shabaks numbers vary between 250,000 and 500,000. Shabak status is disputed between Arabs and Kurds and, as a consequence, Shabaks have been particularly persecuted since 2004 and following ISIS assault on Ninewa. Similar to the Kaka'is, Shabaks are not mentioned in Iraqi formal documents (such as the general censuses) making it difficult to trace the dynamic of their original and current population in Iraq.*

Turkmen: *Turkmen consider themselves the third largest ethnic community of Iraq. Iraqi Turkmen reside in an arc stretching from Tel Afar, west of Mosul city, through Mosul city, Erbil, Altun Kopri (Prde), Kirkuk, Taza Khurmatu, Kifri, to Khaniqin[14]. These areas lie on the southern boarders of KRI and GoI and make up the majority of DIBs. In Ninewa Governorate, the Tel Afar district makes up the stronghold of Turkmen due to its virtually exclusive Turkmen composition. Religiously, Turkmen are Muslims who are almost equally distributed between Sunni Turkmen (mainly in Kirkuk, Altun Kopri, and Kifri) and Shi'a Turkmen (mostly in Tel Afar, Daquq, Tuz Khurmatu and Qaratapa)[15]. As is the case with Yazidis and Christians, estimations about Iraqi Turkmen population vary from 250,000 persons to 2,038,662 in 2003[16], depending on the political standpoint of information providers.*

Yazidis: *Yazidis are one of the ancient religious communities who have existed for thousands of years in Mesopotamia. The Yazidis' identity is a subject of disagreement. For some of Yazidis, in addition to their religiously distinct identity, a Kurdish ethnic identity persists. Others place a stronger emphasis on their religious identity. Geographically, 99% of Iraqi Yazidis live in the two governorates of Ninewa and Dohuk (see Ismail, 2005). The Iraqi census of 1977 shows that 87.8% of Iraq's Yazidis lived in Ninewa Governorate and 9.5% in Dohuk Governorate[17]. In Ninewa Governorate, Yazidis were concentrated in the Sinjar Mountains, 115 km to the west of Mosul city, and the Sheikhan district in the Ninewa Plain, east of Mosul.[18]. Along with the Yazidis living in the city of Mosul and different districts of the Ninewa Governorate, up until the last decade they constituted the majority in Sinjar district, at roughly 85%, and almost all the population in Bashiqa[19]. With the inaccuracy of Iraq's national census and the demographic change policies, it is problematic to present any figures with respect to minorities' actual population size. For instance, relying on the Iraqi censuses of 1987 and 1997, Ismail estimates the number of Yazidis at 223,000*

persons (1% of Iraqi population) in 2,000[20]. While, in the context of attacks on religious minorities, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom estimates the number of Yazidis in 2005 at around 700,000 persons[21].

Currently displaced communities from Ninewa also include Palestinians (mainly from the city of Mosul), Roma (named Kawliyah in Iraq), Baktashis and Sabean Mandeans. These identities are not the focus of this research and therefore not introduced separately. However the Kurdish and Arab Sunni communities will be discussed extensively as they are highly relevant when analyzing return perceptions of IDP minority communities.

1.2 İnternal displacement in İraq

In the last few decades Iraq has witnessed waves of population displacement both inside the country and towards neighboring and western countries. The International Organization of Migration (IOM) Iraq Mission[22] divides displacement into three main waves in Iraqi history: three waves before 2003, one in 2013, and one in 2014.

DISPLACEMENT 1963-1979

Although the IOM's report traces displacement roughly to the time when Saddam Hussain formally grabbed power in 1979, displacement has an older history in Iraq. Dizey and Shwani[23] refer to the events of 1963, when the GoI evacuated 40,000 Kurds from around the oil rich city of Kirkuk and replaced them with tribal Arabs from the middle and south of Iraq. A total of 875 villages were destroyed between the 11th of June and the 23rd of July, 1963. In 1970s, and particularly after the Algiers agreement of 1975 between Iraq and Iran, the Ba'ath dominated GoI declared a broad band of land 5-30 kilometers wide, allocated along the borders with Turkey and Iran, a forbidden zone (some scholars, such as Khalil Ismail, add the Syrian borders as well)[24]. The estimates of the number of destroyed villages in this period vary between 500 and 1400[25]. Chaliand[26] points to the evacuation of the Kurdish population in Iraq-Iran and Iraq-Turkey border areas, which in 1978-1979 led to the resettlement of 250,000 villagers in compulsory settlements close to main roads and GoI military bases. This first wave of displacement took place in the context of the First (1961-1970) and Second (1974-1975) Iraqi-Kurdish War, where Kurds led by Mustafa Barzani were engaged in military campaigns against successive Iraqi regimes for more autonomy.

DISPLACEMENT 1980-1988

The Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988) also caused large displacement movements. In this period, in addition to people's attempt to flee Iraq-Iran border areas, demographic change in Kurdish populated areas became the Iraqi state's formal policy. This policy of 'demographic engineering[27]', i.e. applying demographic strategies in ethnic conflict, continues to influence Iraq's contemporary history today.

The *Anfal* campaign (February to September 1988) marks one of the most devastating population change policies throughout Iraqi history. According to Azad Naqshbandi[28], the Anfal campaigns were planned to realize four main objectives: destroying Kurdish Peshmerga footholds in mountainous areas; cutting off oil rich areas from Iraqi Kurdistan by evacuating Kurds from surrounding areas and replacing them with Arabs; demolishing the population's economic agricultural basis by razing villages; and wrecking the population's youth and economically productive workforce by targeting mostly young males. The Anfal campaign targeted villages in strategic areas, leading to evacuation of 10,0000 to 500,000 Kurds from Kurdistan to the Iraq- Jordan and Iraq-Saudi borders[29].

DISPLACEMENT 1988-2003

Immediately after the Iraq-Iran's ceasefire in August 1988, another policy of resettling Kurdish populations in Iraqi Kurdistan began30. Unlike the Anfal campaign, these new policies targeted urban settings as well, and the destination of displaced people was mostly areas within Iraqi Kurdistan. The GoI's pretext was to evacuate villagers and urban dwellers from remote areas and relocate them in more accessible areas inside Iraqi Kurdistan so that the GoI could provide them with services "after ages of deprivation due to ongoing war in these areas"31. New compulsory camps in the name of "modern camps" were created. The Governor of Sulaymaniyah at the time, Ja'far Abdulkarim Barzinji, referred to the resettlement of 595,000 families by April 1989. In the same period, the Economist reported the resettlement of 2.5 million Kurds32. With the outbreak of the first Gulf War in 1990, two to three million Iraqis (this time not only Kurds) became displaced and sought refuge in neighboring countries33. The international military operation Provide Comfort (1991-1992) imposed a no-fly zone in northern Iraq and provided assistance to more than 500,000 displaced Kurds.

DISPLACEMENT 2003-2013

The US led invasion and collapse of Saddam's regime in 2003 marked a new era of displacement in Iraq. From 2003 to 2006, an estimated 250,000 Iraqis were displaced as a result of widespread sectarian violence and insurgency movements. The bombing of the Al-Askari mosque in Samarra, one of the holiest Shi'a shrines, in February 2006, marked the beginning of a substantial and dramatic displacement in the post 2003 war period. Between 2006-2008, the sectarian conflict and persecution of minorities reached a peak and led to the displacement of 1.6 million Iraqis, and another 1.8 million became refugees in neighboring countries[34]. Basra witnessed a large displacement of the Christian community. Their number declined from 1,200 families before 2003 to only a few families in July 2006. Displaced Christians, many of them from the capital Baghdad (about 75% of Baghdad's Christian community left the capital[35]) mostly took refuge in northern governorates of Iraq[36]. The targeting of minorities took a range of forms, from bomb attacks to kidnapping of religious leaders. From April 2003 until November 2007, over 27 churches were attacked or bombed. Furthermore, until May 2008, seventeen priests and bishops were abducted, and four of them were killed[37].

The intimidation and persecution of Christian communities caused widespread displacement. According to some estimates, by 2008, there were 80,000 Christians displaced to Syria, 20,000 to Jordan, and varying numbers to Lebanon, Egypt, Greece and Turkey, seeking resettlement in other European countries, the US or Australia. Other sources (such as Hanish, 2009) report 250,000 displaced Christians in the abovementioned countries by 2006. Internally, a significant numbers of Christian families (6,110) were displaced to the northern Governorate of Ninewa[38]. Other minorities also suffered from the intimidation and targeting of minorities. For instance, a bomb attack in August 2007 left hundreds of Yazidis dead in one single day. Meanwhile, Shi'a communities in the DIBs areas were receiving financial and military support from the Shi'a dominated Maliki government, further fuelling inter-community tensions in the region[39].

Villagers in Zummar district, where reconstruction has started, but security remains unstable.

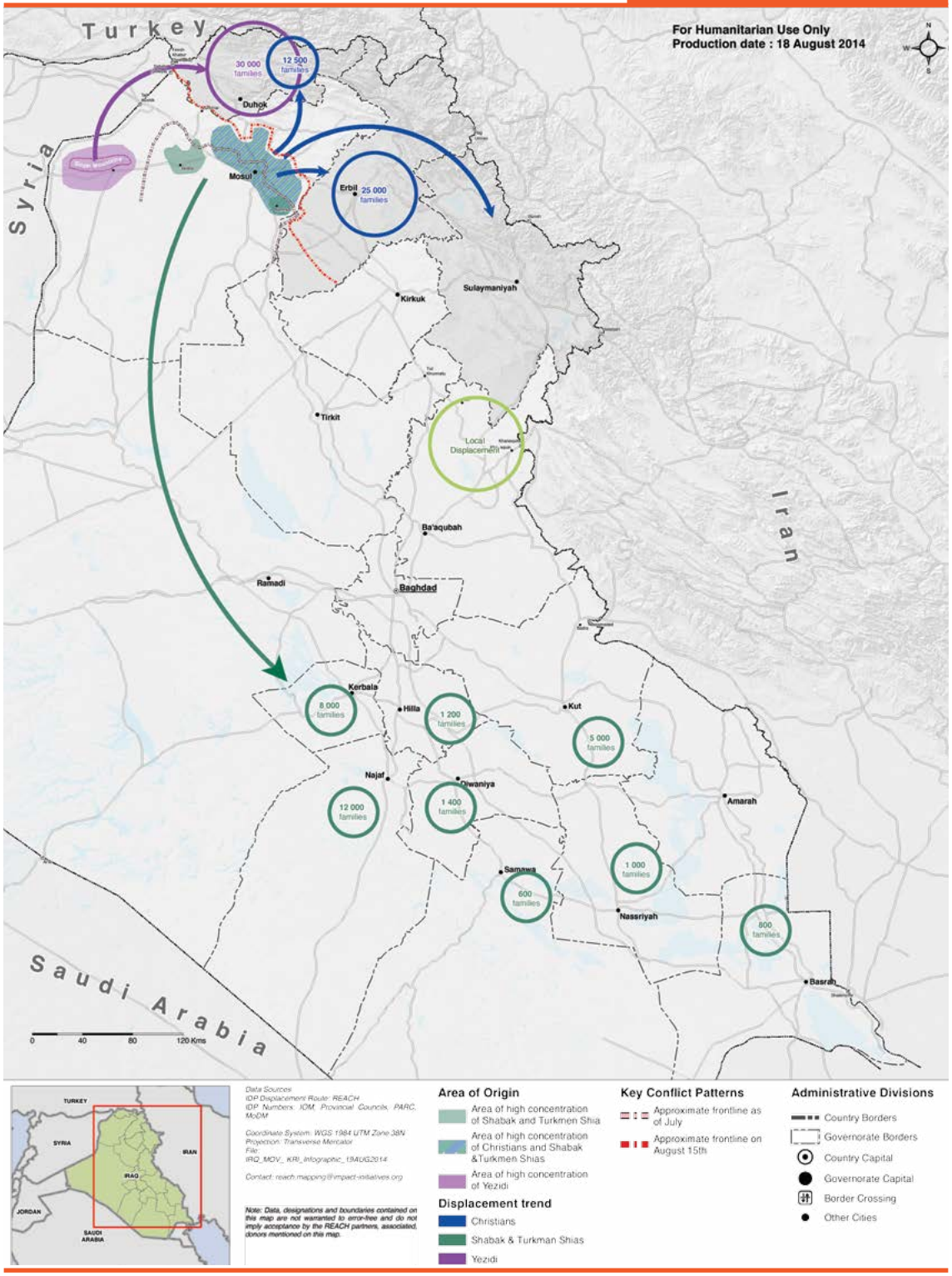
Table 01.
Displacement in 2014 disaggregated by displacement period

Period observation	Locations*	İDP Families	İndividuals	%
Pre-June 2014	946	95,179	571,074	23%
June-July 2014	1450	105,429	632,574	26%
August 2014	1001	143,090	858,540	35%
Post 1 Sept 2014	949	68,376	410,256	17%
Total	**2744**	**412,074**	**2,472,444**	**100%**

* The number of locations per wave does not sum the overall number of distinct locations as displacement populations often increase in pre-existing locations between waves. Also, locations may host displaced populations from multiple waves.

Source: IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix, February 2015

Map 03.
Iraq, IDP crisis (June 6-August 218, 2014)



Source: REACH, August 2015

DISPLACEMENT 2013-2015

After a period of relative stability during 2008-2012, another wave of displacement commenced in 2013. According to the IOM[40], 9,991 persons were displaced in 2013. Displacement mainly took place in Ninewa Governorate, Baghdad, Basra and Diyala. During this displacement wave, Turkmen and Shabak minorities comprised the majority of displaced individuals. Turkmen fled Ninewa Governorate, Salah ad-Din and Diyala or headed south to the Shi'a governorates of Karbala and Al-Najaf. Meanwhile, Shabaks moved within Ninewa Governorate after they left the city of Mosul and took shelter in nearby villages. At the end of 2013, violence escalated and turned into the so called "Anbar Crisis," which, by September 2014, had led to the displacement of 82,621 families, comprising approximately 495,726 individuals[41].

ISIS's advances towards Ninewa Governorate in June 2014 and the deliberate targeting of non-Sunni minorities triggered a new extensive wave of displacement in Iraq. Since this fourth wave is the focus of this report, section 1.4 will analyze separately the displacement of minorities in the Governorate from June to mid-August 2015. The section highlights available figures with respect to minorities' displacement, their destination, and the number and distribution of IDP camps in KRG administered Dohuk and Erbil.

1.3 Demographic dynamics in Ninewa

Given its ethnic and religious diversity, the North of Iraq has been described as "ethnographic museum." While central and southern governorates of Iraq are rather homogeneous, northern governorates, particularly Ninewa, Kirkuk, Salah ad-Din and Diyala, are historically highly heterogeneous. According to the general census of 1977, Ninewa Governorate was the most heterogeneous Governorate of Iraq42. Ethnically and religiously diverse areas begin from Tel Afar, northwest of Mosul city, extend through the Ninewa Plain to Kirkuk, and then end at Khanaqin, in Diyala Governorate, northeast of Iraq.

DISPUTED INTERNAL BOUNDARIES

This geographic arc of ethnic and religious diversity overlaps the DIBs, territory disputed between GoI and KRG. Following the end of the First Gulf War in 1991, a no-fly zone was set up in northern Iraq by the United States, United Kingdom and France in order to protect the Kurds (in addition to a southern no-fly zone to protect Shi'a Muslims in the south. Also, a ceasefire line (Green Line) was established between the Kurdish Region of Iraq and the rest of the country, parallel with the internationally protected no-fly zone. This practically meant that some Iraqi governorates came fully or partially under the direct control of Kurdish authorities. Since 1991, in Ninewa Governorate, the districts of Aqra, (half of) Skeikhan, Telkaif, Tel Afar and Sinjar have come under de facto Kurdish control. In the 2005 constitution of Iraq, an article was included to deal with the country's DIBs. Article 140 outlines a series of steps that should be taken in order to settle who exactly the disputed territories belong to. The start with normalization - the return of Kurds and other residents displaced by Arabisation – followed by a census to verify the demographic makeup of the Governorate's population and then, finally, a referendum to determine the status of disputed territories. DIBs comprise areas that were targeted by Arabization policies during Ba'ath Party rule in Iraq (1968-2003). Since 2003, these areas have been central to a dispute between Arabs and Kurds, and article 140 has not been officially implemented.

LACK OF RELIABLE DATA ON DEMOGRAPHIC DYNAMICS

Demographic information with respect to minority populations and their geographic distribution across Ninewa Governorate and other ethnically diverse governorates are both inaccurate and contested. In addition to the fact that most of the general censuses were inaccurate and conducted in nonstandard situations[43], the demographic composition of Iraq's northern governorates has been deliberately altered by Iraqi governments. These changes were planned and aimed at increasing the number of the Arab population at the expense of other ethnic and religious components of these areas (see Table 3). A quick comparison of the 1957 and 1977 census supports this suggestion. In the three most diverse governorates of Diyala, Ninewa and Kirkuk, the Arab population dramatically increased. In Diyala, the proportion of Arabs witnessed an increase from 79.3% of the overall population of the Governorate to 87.4%. The increase is even sharper in Ninewa Governorate (from 56.1% to 73.6%) and Kirkuk (a jump from 28.2% to 44.4%). While in the same period the percentage of Kurds, Turkmen and "others" (meaning religious minorities) has recorded a drastic decrease[44].

Since 1977, more recent censuses were conducted in 1987 and 1997 (the latter excluded Kurdish territories, and a census planned for 2007 was postponed because of political instability), but experts strongly question the reliability of these data given the various displacements, the Iraq-Iran war, and politically motivated demographic interference starting from the early eighties.

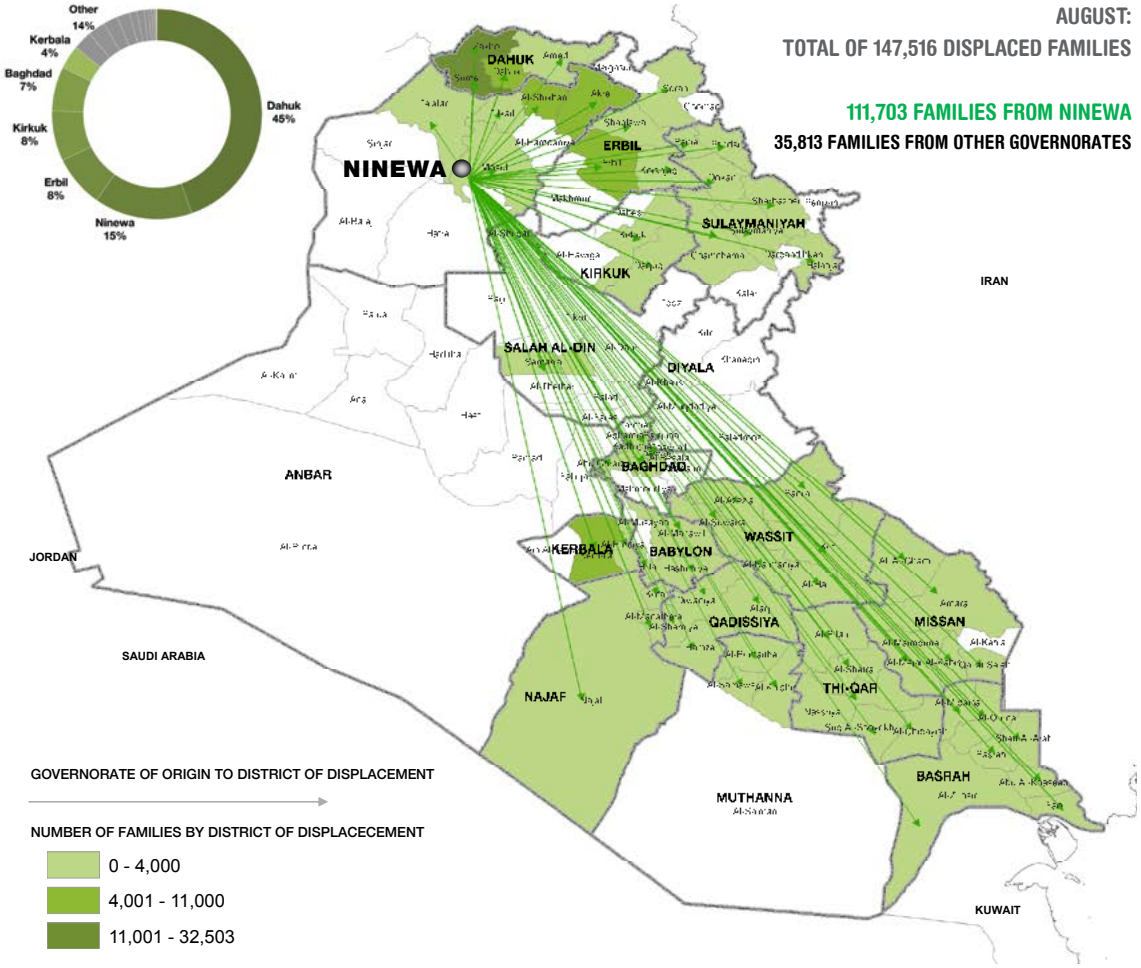
DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS IN NINEWA GOVERNORATE

Even though demographic change has more or less been a formal policy for different Iraqi governments roughly since 1930s, the pace of this process was accelerated in the last two decades of the twentieth century (see 1.2). Such a change was realized by utilizing a range of methods, including forced displacement of minorities, redrawing the administrative boundaries both between and within governorates and replacing the original population by Arab tribes[45]. It has been noted that in the three abovementioned governorates, the proportion of ethnic and religious minorities has progressively declined. Although policies of demographic change mainly targeted Kurds in diverse areas, these policies were not confined to this particular group. In the late 1970s, nearly 200 Christian towns and villages were destroyed in Northern Iraq[46]. At the same time, 158 Yazidi villages in Sinjar, Zakho and Sheikhan were destroyed and their inhabitants were evacuated to areas near Dohuk, while Arab tribes were settled in their areas[47]. Furthermore, in the general census of 1977, the three communities of Christians, Yazidis and Kaka'is were forced by the Ba'ath dominated GoI to register themselves as Arabs in Ninewa Governorate.

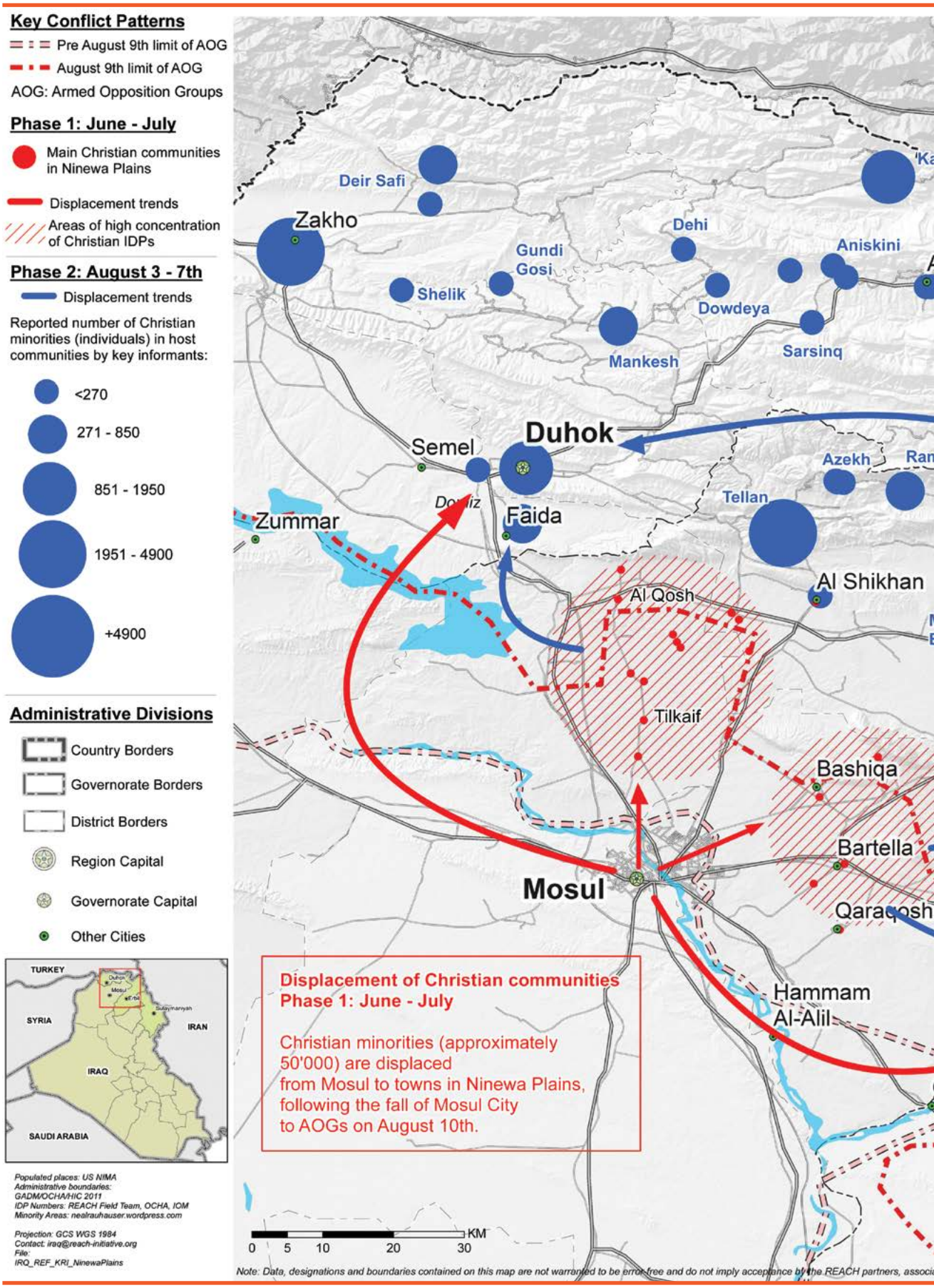
Since 2003, ethnic and religious minorities have become increasingly targeted by extremist groups. This led to waves of displacement both inside and outside Iraq. Though figures regarding each minority's displacement from Ninewa Governorate are not available, some Christian organizations maintain that Iraq's Christian population underwent a drastic decline from 1.5 million to virtually 350,000 individuals[48]. Despite assistance from the Kurdish Peshmerga, who provided security in most parts of Ninewa Governorate since November 2004, extremist attacks in Ninewa and subsequent ISIS control of the governorate has caused further displacement of minorities. Yazidis experienced a similar fate after ongoing persecution by extremist groups. Out of 600,000 Yazidis in Iraq, 400,000 are now displaced in the KRI[49]. Furthermore, displacement of Shabaks and Kaka'is from the city of Mosul and the Ninewa Plain, in addition to widespread displacement of Turkmen from Tel Afar, present another massive demographic change in Ninewa Governorate

Map 04.

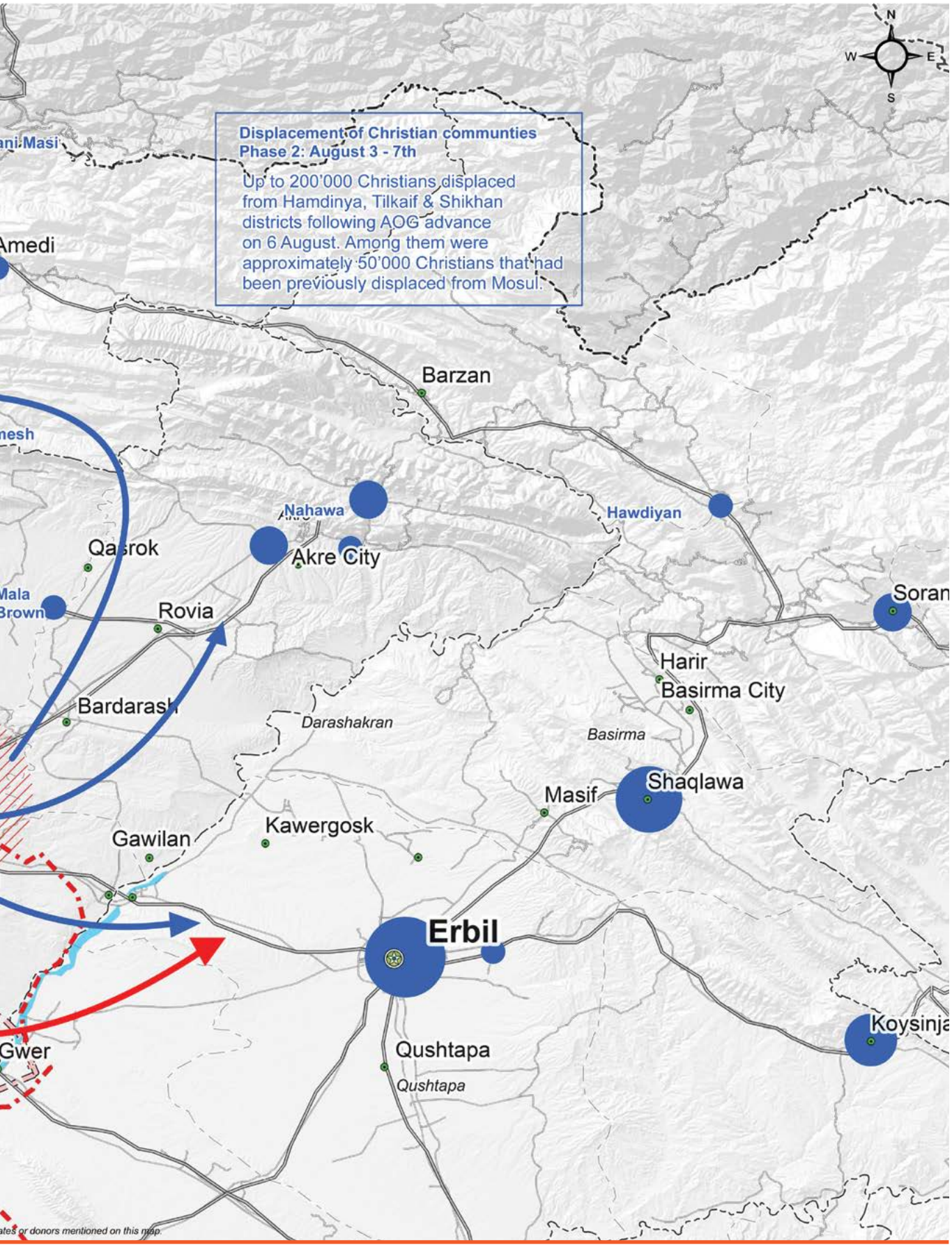
Iraq IDP Crisis Displacement flows



Source: IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix, August 2014


Key Conflict Patterns
Pre August 9th limit of AOG
August 9th limit of AOG
AOG: Armed Opposition Groups
Phase 1: June - July
Main Christian communities in Ninewa Plains
Displacement trends
Areas of high concentration of Christian IDPs
Phase 2: August 3 - 7th
Displacement trends
Reported number of Christian minorities (individuals) in host communities by key informants:
<270
271 - 850
851 - 1950
1951 - 4900
+4900
Administrative Divisions
Country Borders
Governorate Borders
District Borders
Region Capital
Governorate Capital
Other Cities
TURKEY
SYRIA
IRAN
IRAQ
SAUDI ARABIA
Deir Safi
Zakho
Dehi
Gundi
Gosi
Aniskini
Shelik
Dowdeya
Sarsinq
Mankesh
Semel
Duhok
Azekh
Tellan
Zummar
Faida
Al Shikhan
Al Qosh
Tilkaif
Bashiqa
Bartella
Mosul
Qaraqosh
Hammam
Al-Alil
Displacement of Christian communities
Phase 1: June - July
Christian minorities (approximately 50'000) are displaced from Mosul to towns in Ninewa Plains, following the fall of Mosul City to AOGs on August 10th.
KM
0 5 10 20 30
Populated places: US NIMA
Administrative boundaries: GADM/OCHA/HIC 2011
IDP Numbers: REACH Field Team, OCHA, IOM
Minority Areas: nealrauhauser.wordpress.com
Projection: GCS WGS 1984
Contact: iraq@reach-initiative.org
File: IRQ_REF_KRI_NinewaPlains
Note: Data, designations and boundaries contained on this map are not warranted to be error-free and do not imply acceptance by the REACH partners, associ

Map 05.
Iraq, Ninewa Plains IDP crisis,
June-August 2014



Source: REACH, August 2015

1.4 The latest wave of displacement from Ninewa Governorate

The most recent wave of ethnic and religious minorities' displacement from Ninewa Governorate began immediately after the seizure of Mosul city by ISIS fighters on the 6th of June, 2014. Between the June 6 and August 3, ISIS forces were able to advance in several directions: towards the western district of Tel Afar on the 16th of June, the north and northwestern districts of Al-Hamdaniyah and Tel Kef in the Ninewa Plain, and eventually into the northwestern district of Sinjar on the 3rd of August[50]. Figures from the IOM[51] point to the displacement of 836,670 IDPs following the Mosul crisis. This number includes IDPs from both the minority and majority communities of the area.

There is a clear pattern of displacement among ethnic and religious minorities. Data from REACH[52] shows that an estimated 30,000 Shabak and Turkmen Shi'a households were displaced from Mosul and surrounding areas before finally taking refuge in predominantly Shi'a governorates in the south of Iraq. Meanwhile, Christian families were also displaced from the city of Mosul and initially fled to majority Christian districts of Al-Hamdaniyah and Tel kef in the Ninewa Plain. Displaced Christians have for the most part headed towards the KRI and were sheltered in Dohuk and Erbil. The Yazidi communities from Sinjar and neighboring villages (approximately 130,000 individuals) were trapped on the Sinjar Mountains. After a safe corridor was established by the Peshmerga, they entered Syrian territory before reentering the KRI through the Fishkhabur boarder point[53]. The Sinjar crisis alone created 307,092 IDPs[54].

NINEWA IDPS HOSTED IN KURDISH REGION OF IRAQ

Ninewa IDPs in the KRI have been sheltered in various types of accommodation, including living in the open, unfinished buildings, and collective shelters. REACH's report[55] indicates that the majority of IDPs (this assessment selected IDPs from the whole of Iraq, not only minorities IDPs from Ninewa Governorate) in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah lived in rented houses. While in Dohuk, the vast majority (75%) of IDPs were hosted by families. As for IDPs from Sinjar and the Ninewa Plain, different accommodation arrangements can be seen. REACH's assessment notes accommodation types ranging from temporary shelter in school buildings, IDP camps, parks and public spaces, to other shelter types including churches and unfinished building[56].

The most updated figures of the IOM[57] show that from January 2014 to February 2015, the Ninewa Governorate was hosting the highest proportion of IDPs across Iraq, as 991,290 persons (40%) of Iraq's overall displaced population, sought refuge in the governorate. Dohuk Governorate received the third largest number of Iraqi IDPs (18%) while Erbil is the fourth most important destination for IDPs[58] (11%). Since the most extensive wave of displacement from Ninewa Governorate occurred in the second half of 2014, a period when ISIS advanced towards Tel Afar, Sinjar and the Ninewa Plain, a significant percentage of the Ninewa Governorate IDPs are believed to have ethnic or religious minority backgrounds.

Refugees and IDPs are geographically scattered across the Dohuk Governorate (see Table 02). They are settled in 74 main refugee and IDP locations in the six districts of the governorate. In addition to 4 refugee camps that host Syrian refugees, there are 17 IDP camps.

In addition to private arrangements, ethnic and religious minority IDPs from Ninewa Governorate have been hosted in a number of camps in Dohuk, mostly separated according to community.

Table 02.
Refugee and IDP distribution in Dohuk Governorate

Districts	Nr of refugee & İDP locations	Nr of families	Nr of individuals
Zakho	14	21984	131904
Semel	10	28698	172188
Center of Dohuk	29	22051	132306
Amedi	9	4795	28770
Sheikhan (part of DIBs, half administered by the KRG since 2003)	10	4561	38850
Akre (part of DIBs, half administered by the KRG since 1991)	2	6561	39366
Total	**74**	**90.564**	**543.384**

Source: Governorate of Dohuk, March 2015

The total number of Yazidi IDPs reaches 65,000 individuals, located in seven camps of Khanke 1, Khanke 2, Sharia, Karbatu 1, Karbatu 2, Bajakandala 1, and Bakakadala 2. Christians of the Ninewa Plain, particularly from Al-Hamdaniyah and Bashiqa, are sheltered in the Sheikhan camp. Meanwhile, Shabaks are sheltered in Mamilan Camp, Akre and Bardarash Camp[59].

Erbil also hosts a considerable number of IDP minorities from Ninewa Governorate. To date, no accurate figures for the number of families or individuals, or their ethnic or religious backgrounds, are available. In Erbil, 473 Yazidi families (1,435 individuals) are sheltered in Avro City and another 240 families in Zerin city. As for Christian IDPs, they are for the most part hosted in the Ainkawa 108 camp. Additionally, the Bahrka camp hosts 650 families (3,125 individuals) from the Shabaks, Turkmen and Kaka'i communities[60].♦

2. Ninewa İDPs perceptions of inter-community relations

This chapter presents the perceptions of different communities in Ninewa Governorate towards pre- and post-İSİS intercommunity relations. For each community, living conditions, current and future intercommunity relations, support for İSİS, and possibilities for return will be discussed.

2.1 Christians

SECURITY, EMPLOYMENT AND SERVICES

In terms of the security situation, Christian respondents made clear distinctions between the Ninewa Plain areas and the city of Mosul. They stated that as a result of the presence of Christian guards (hirasat[61]), the Peshmerga and Kurdish security forces (Asaish[62]), they experienced a more stable security situation in the Ninewa Plain. Consequently, more people from other areas of Iraq and Ninewa Governorate (mainly the city of Mosul) took refuge in the Ninewa Plain, leading to an increase in the area's population, particularly Christians. The 2003 Iraq war marks a turning point for sectarian violence emerging in Ninewa Governorate. Christians were targets of violence and consequently significant numbers of Christian families migrated to Western countries.

Christian respondents tended to complain about the lack of job opportunities in Ninewa. The appalling security situation in the city of Mosul had caused a drastic decrease in the number of Christians able to work in the city. They either had to rely on the few agricultural activities they had traditionally engaged in or commuted to the KRI in search of work. It should be stated that the presence of hirasat served not only to maintain security in the area, but, according to respondents, it also generated some job opportunities for Christian youths. Hence, a number

Local leaders in Zummar district, March 2015

of respondents praised the hirasat mainly on economic grounds. It is also noticeable that the Christian respondents reported enjoying easy access to the cities of the KRI.
Church and religious institutions linked to Christian endowments have played an important role in the life of Christians in the Ninewa Plain. They have been a significant source of financial support to Christian families before and after displacement. For example, the Church covered transportation costs for 1300 university students from Qaraqosh and Kirmlis to the city of Mosul. Due to worsening security, many students, more particularly female Christian students fearful of abduction and rape, were reluctant to lodge at university dorms. A total of 22 buses were leased to ferry students daily between the Ninewa Plain and the city of Mosul. After displacement, the Church continued to support Christian IDPs. Respondents pointed to the leasing of houses, apartments and hotel rooms for Christian IDPs and, to a lesser extent, insuring income security as indicators of the Church's indispensable support in recent critical moments of displacement.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER COMMUNITIES

Generally speaking, Christian respondents reported peaceful coexistence with other communities of the area. They referred to business transactions, friendships, and neighborly relations as instances of healthy relationships with others. However, as focus group discussions went on, masked traditional tensions between Christian communities and other minority and majority communities were voiced. Due to religious differences, Christians avoided marrying with other communities of the area. Some respondents referred to the position of Christians as "second-class citizens" compared to other communities of the Ninewa Plain. References were made to cases of aggression committed against Christians. In some instances, "others were cutting the water that we were using to irrigate our farms," and "if they asked for something, we had no choice but to give it to them." One respondent said, "we were like prisoners."

PERCEPTIONS OF ISIS NATURE AND SUPPORT

Christian respondents initially mentioned foreign nationalities when describing the nature of ISIS. They said ISIS consists of Afghans and Pakistanis supported by Sunni Arabs from Mosul city and surrounding areas (sub-districts and villages) of poor educational and economic backgrounds. One respondent said, “at the beginning, Mosul residents welcomed ISIS.” Also, “Mosul residents considered the Iraqi army to be sectarian [Shi’a dominated] and Mosul residents are themselves sectarian…we, as Christians, did not have any problem with the Iraqi army.” What motivated local collaborators to support ISIS was “looting and theft.” According to respondents, ISIS targets everyone. “They are targeting all small groups,” a respondent said. Another respondent stated that “ISIS considers anyone who does not think like ISIS an infidel.” Nonetheless, some Christian respondents pointed to religion as a factor behind targeting them. For few of them, “Islam was a reason for targeting them because it is a religion which does not accept the other.” Moreover, in the context of explaining ISIS’s motivation in targeting Christians, few respondents thought ISIS believes that because “we and the Americans are of the same religion, we are also responsible for the occupation of Iraq in 2003, so they seek revenge against us.”

After the withdrawal of the Peshmerga from the Ninewa Plain, Christians fled their villages and towns. They were aware of tragedies that had befallen the Yazidis in Sinjar and did not want the same to happen to them. One respondent said, “ISIS forces were shocked when they reached the Ninewa Plain to find nobody left. They wished to see us there to do the same thing to us.”

RETURN, PROTECTION AND REVENGE

Christian respondents claimed to remain hopeful of return, although many acknowledged that trust towards others has been undermined. The liberation of the city of Mosul from ISIS is considered a prerequisite for return. In addition to restoring services and compensation, some Christian respondents pointed to the importance of ensuring the safety of their students at Mosul University. Traditionally, Christians were well represented in Mosul University and higher education institutions. Other respondents wished to return in order to unite with their families. According to respondents, migration to the West has made Christians dispersed. One respondentsaid, “I want to return so that we can get together again. Now we are scattered… each in a different place.”

International protection was raised by a substantial number of respondents in the focus groups for the Ninewa Plain. It is also a demand that has been, to some extent, a subject of public debate both in Iraq and the KRI. This demand reflects the Christian community’s disappointment in the GoI and, to a lesser extent, with the KRG for lack minority protection. Simultaneously, respondents tended to believe that the Peshmerga do not have the capability to defend their areas. Therefore, many thought international protection was the only reliable option to preserve peace and security in areas of the Ninewa Plain. However, a few respondents were skeptical about the effectiveness of such a proposal, with one stating, “OK! International protection might protect me here, but who would protect me if I travelled to Baghdad?” In fact, he implied that Christians should not be locked in a cage. Freedom of movement remains a main challenge for those promoting international protection.

2.2 Kaka'is

SECURITY, EMPLOYMENT AND SERVICES

The Kaka'i respondents in our research were inhabitants of a number of villages in the Ninewa Plain. Similar to the Christians in the Plain, their areas were controlled by the Peshmerga and local police (under the Iraqi Ministry of Interior). Initially, and generally speaking, respondents described the security situation prior to THE ISIS advance as satisfactory. The most significant attack mentioned by Kaka'i respondents was the car bomb in Wardak village in 2009, which left dozens dead. From 2004 onwards, Mosul city was no longer considered safe for Kaka'is. According to female respondents, Kaka'is began to leave the city in 2004 for shelter in the villages. Kaka'is from the Ninewa Plain were not able to travel to the city of Mosul, particularly because a substantial portion of them were engaged in the Peshmerga and local police. According to female respondents, 75 Kaka'i volunteers in the Peshmerga and local police were killed in last few years. They were easily recognized in the city due to their different accent and the fact that they were known by locals from the city of Mosul.

Services in Kaka'i villages were extremely poor. One respondent said, "services were below zero." A substantial shortage of electricity and water is reported. Most streets and roads were unpaved. Houses were made of mud and other material of very low quality. Respondents referred to very few work opportunities. Most opportunities were with the Peshmerga or local police. Kaka'i youths had to commute to KRI cities, mainly seeking manual jobs that did not require highly intellectual skills.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER COMMUNITIES

Kaka'is in the Ninewa Plain live in homogeneous and heterogeneous villages. Broadly speaking, Kaka'i respondents tended to have a positive evaluation of their relations with other communities. Though they did not live with Arabs in the same villages, they reported good relations with Arabs from neighboring villages. Some exceptions were identified, as some male respondents reported their inability to go to some Arab dominated areas such as Salamya and Hawi. Respondents made references to cross communities participation in weddings and funerals, as well as friendship and marriage. Nevertheless, some female respondents mentioned unwelcome intervention by some Shabaks in their religious affairs. One respondent said, "They were telling us why do not you pray? Why do you not fast?"

PERCEPTIONS OF ISIS NATURE AND SUPPORT

Respondents from the Kaka'i community pointed to the multiple backgrounds of ISIS fighters. "They are Iraqis and foreigners, supported by people from the area," one respondent said. Another respondent said, "I was told that in one village there was a foreign ISIS emir who had an Iraqi translator with him." Respondents made a clear distinction between Islam and ISIS. A female respondent said, "if they were Muslims, they would not have blown-up mosques and holy shrines. … their practices do not represent Islam." Another male respondent said, "they targeted all sects and areas." Local Arabs were accused of collaborating with ISIS, although respondents did not categorize all Arabs as ISIS supporters.

Many Kaka'is stressed that support for ISIS was a result of a conspiracy against Iraq and a wish to foment strife between different communities. Male respondents were skeptical about USA seriousness in defeating ISIS. Statements such as, "if America wanted, we'd return tomorrow," "America is not serious about its strikes or the liberation of Mosul," "where does ISIS get all these weapons from? Someone must be supporting them? It must be a country!" are all indications of

the conspiratorial thinking among respondents. Moreover, respondents mentioned betrayal as the cause of the sudden collapse of Mosul. Furthermore, Kaka'is pointed to weak cooperation between citizens and the Iraqi army. According to them, people were reluctant to cooperate with the Iraqi army by reporting suspicious activities. Amid all this, Kaka'is were also targeted on the basis of their participation in elections and voting for Kurdish political parties. In addition, respondents insisted that ISIS had intended to repeat with the Kaka'is what they had done to the Yazidis. Finally, Kaka'i respondents claimed that ISIS attacks were also motivated by their wish to loot homes, shops and banks.

According to Kaka'i respondents, the quick advance on Mosul was made possible by the cooperation of Mosul residents with ISIS. The Kaka'is insisted that Mosul residents were sick of Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki's exclusionary behavior against them and that ISIS came with the promise that it will liberate them from his oppression. But, once ISIS was entrenched in the city, it began to oppress people. Kaka'i respondents tended to believe that, "now that Mosul residents saw mosques, holy shrines and public libraries bombed by ISIS, they regret supporting it."

RETURN, PROTECTION AND REVENGE

Kaka'is are optimistic about return. They are, however, not willing to return immediately after the removal of ISIS. There are strong concerns about booby traps and unexploded ordnances in the area. Moreover, they noted the devastation of services they'd find upon return. Due to the proximity of their villages to the city of Mosul, Kaka'is consider liberation of the city as a first step towards their return. Respondents were also not sure if the Iraqi army would be able to protect their areas. Fearful for the future, Kaka'i respondents place emphasis on future coordination between the GoI and KRG to protect their areas. Many reiterated their support for integrating their areas into the KRI. They also demanded fair compensation, because Kaka'i areas suffered more home destruction and looting than loss of life.

Because of local Arab cooperation with ISIS, retaliation against Sunni Arab communities is considered a possibility. One respondent said, "our heart is full of hostility towards those who hurt us…we will take revenge on them." However, for the majority of respondents in the focus groups, revenge depended on what they will see after return. A respondent said, "when we return we will look to see what happened to our homes and properties… if our belongings were looted, we will consider that our Arab neighbors id it." Male respondents had also reported hearing stories of revenge by Yazidis against local Arabs in their areas. Kaka'is threatened to do the same in their areas. One respondent said, "a river of blood will flow."

Other Kaka'i respondents tried to avoid any reference to revenge. For instance, a minority of respondents mentioned physical and social avoidance of Arabs in the future as a result of what happened. Meanwhile, one respondent said, "We need time for our relations to become good again with them." With other communities, such as the Shabak and Christians, they foresee relationships to remain positive.

2.3 Kurds

SECURITY, EMPLOYMENT AND SERVICES

Two focus group interviews were conducted with Kurds from the city of Mosul. They included Kaka'i Kurds as well as Kurds from the tribes of Zebari, Harki and Goran from the city. The Kurdish respondents perceived the security situation in the city as extremely unstable. Bomb explosions and abductions were common. Kurds, due to their involvement in the Peshmerga and voting for Kurdish political parties, were particularly targeted. One female respondent said, "If we had one day of calm, it would be followed by ten days of unrest." Reported differences between the city's various neighborhoods were minor and very few. According to female respondents, the peripheral neighborhoods were safer than the central ones. Male respondents focused more on exclusionary policies of Saddam's regime by referring to their first displacement in 1977. Respondents, moreover, pointed to Iraqi Ba'ath policies, under which Kurds were denied property rights in the city. Even after 2003, when these policies were formally removed, the local government of Ninewa remained reluctant to give Kurds the same formal documents normally given to others. The respondents complained of threats they were receiving from local people. One respondent said, "If they said bad things about the Kurds, we were unable to respond to them… we had to be silent." Another respondent said, "If a Kurdish person had money and he wanted to open a business, they would immediately send him a threat and would not allow him to open it… they immediately replaced it with their own business."

Contrary to other communities from the city of Mosul, Kurdish respondents tended not to complain as much as others about the Iraqi army's practices in the city. However, some were quite critical of the local police because of their frequent and random raids on people's homes. According to Kurdish respondents, the local police was always searching for weapons in homes and was able to confiscate many arms. One respondent said, "The army was good, because they were not from the city." Kurdish residents considered the Iraqi army to be neutral because it did not consist of Arab Sunnis from the city of Mosul.

Many services were lacking in the city. Female respondents reported that electricity supplies were restricted to 14 hours a day, provided jointly by government and private generators. Water provision was also inadequate. In terms of services, respondents were able to report slight differences between neighborhoods. Job opportunities were very few and, for Kurds, the only opportunity was to volunteer for the Peshmerga and Asaish in the KRI. Women were mostly housewives and did not have to look for job opportunities.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER COMMUNITIES

Respondents (mainly females) described relations between different minority communities as tolerable. They particularly focused on the peaceful nature of Christians and Shabak, with whom they had friendships, exchanged family visits and coexisted within the same neighborhoods.

PERCEPTIONS OF ISIS NATURE AND SUPPORT

In spite of the frequent security crises, the complete collapse of Mosul was unexpected. Respondents tended to think that a conspiracy lay behind the city's easy fall. "Mosul was sold" was a common expression among Kurdish respondents. They mainly hold the view that ISIS consists of foreigners and locals, with a dominance of former Ba'athists and criminals released by ISIS from Mosul prisons. According to respondents, former Ba'ath loyalists were in possession of detailed information about the city's inhabitants, allowing them to specifically target Shi'a, Yazidi or Christian residents.

RETURN, PROTECTION AND REVENGE

Kurds (particularly female respondents) were enthusiastic to return because of their emotional connection to their homes. They expressed concern over the looting of their homes and shops and stressed the importance of compensation for those affected. A strong motivation for their desire to return was grievance against their displacement conditions. Kurdish respondents expressed great frustration towards the lack of job opportunities and disappointment with the level of support for Kurdish IDPs in Erbil. It should be noted that male Kurdish respondents were not as enthusiastic to return as their female counterparts. In addition to possible revenge reactions, men were worried about the Mosul residents remaining in the city, i.e. those who did not flee after the collapse of Mosul. One respondent said, “In the future, they will tell us: why did you flee? There has to be something with you…” He implied that tensions may occur as they will be perceived as pro-Kurdish parties and will consequently face problems back in Mosul. Kurdish women, too, were reluctant to believe that intercommunity relations were intact after ISIS. One female respondent said, “After all that happened, it is definitely difficult for us to trust others.”

2.4 Shabak

SECURITY, EMPLOYMENT AND SERVICES

With regards to the security situations prior to the advance of ISIS, Shabak respondents generally described it as calm. Contrary to the western side of the city of Mosul, the eastern side and the Ninewa Plain were considered safe for the Shabak community. This was stated by both female and male respondents. According to them, the Peshmerga’s presence in their areas had a decisive role in maintaining order and security. Although they were not officially in charge of security in some of these areas, police forces (who institutionally belonged to GoI) were taking their orders from the Peshmerga. However, Shabak respondents were reluctant to mention any positive contribution of the Iraqi army in maintaining security. It was noted that the involvement of a number of Shabak respondents in the Peshmerga and local police has played a role in this view. The city of Mosul was described as particularly unsafe for Shabaks. They were not able to commute to the city for work purposes or to process their formal transactions. It was also difficult for Shabak university students to stay in, or even commute to, the city of Mosul.

The GoI and its army in Ninewa Governorate were labeled as sectarian and incapable of maintaining security or providing services to the inhabitants of the area. One respondent said, “Neither army nor police were able to pursue criminals or establish justice.” Respondents shared with us their personal experiences to show how, in a number of instances, the Iraqi army and local police avoided any actual confrontation with terrorists and criminals. Some respondents shared the view that “people joined the police only for the salary”, to imply that they felt no responsibility towards the people. The GoI was further accused of creating sectarianism as most of the respondents believed that sectarianism was new to them and, more specifically, they pointed to the 2003 war as the spark for sectarian conflict in Ninewa Governorate.

Services were evaluated as satisfactory among Shabak respondents. Electricity was provided by the government and private sectors (local electric generators). Inhabitants reported having enough potable water. Nevertheless, Shabaks, who mostly live in villages, suffered from absense of policies for the development of their agricultural economy. Thus, many male respondents pointed out that their younger members were dependant on the KRI for job opportunities. The fact that most Shabaks were unable to go to Mosul for work due to security meant they had no choice but to

depend on the neighboring areas of KRI.

INTERCOMMUNITY RELATIONS

Shabak respondents portrayed a positive image of inter-community relationships between themselves and their neighbors. Coexistence in the same neighborhood, cross-community friendships, marriages (with the exception of Christians due to religious differences), and joint business activities were examples of constructive relations among the communities. In spite of this, respondents were divided with respect to the prevalence of trust between communities. While some stressed the existence of trust, others denied the predominance of inter-community trust. Some respondents had very positive first hand experiences with their neighbors, while others mentioned negative experiences. Male Shabaks tended to describe Shabak-Christian relationships as particularly positive and frequently referred to business relationship between the two sided.

PERCEPTIONS OF ISIS NATURE AND SUPPORT

The Common understanding amongst Shabaks is that ISIS fighters come from several countries. References were made to a number of European and Middle Eastern countries from where ISIS receives support. Nonetheless, clear accusations were leveled against some Sunni Arabs from Mosul and surrounding areas for having collaborated with ISIS against these communities. Reference was particularly made to youths (of the Sunni Arab community) from Mosul as facilitators for ISIS.

Though Shabak respondents acknowledged that ISIS has attacked all the communities of the area and they were able to refer to ISIS practices of destroying Islamic holy shrines, they believe they were particularly targeted on a number of grounds. One obvious reason was the fact that a considerable percentage of Shabaks are Shi'a Muslims and Hussainiyahs (Shi'a Mosques) existed in these areas. Moreover, according to the respondents, the nature of Shabaks as a peaceful community has also contributed to making them an easy target for ISIS. AT the same time, references were made to the overall security vacuum in the area, betrayal by the Iraqi army, and the presence of ISIS's local spies as factors behind the fall of Mosul. Meanwhile, the engagement of some Shabaks with the Peshmerga and Kurdish political parties is also considered a reason for becoming targets of ISIS fighters. In a few instances, economic jealousies were also cited as motivation for some local Sunni Arabs (who were economically poor) to unite with ISIS against Shabaks (who were their rich neighbors, supported by the Shi'a dominated GoI in Baghdad).

RETURN, PROTECTION AND REVENGE

Shabak respondents expressed enthusiasm to return after the removal of the ISIS threat in the area. Emotional attachment to home is the most influential impetus for return, mainly among female respondents. They were also eager to express the feeling that they had spent their lives building what they now have and were not prepared to easily give up their homes or property. What is more, Shabak IDPs readily pointed to the social and physical freedoms they enjoyed in their home areas as a driver for return. Although respondents, in general, showed satisfaction with the support they receive in IDP camps, they still wished to return. Nevertheless, this does not mean that Shabaks will return immediately after the liberation of their areas. Guaranteeing security (especially with the danger of booby traps and unexploded ordnances) is a precondition for returning. Respondents were also aware of the damage to basic services in the area and their homes. According to them, efforts should be made to rebuild services before they will be able to return. As to private property, people have no reliable information at present concerning

what exactly might have happened to their own properties. However, they are expecting that their homes were damaged and their furniture looted. Therefore, compensation is also necessary for IDPs proposed return. For some Shabaks, the formation of exclusive Shabak Peshmerga units makes them optimists about liberating their villages.

After return, according to the respondents in different focus group discussions, Shabaks will maintain good relationships with other communities of the area, particularly with Christians, Yazidis and Turkmen (particularly Shi'a Turkmen from the Ninewa Plain), who also suffered from ISIS's assault. However, there is disappointment and anger towards Sunni Arabs from the whole Ninewa Governorate who collaborated with and facilitated ISIS advances, and then participated in looting Shabak homes. For Shabaks, future revenge and sectarian strife are strongly possible after return. This does not mean that all Shabaks will seek revenge. The reaction towards the Arab Sunni community may also be segregation and a reduction of interaction to a minimum, without necessarily engaging in any violent reactions against them. To prevent revenge and sectarian strife, some respondents pointed to compensation, fair trials for ISIS collaborators and dialogue as possible effective tools.

2.5 Sunni Arabs

SECURITY, EMPLOYMENT AND SERVICES

Sunni Arab respondents in the focus groups came from the city of Mosul and the southern district of Hadzar. Some men in the focus group discussions originated from the Salah ad-Din Governorate. Broadly speaking, in spite of bombings, respondents from the surrounding areas tended to portray the security situation as stable. These respondents expressed more satisfaction with the performance of the Iraqi army and local police. However, they were unsatisfied with services. In a few villages water was in extremely short supply and was provided by tankers. Electricity was delivered jointly by the government and private generators. Moreover, job opportunities were scarce. According to them, only people with higher education could find jobs. With regards to the city of Mosul, respondents reported a worsened security situation and they believed that from 2003 onwards they have moved "from bad to worse." Again, contrary to their counterparts in the district of Hadzar, they described services as more satisfactory.

For Mosul Arabs, the Iraqi army was sectarian and, in spite of the fact that some Sunnis were engaged in it, mostly dominated by high ranking Shi'a officers. The Iraqi army was dominant and responsible of maintaining order in the city. The local police submitted to the Iraqi army and therefore its role was insignificant. According to male respondents, the Iraqi army did not trust the local police.

Male respondents focused particularly on the destructive impact of the US in Iraq. According to them, "Americans occupied Iraq, made it sectarian and brought in al-Qaida and ISIS." for them, "Iraq has become a battleground for settling international and regional conflicts… America, Iran and Saudi Arabia fight on Iraqi territory." One respondent went further, claiming that "The Americans sold Iraq to Iran." Amid this, there are "weak Iraqis" who have facilitated this foreign intervention in Iraqi affairs.

Among the Arab respondents, the collapse of Mosul is described as sudden and unexpected. Male respondents pointed to the massive arms capabilities enjoyed by the Iraqi army, which were

deemed sufficient to defend the city. A huge number of soldiers were in service and deployed throughout the city of Mosul and surrounding districts. Additionally, the army had access to advanced weaponry. In this regard, female respondents suggested that the Iraqi army ignored the borders [with Syria] and focused instead on the city of Mosul, and thus the border zone was left with a security vacuum.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER COMMUNITIES

Sunni respondents pointed to positive inter-community relationships in their areas. With the exception of Yazidis, who were living in geographically remote locations, they reported having relations of friendship, coexistence in mixed neighborhoods and marriage with other communities. Respondents specially talked about displacement of Christians from the city of Mosul due to the security situations.

PERCEPTIONS OF ISIS NATURE AND SUPPORT

According to the Sunni Arab respondents, ISIS fighters have varying nationalities and are supported by local people. One respondent said, “There is no specific community to be attached to ISIS… there are ISIS collaborators from all communities… there are even Yazidis who converted to Islam and now support ISIS… Even within one single tribe, there are supporters and enemies of ISIS.” The respondents further suggested that local collaborators might be fearful of ISIS and afraid that their honor will be violated if they do not support it. They also claimed that others might have been driven by financial motivation.

Respondents were deeply suspicious about how “thousands of Australians, British, and French and… were able to enter Iraqi territories without support from specific countries.” One respondent said, “I cannot easily travel from Erbil to Sulaymaniyah… there are many checkpoints that I need to go through… How can one travel thousands of kilometers and enter Iraq so easily?” Sunni respondents deny their attachment to ISIS, although they are perceived as linked to it. They complained that some politicians try to present Sunnis as synonyms to ISIS. One respondent referred to a statement by a Shi’a politician saying that “90% of people in the occupied governorates [Mosul, Anbar, Salah ad-Din and, to some extent, Diyala] belong to ISIS.” He pointed out that such a statement is inaccurate and, furthermore, motivates Shi’a militias to perpetrate violence against Sunnis when they enter Sunni dominated governorates.

RETURN, PROTECTION AND REVENGE

Female and male Sunni Arabs in the focus groups expressed different views on return. Female respondents expressed their desperate hope to return. They were entirely dissatisfied with the situation in the IDP camps. One respondent said, “I prefer a tent in Mosul to a palace here.” Although some women reported that the host community was welcoming, some others complained about the discrimination they experience in the camp and even in Erbil. They pointed to their exclusion from job opportunities and the preferential treatment of specific community over others. Some females also stressed that the language differences posed an obstacle to job opportunities for their husbands and sons.

Male respondents, on the contrary, were more pessimistic about return. They claimed that there is no end to Iraq and Mosul’s problems. They were deeply worried about practices of the Popular Mobilization Units (al-hashd al-sha’bi[63]) and future revenge against Sunni Arabs. One respondent referred to the abduction of roughly 100 Sunni Arabs from Salah ad-Din during the ongoing attack on the governorate. They were also sure that IDPs will take revenge against

supposed ISIS collaborators. One point of focus was tribal rules, according to which one must take revenge if a family member (close or extended) was harmed by a stranger.

The respondents stressed that an end to Iran's intervention is the only solution for Iraq's crisis. One respondent said, "Iraqi Shi'as are not our enemies… they are tools in Iran's hand and they are not aware of that."

2.6 Turkmen

SECURITY, EMPLOYMENT AND SERVICES

Turkmen respondents (who were from Tel Afar and the city of Mosul) in the focus groups were reluctant to describe the security situation as satisfactory compared to other communities of the Ninewa Plain. According to respondents, the last election of 2013 was a turning point for the escalation of violence in Ninewa Governorate. It was a time when antagonism between "al-Nujaifi family and al-Maliki reached its peak." Turkmen reported widespread violence and terrorist attacks in their areas. There were complains about the practices of the Iraqi army in the area. Respondents described the army as "sectarian and insulting." Although one women respondent said that, "if one respected the law, the army would treat them with respect," the overwhelming majority of respondents were critical of the Iraqi army. Respondents narrated many incidents showing how they were insulted by the army at multiple checkpoints inside and outside the city of Mosul. A respondent said, "At the checkpoints you were requested to show you Iraqi ID card. If your name were Omar or Othman[64] you would have been severely insulted." Local police, according to them, was completely powerless and subjugated by the army. Respondents from Tel Afar accused PM al-Maliki of ignoring them while they were defending their areas against ISIS. One respondent said, "We defended it for 13 days with the support of the local police only, but Maliki was not ready to support us despite our many calls."

Service provision was poor, though there had been disparities between areas or neighborhoods in the city of Mosul. Turkmen respondents mentioned that appointment in government almost entirely relied on wasta (connections or nepotism). "If you had a wasta you would were appointed to a job. Otherwise, you would have no chance," one respondent said. They also pointed out that bribes were common in the area. One respondent said, "I was appointed for a job because I paid a bribe of USD 2,200." Another respondent said that, "You had to be Maslawi (original resident of the old city of Mosul) or you had to bribe to get a government job. Other government organizations were also described as corrupt. Courts were not able sentence criminals. A respondent mentioned that criminals were able to leave the prison after only one day, saying, "They were put in prison one day and discharged the next."

RELATIONS WITH OTHER COMMUNITIES

Turkmen respondents initially described inter-community relationships in their areas as positive. They referred to friendships, marriage, and living in mixed neighborhoods as signs of positive relations between different communities. Respondents in one focus group discussion in particular mentioned the appointment of the head of Tel Afar police in 2004 as the starting point of sectarianism. According to the respondents, the police chief was from the Shi'a sect and he at once began to exclude Sunnis from the police forces. One respondent said "I was a police officer and when he arrived he asked me if I am a Sunni. When I confirmed, he immediately discharged me. He did it with other Sunnis too." From then on sectarianism rose

and segregation between Shi'a Turkmen and Sunni Turkmen developed. Relations with other communities, mainly Kurds, Yazidis and Christians, were reported to have been good. A number of respondents stated clearly that, "sectarianism does not exist between people: it is politicians who created it."

PERCEPTIONS OF ISIS NATURE AND SUPPORT

Turkmen respondents considered ISIS ranks comprised a variety of Arab and Western nationalities. They claimed that ISIS is supported by local people, or sleeping cells (al-khalaya al-naima[65]). The respondents pointed out that ISIS targeted all communities. One respondent said, "ISIS was targeting whoever works with the government, whether Shi'a or Sunni." Nevertheless, they described the situation as a sectarian attack. Respondents overtly criticized the GoI for being responsible for the swift advance into Mosul and the surrounding areas, to the extent that some respondents suspected the GoI of conspiring to let Mosul fall. One respondent said, "Al-Maliki sold Mosul." Turkmen respondents believed that the Iraqi army had the capacity to defend the city against ISIS, but did not. One respondent, who was also a soldier in Iraqi army, said, "in the Kindi military camp we had the most advanced American weapons… we had tanks… we could have fought for many days even without any external support."

RETURN, PROTECTION AND REVENGE

On return, Turkmen respondents were more divided than other communities. The Tel Afaris in the focus group were totally distrustful of the GoI and showed little desire to return, citing fears that history will be repeated. They expressed no confidence that the GoI and Iraqi army were capable of maintaining security in their areas. Among this group, there was a call for the integration of Tel Afar and other Turkmen areas into the KRI in order to ensure security. One respondent said, "For me, it does not matter who rules…Muslim, Christian, Jew, Shi'a, or Sunni!… It does not matter at all... I need somebody who can protect me." Other respondents in the focus group expressed their hope and desire to return, particularly given news of recent military advances by the Peshmerga, the Iraqi army and, to some extent, the Popular Mobilization Units (al-hashd al-sha'bi). Similar to other communities, compensation was considered necessary for any return to happen, particularly for the Turkmen farmers who stated that most of their agricultural equipment has been looted by ISIS. A few others mentioned the return of employees to former jobs (government jobs) as a necessary future steps. Women respondents particularly complained about the difficult camp situation which made them desperate to return. Female respondents focused on the deplorable sanitation, cleanliness and health conditions in the camps.

Respondents expressed their belief that future relations with other communities will be as good as it was, with the exception of local collaborators with ISIS. Though some respondents looked to the courts and the State for a fair trial of collaborators, revenge remains highly likely. A considerable number of male respondents overtly expressed their intention to exact revenge. One respondents said, "After the defeat of ISIS, I will go back… I will sell all my properties and will take revenge on those who killed my brothers, and then I will leave the area forever."

2.7 Yazidis

SECURITY, EMPLOYMENT AND SERVICES

The Yazidi focus group respondents came from Bashiqa in the Ninewa Plain and from Sinjar, northwest of Mosul city. Large differences were noted between the two areas in terms of

security and services. The Ninewa Plain had been relatively safe and controlled by the Peshmerga, while remotely located from central authority. In Bashiqa, services were also better than Sinjar, being located close to Erbil and the Ninewa Plain towns of Qaraqosh and Bartella. For instance, respondents reported having water twice a day while Sinjar received water delivery one day out of 15, obliging many inhabitants to have their own water wells. As for electricity, the Ninewa Plain inhabitants relied on the national grid and private generators. In Sinjar, the national grid was provided for 2 hours in each 6 hour period.

The Yazidi respondents from the Ninewa Plain noted their good relations with other communities in the area. In Sinjar, besides living in mixed neighborhoods, Yazidi respondents mentioned, for instance, their support for Turkmen families who fled Tel Afar and taken refuge in Sinjar, hosting them at home and sharing their possessions with them. According to the respondents, sectarianism emerged in 2003 and as a consequence Yazidis, Christians and Shabaks were targeted on the grounds of their religion or sect. Respondents from Sinjar also mentioned their positive relations with other communities and specifically stressed their relations with Christian and Kurds. In spite of the fact that the Yazidi community has regularly been targeted by Sunni Arabs from 2003 onwards (according to the Sinjar respondents, at least one Yazidi was killed every month) relations between Yazidis and Sunni Arabs were tolerable. The bomb explosions of 2007 in Qahtaniya and Siba Shekh Khidri (in Sinjar) undermined relations between the two communities. The explosions left more than hundred Yazidi dead.

Both Sinjar and Bashiqa respondents pointed out that Mosul city was unsafe for Yazidis. There were plenty of stories of Yazidis trapped in the city, abducted and killed. For Yazidi female students it was much more difficult to commute to Mosul. One Yazid female student said, “there were direct threats against Yazidi students… we had to wear the hijab (veil) at university to hide our religious identity… all other Arab students from Mosul wore *hijab*... so we were trying to be like them.” With the deteriorating security situations in Mosul, Yazidi students’ movements became increasingly restricted. The same student said, “Lately, we were not able to attend classes… we were going to the university on exam days only,” in order to reduce their presence in the city of Mosul to a minimum.

The Sinjar area in particular suffered from a lack of job opportunities. The few available opportunities were taken through *wasta.* Religious and cultural traditions prevented Sinjar women from working outside the home. Most Yazidi Sinjar residents worked as day laborers on farms or in construction.

PERCEPTIONS OF ISIS NATURE AND SUPPORT

Yazidi respondents, especially from Sinjar, described ISIS as their neighbors: Sunni Arabs with whom they had had a rather good relationships. A respondent said, “Those who attacked Sinjar were not from Afghanistan and Pakistan… nor from any other country… they were our Arab neighbors.” Another respondent said, “After the liberation of northern areas [e.g. *Zumar* and *Sinune*] we found our belongings in our neighbors’ houses.” Thus, according to them, Arab Sunni neighbors had directly engaged in looting Yazidi homes. Some respondents mentioned specific Arab tribes, such as *Matiuun* and *Khatunin,* as local collaborators with ISIS.

In addition to the religious differences and the fact that ISIS deems Yazidis infidel, Yazidi respondents pointed to other grounds for targeting them. The fact that Yazidis are a powerless minority without an army or weapons made them easy targets. Damaging Yazidi honor by

kidnapping their women and smuggling them to other countries was also a reason for targeting Yazidis, according to the respondents. Moreover, some respondents viewed the issue as Yazidis paying the price for being Kurds. One respondent said, “Kurds do not have support and weapons… they are a minority who are targeted by all neighbors.” Furthermore, a number of respondents mentioned the security vacuum (the ineffectiveness of the Iraqi army) and international agendas as part of the reasons behind the emergence of ISIS.

RETURN, PROTECTION AND REVENGE

Respondents were keen to return to their home areas. However, like Christian IDPs, they call for international protection in Sinjar and the Ninewa Plain. A few respondents stated that even if Sinjar were to be controlled by the KRI, it would still require international protection. Compared to other communities, Yazidis distrust of their neighbors is very strong. The respondents focused more on the psychological damage to their community than on other issues, such as compensation or service provision in their areas. All other focus groups acknowledged that Yazidis suffered the most. In many instances, respondents from other communities persistently repeated the expression, “Compared to Yazidis, nothing happened to us.”

With the exception of Sunni Arabs and Arab tribes who cooperated with ISIS, Yazidi respondents expressed their willingness to maintain good relations with other communities. Respondents particularly stressed their good relations with Christians, Shi’a and Kurds. Even though, Yazidi respondents made a distinction between Islam and ISIS, some of them believed that the image and reputation of Islam have been damaged by ISIS. One respondent said, “It is no longer a desired religion.” It will not be easy for Yazidis to live again with their Arab neighbors. In fact, some respondents considered the removal of Arab communities a precondition for their own return. Yazidi respondents showed little trust in the effectiveness laws and courts in achieving justice and expressed their desire for revenge.♦

3. Narratives on the fall of Mosul and persecution of minorities

This Chapter provides analysis of the secondary data review in Chapter İ and the primary data of the focus groups in Chapter İİ. Both sets of data are analyzed in light of explanatory and consultative sessions with stakeholders and experts. This chapter, firstly, presents an explanation of the dynamics of the socio-political crisis in Ninewa Governorate after 2003, culminating in İSİS taking control. Against this background, the chapter discusses a range of explanations for the fall of Mosul. İt then shifts focus to the impacts of political instability in the Ninewa Governorate and the discourse that led to the targeting of minorities since 2003 and expulsion from their areas in Ninewa in 2014.

3.1 From authoritarian rule to ineffective government

A FAILING NATION STATE

The year 2003 witnessed the collapse of the Ba'ath regime (1968-2003) in Iraq. The era of Ba'ath rule was marked by wide scale use of violence and exclusionary policies against the majority Shi'a Arabs, the Kurds and the other ethnic and religious minorities of Yazidis, Turkmen, Kaka'is, Faili Kurds, and Shabaks. As Anderson and Stansfield[66] argue, violence and exclusion were not new to Iraq, persisting since its foundation in 1921. But, under Ba'ath party domination and, more particularly, after Saddam Hussein came to power in 1979, violence and exclusion reached their peak and the most brutal forms of violence and demographic engineering were put into practice. Demographic change and Arabization of ethnically mixed governorates (Such as Kirkuk, Ninewa, Salah ad-Din and Diyala), even leading to the use of chemical weapons in Northern Iraq, were manifestations of the authoritarian rule prevailing for over three decades of Iraqi history.

Destructed house owned by Peshmerga member, Zummar district, March 2015

The end of Ba'ath domination did not signal the beginning of an effective democracy in Iraq. In spite of the fact that Iraqis voted for a constitution in 2005 and the GoI held multiple elections at different levels of government (provincial, regional in the KRI, and national), the State of Iraq proved in many respects to be weak and ineffectual. The failure of the Iraqi State has been summarized in three aspects:

- The inability of Iraqis to build an inclusionary political system which enabled different ethnic and religious communities to participate meaningful in governance.
- The inability of Iraq's successive post 2003 governments to monopolize the use of violence and to fill the security vacuum in a number of governorates from the centre towards the northwest of the country.
- The failure of Iraqi governments adequately to provide services, create job opportunities and achieve an acceptable level of economic and social development.

These aspects of failure in post 2003 Iraq resulted, according to Andrew Flibbert[67], in a legitimacy crisis, security collapse and ineffective administration and service provision. Similar explanations have been put forward by IDP communities and stakeholders for the emergence of ISIS and other extremist organizations in Iraq in general and in Ninewa Governorate in particular.

It can be argued that, since 2003, Iraqi politicians were unable efficiently to tackle the country's major issues. At the national level, the status of Sunni Arabs -perceived to have been formerly privileged by the Ba'ath regime- was a source of tension and conflict. In 2005, the predominantly

Sunni Arab governorates of Ninewa, Salah ad-Din, Diyala and Anbar boycotted the referendum on the constitution and the first post-Ba'ath general election. The election turnout was extremely low, never surpassing a third of eligible voters (2%, 17% and 29% in Anbar, Ninewa and Salahddin, respectively[68]). In addition, a number of contested issues prevented the KRI and GoI from establishing a cooperative relationship over the last 12 years. Federalism and power sharing arrangements have always been vague and imbalanced, especially in the DIBs, where the management of natural resources (mainly oil) remains disputed. Even though Iraq's constitution has tackled contested issues in a number of its articles, competing interpretations, political instability, security problems and the lack of logistic support have hindered the adequate implementation of the constitution.

POLITICAL CRISIS AND INEFFECTIVE NINEWA LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Disputes at the national level weighed heavily on political developments in the Ninewa Governorate. Sunni Arabs, who made up the majority of its population by 2003, boycotted the first provincial council elections of 2005, which gave Kurdish dominated political parties a majority in the Ninewa Provincial Council of 2005-2009. In 2009, Al- Hadba list (predominantly Sunni Arab) led by later Governor of Ninewa, Athel al- Nujaifi, won the provincial elections[69]. Disputes between Al-Hadba List and the Ninewa Brotherhood List (dominated by Kurdish parties) resulted in fragmented mandates on responsibilities for the Iraqi army, the Peshmerga, and the administration of DIBs in the Ninewa districts of Sinjar, Tel Afar, the Ninewa Plain and Makhmur. The lack of political settlement under Article 140 (concerning DIBs, see also p. 16) allowed a situation to persist where Kurdish authorities where in de facto control of parts of the Ninewa Governorate, in particular the Ninewa Plain. The Ninewa local authorities, the Governorate and the Ninewa Provincial Council, aligned to the central GoI, where not only divided but also increasingly powerless to fulfill their mandate.

POOR SECURITY PROVISION IN NINEWA GOVERNORATE

In line with the failure of the Iraqi central state, Ninewa Governorate from 2003 onwards was considered one of the most dangerous governorates of Iraq[70]. A number of radical organizations such as al-Qaida, the Mujahidin Group, Ansar Al-Sunna Group, Rashidin Group, Naqshbandiyah Group and ISIS, have always been active in Ninewa generally and more particularly in the capital city of Mosul. They were not only able to practice numerous forms of violence (ranging from assassinations and abductions, to suicidal attacks and car and truck bombings) but also to impose an Itawa (tax) on businessmen, pharmacy owners, taxi drivers and so on (interview with stakeholders and key informants). A study[71] has shown that almost half million Iraqi deaths occurred between 2003-2011. The study also estimated the figure for weekly adult deaths at 766 when violence reached its peak in this period (70% of deaths was attributable to war-related violence). Amid the prevalent violence in Ninewa Governorate, the Iraqi army and local police did not demonstrate any significance ability to establish security. Focus group discussions with IDP communities and individual stakeholder interviews also pointed out that these forces were infiltrated and did not have the capacity to counter violence in the Ninewa Governorate.

UNEQUAL SERVICE PROVISION AND LIMITED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN NINEWA GOVERNORATE

The local government of Ninewa demonstrated almost no success in providing basic services to citizens. IDP communities in Ninewa Governorate reported a widening gap in service delivery between the various districts, as well as between Mosul city neighborhoods. So, while Sinjar focus group respondents referred to a bi-monthly water supply as the standard in the period

preceding their displacement, some of their counterparts in the Ninewa Plain reported bi-daily water supplies. Furthermore, job opportunities were scarce and, if they existed at all, were mainly limited to posts in the Iraqi army, Peshmerga and security forces.

Hence, the failure of the Ninewa Governorate administration is partly rooted in a broader failure at the national level. As Iraq failed to move in the direction of effective democracy, so did Ninewa. Politically, the local government of Ninewa was far from cohesive. Rivalries between Arab and Kurdish parties ran deep until roughly 2012, and the disputing parties were unable to develop an acceptable and effective form of power sharing. Except for a relative decrease in violent incidents during the period 2004-2008, law-enforcement bodies showed little success in establishing security. Stakeholders and IDP communities also stressed the poor services and high levels of unemployment especially in the mostly tribal areas surrounding the city of Mosul.

3.2 The fall of Mosul and polarized communities

PERCEPTIONS AND ANALYSIS OF THE FALL OF MOSUL

A number of factors contributed to the sudden fall of Mosul in June 2014. Part of these factors were related to the overall development of Iraq following the 2003 war (see 4.1). However, there are other factors which specific to Mosul and the whole Ninewa Governorate.

First and foremost, it should be emphasized that widespread insecurity from 2003 onwards, which was compounded by high unemployment rates, extremely poor service provision and rampant corruption in various governmental bodies (both civic and military) caused disenchantment and anger against the new elected government of Ninewa. Just a few days before ISIS's takeover of Mosul, a survey showed that 91% of the inhabitants of Mosul city (in contrast to 55% among Shi'a respondents) agreed with the statement that, "Things in Iraq were going in the wrong direction."[72] Similarly, our focus group discussions and stakeholder interviews revealed that the inhabitants of Ninewa Governorate were deeply dissatisfied with the performance of executive (Governorate), legislative (Ninewa Provincial Council) and judicial (courts and judges) institutions. On top of the wide variance in service provision and employment opportunities between the predominantly Shi'a and Sunni governorates in Iraq, the weak levels of security and justice noted by the IDP respondents show a significant difference with their fellow Iraqis. One week before the collapse of Mosul, 80% of its residents felt unsafe in their neighborhood and 60% (again in contrast to 30% of Shi'a counterparts) reported a lack of trust in the judicial system[73]. Thus, the legitimacy of the entire political system in the Ninewa Governorate was greatly damaged. This logically meant a strong decline in popular support and trust in the provincial authorities. Key informants added that this lack of support in local government was especially absent in Arab tribal areas around the city of Mosul, which, in addition to the above problems, suffered from poor educational services.

Equally important is the aversion of Mosul inhabitants to the practices of Iraqi army and the ineffectiveness of the local police in dealing with criminals and terrorist attacks. For many, the Iraqi army was sectarian; applying practices which Mosul's population found abusive and insulting. Respondents and stakeholders reported multiple and unnecessary checkpoints, road blocks, frequent raids and searches as examples of the Iraqi army's behavior in Mosul. A member of the Ninewa Provincial Council noted: "Consequently, relations between the army and the people turned to enmity. People viewed the army as sectarian and the army, in turn, looked at the people as a source of danger and terror." Furthermore, the Iraqi army was totally

distrustful of the local police, which it perceived as infiltrated by terrorists. As a result, the Iraqi army in Mosul tried to paralyze the local police and, consequently, the latter became powerless and subjected to army commanders.

What contributed to the further deterioration of the situation was Baghdad's negative engagement with the demands of demonstrators, who started sit-ins during the period of Arab Spring uprisings (2011 onwards) and took to occupying squares in, among others, Mosul city. According to a member of the Ninewa Provincial Council, some of these demands were very "Simple and legitimate and could have been met very easily… For example, the Counter Terrorism Court was in the Kindi military camp in Mosul and the demonstrators wanted it to be transferred to a more suitable location… Or, there were occasions in which judges came from Baghdad to try people in Mosul." Al-Maliki's government ignored these demands, thus increasing hostility towards his government.

LOCAL SUPPORT FOR ISIS IN NINEWA

In addition to people who were utterly angry and upset as a result of overall degradation of life conditions, there were other communities who supported ISIS on different grounds. Among them were ex-Ba'athists, Sunni extremists, opportunists and some Arab tribes. As to the first group, informants related that Mosul was a stronghold for the Ba'ath party and, under its rule, provided the Iraqi army with skillful commanders and soldiers. In today's Mosul, former Ba'athists constitute a segment of society whose interests have been deeply harmed. The de-Ba'athification Law issued by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) came into force in May 2003. As a result of its implementation, many former army commanders and high-ranking bureaucrats were dismissed from state apparatuses, severely humiliated in the process, and subsequently developed hostility to the new government of Ninewa as a constituent part of the new system of state.

The second group, Sunni extremists, support ISIS's discourse. Extremist groups have been active in Mosul since 2003. Key informants pointed out that al-Qaida was the first to penetrate the city of Mosul during the fight against occupation by coalition forces following the fall of the regime, and ISIS is seen as an extension of this organization.

The third group consists of some Arab tribes, particularly from areas surrounding the city of Mosul, who supported ISIS's advance. According to key informants, this category of ISIS supporters consists of persons who fled some areas of the Governorate of Dohuk following the Kurdish uprising of 1991 and took shelter in nearby rural areas of the Ninewa Governorate. During Ba'ath's rule, those tribes had moved to Dohuk as part of the Arabization process. Within this category, there are other Arab tribes, who were displaced from the Makhmur area after 2003, when Kurdish farmers reclaimed their lands. In this regards, the Maslawis, who claim to be the original residents of the old city of Mosul, maintain that more rural Arab communities have migrated to the city of Mosul over recent years, constituting a base of support for extremist groups such as ISIS. A key informant said, "These two categories of Arab tribes turned out to be the most stubborn supporters of Al-Qaida and ISIS after 2003" to take revenge for their displacement from areas in Dohuk and Makhmur in Erbil Governorate.

Another source of ISIS support came from opportunistic individuals. As a member of the Iraqi Parliament said, "There are opportunists who support whoever is in control in pursuit of private gains."

Children in Zummar district, March 2015. Mainly Kurdish IDP communities have started to return.

Thus, ISIS's advance to Mosul was facilitated by support from some sections of the local population who facilitated their movement, driven by a variety of motivations, ranging from frustration with and anger at local government, loss of privileges resulting from regime change, sympathy with ISIS ideology, to opportunism and shifting interests.

NARRATIVES FEEDING CONSPIRACY THEORIES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR IDPS RETURN

Besides the required human resources, ISIS's control of Mosul, Iraq's third largest governorate by area and second in terms of proportion of ethnic and religious minorities, also required financial means. Respondents claimed that extremist groups, considered ISIS's precursor, controlled parts of the city of Mosul after the collapse of Ba'ath regime in 2003. *Itawa* (taxes) were imposed, not only on ordinary individual bread-winners, but also on various economic entrepreneurs. Our interviews with representatives in the Ninewa Governorate and focus group discussions show that the Mosul government was well aware of this practice but remained entirely passive or incapable of action towards it.

On a different, but related level, regional instabilities, particularly developments in neighboring Syria, provided ISIS with necessary weaponry. Before ISIS could invade Mosul, it established its own state in Raqqa, Syria, and was able to take over relatively advanced weapons from the Syrian army. Given the inability of the Iraqi army and border police to control the western border with Syria, ISIS fighters could easily move across the borders.

Thus, according to a member of the Iraqi Parliament, ISIS had all it needed to occupy Mosul. He stated that, "ISIS had people (supporters), money and weaponry." In additions to this context, many respondents resorted to conspiracy theory to interpret current developments in the Ninewa

Governorate. Many respondents questioned the unexpected collapse of Iraqi forces comprising over 40,000 soldiers equipped with relatively advanced US arms. People were also suspicious of the easy entry of substantial numbers of foreign fighters to Iraq. Some of these fighters came from very remote countries and, to reach Iraq, they needed to pass through a number of countries. Moreover, there were question marks with respect to ISIS's continuous access to ammunition. Amid this, media reports occasionally supported popular alleged conspiracies. Very recently, news spread that unknown aircraft were dropping ammunition and food to ISIS fighters[74]. For IDPs who believe in conspiracy theory, even return is contingent on behind the scene machinations. One IDP respondent in a focus group said, "Our return is a matter of one telephone call… if they order ISIS to leave, it will leave immediately." These are only a few examples that demonstrate people's skepticism towards regional developments or their perceived powerlessness in deciding their fate.

3.3 Why are minorities targeted?

RELIGIOUS MOTIVATIONS

ISIS and its predecessors have relied extensively on their theological interpretation of Islam to justify targeting religious minorities[75]. This interpretation excludes and targets anyone, even Muslims, who refuse to swear allegiance to their own leader or, in the case of Christians, who refuse to pay a special tax *(jizya)*. Apart from these religious justifications, analyses points to various other root causes as contributors to the deliberate targeting of minorities in Iraq generally, and more particularly in Ninewa.

MINORITIES AS SCAPEGOATS

According to Allport[76], scapegoats must be easily recognized, serve as alternative targets instead of the real source of frustration, are defenseless and normally have a history of hostility and aggression against them. All, or a combination of some, of these characteristics apply to the target minorities over the last twelve years in the Ninewa Governorate. Its minorities have been distinguished by physical traits, language or accent differences, name, and place of residence. For example, in the case of male Yazidis and Kaka'is, long mustaches was a prominent indicator of their religious identity. Meanwhile, in spite of the fact that the overwhelming majority of inhabitants of the Ninewa Governorate speak the local Arabic dialect, still some accent differences exist. A Shabak respondent from the Ninewa Plain told us that, "We were not able to go to Mosul because they would recognizes us from our accent, even though the difference is very slight." For some Shi'a Turkmen, furthermore, names such as *Ali, Hussain* and other Shi'a related names made them targets of criminal and radical groups. On other occasions, particularly with villages in the Ninewa Plain, the name of the village could be an identifying clue. So, for example, someone from the Wardak village would certainly be Kaka'I, as the village is known to be exclusively Kaka'i. Hence, although respondents in the focused groups repeatedly pointed to local spies who revealed their ethnic and religious identities, those attacking the minorities also relied on information from such physical and socio-cultural characteristics.

MINORITIES EXCLUDED FROM THE LOCAL SECURITY STRUCTURE

Ninewa minorities have frequently been targeted, in line with this scapegoating, but were never able to respond to such aggression in any effective manner. In our focus group discussions, it was made clear that minorities perceive themselves as defenseless. They were neither protected by the local Ninewa government nor the national government, nor did they possess their own self-protection capabilities. Even in the case of Kurds, with their Peshmerga, or the

Christians, who had *hirasat* community guards in the Ninewa Plain, these armed groups lacked the training and equipment necessary to engage in major military confrontations. In their view, this situation turned minorities into easy targets for attack on ethnic and religious grounds. In specific instances, minorities paid a price for problems for which they bore no responsibility. For example, Christian respondents said that extremists believed they had cooperated with the US occupation simply because they shared the same religion with the occupiers.

MINORITIES PERCEIVED AS UNTRUSTWORTHY ALLIES

The analyses offered by local stakeholders further holds that former Ba'ath loyalists were disappointed with minority communities, who relatively quickly turned for protection to the post-Ba'ath authorities (first US, then Maliki), cooperated with them, and failed to join the opposition and insurgencies against the new rulers in Baghdad. Minority communities were believed to have backed the Saddam regime and later came to be seen (particularly by disempowered Sunni communities) as always opting to side with new rulers as a survival strategy and, therefore, could not be trusted. Minorities in Mosul, for instance, were specifically targeted for their membership of pro-Baghdad or pro-Kurdish parties. The large waves of recruits to and support for hardline jihadists in Iraq during the Sunni uprisings further intensified the targeting of minorities, framing them as 'foreign spies or members of a 5th column'. In this context, Iraq's Christian minorities were also caught up in the global polarization engulfing Islam after the attacks of on the 9th of September 2001. An interviewed stakeholder stated that whenever a cartoon of the Prophet Mohammad was published in Europe, Christians in Mosul were subjected to violent attacks[77].

PATTERNS OF MINORITY DISPLACEMENTS TO THE NINEWA PLAIN

As minorities did not have the capacity to protect themselves against assault, their reaction has, on the whole, been confined to their tendency towards physical avoidance. They sought to avoid tense or dangerous areas and, as a result, moved to locations deemed safer and better protected. For example, when Christians were first targeted in Baghdad, they took refuge in Mosul, the Ninewa Plain, Erbil and Dohuk. Likewise, when Yazidis were targeted in the city of Mosul, they had no choice but to leave the city and seek shelter in the predominantly Yazidi areas of Sinjar and Zumar, or in the Ninewa Plain. The same applies to Kurds, Shabaks, and Kaka'is. For the Christian community, more especially, displacement increasingly meant leaving Iraq altogether. Following the ISIS assault in the summer of 2014, many minorities fled to towns in the Ninewa Plain. The fact that ISIS eventually took control of the Plain and all minority communities, including the previously displaced, were forced to flee the area, meant that Ninewa minorities were greatly distrustful of both the Kurdish and Iraqi forces' willingness and ability to protect them.

HISTORICAL INTER-COMMUNITY TENSIONS EXACERBATED BY THE FALL OF THE BA'ATH REGIME

Finally, as would befit typical scapegoats, Ninewa minorities have a history of oppression and discrimination. During Ba'ath rule, most were coopted by state policies and, following the collapse of that regime, they started to be terrorized by armed and criminal groups. Stakeholder and focus group discussions confirmed that throughout the Ba'ath era, oppression was practiced by the Iraqi State. However, the state was strong enough to stop communities from attacking one another. The situation changed dramatically after 2003. As the state's monopoly of violence vanished and numerous criminal and armed groups came to the fore. Amid this turmoil, minorities were the first to pay the price for security deterioration. Examples of aggression against minorities in the Ninewa Governorate are abundant. From 2003 onwards, Shi'a (particularly those affiliated

to Shi'a political parties), Kurds (especially those involved in Kurdish parties, the Peshmerga or security forces), Christians (especially those who cooperated with American agencies), Shabaks (principally Shi'a Shabaks), Yazidis, and Kaka'is were targeted. In addition to frequent individual assaults, the bomb explosions of *Qahtanyyah* in 2007, which left several hundred Yazidis dead, the targeting of Christian university students on their way to Mosul in 2005, and the Wardak truck bomb of 2009, are instances in a winder trend of attacks specifically targeting minorities.

POWER VACUUM AND INTRA-COMMUNITY DIVISIONS IN THE ABSENCE OF A DIBS SETTLEMENT

Against this background, political disputes between the GoI and KRG only exacerbated minority vulnerability. This applies particularly to minorities from the Ninewa Plain, as their areas are part of DIBs territories and thus covered by Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution. Both the GoI and KRG pressured or incentivized minorities to take sides in this dispute. Consequently, most minority groups today are politically fragmented or coopted by one side or another of the Arab-Kurdish struggle. The Shabaks, , for instance, are divided between a wing with a Shi'a background that is more pro-GoI, and a Sunni Shabaks wing that stresses its Kurdish identity and supports KRG policies. With Yazidis, Turkmen and Christians the same logic of intra-community division applies[78]. Minority stakeholders have pointed out that they feel victimized by the Arab-Kurdish struggle over their territories.

3.4 The Ninewa Plain accommodating previous displacements

SECURITY INCENTIVES FOR MINORITY MIGRATION TO THE NINEWA PLAIN

The Ninewa Plain basically includes the three districts of Tilkef, Sheikhan and Al-Hamdaniya in the north and east of the city of Mosul. Similar to the whole of the Ninewa Governorate, the Ninewa Plain is a heterogeneous area. Although accurate figures for the population of the existing communities are not available, the Ninewa Plain is home to Christian, Shabak, Yazidi, Kaka'i, and Turkmen communities, where they live in homogeneous and heterogeneous settings. While villages tend to be more homogeneous, urban areas, such as district and sub-district centers, are mostly mixed in ethnic and religious minority composition.

Since 2003, a trend was set in motion where minorities felt under attack and intimidated in various Iraqi cities and choose to migrate to the Ninewa Plain. According to Patriarch Sako,[79] the number of internally displaced Christian in the Ninewa Plain reached 6,110 families in 2008. The bus attack incident, which took the lives of forty Yazidi individuals in the city of Mosul, made Yazidis leave the city early, shortly after the invasion of Iraq. In the same vein, focus group discussions demonstrated that, for minorities in the city of Mosul, areas in the Ninewa Plain were considered much safer. Respondents from areas in the Ninewa Plain expressed satisfaction with security compared to their counterparts in the city of Mosul or even in areas of the Sinjar and Tel Afar districts. Most respondents pointed out that the presence of Peshmerga and Kurdish security forces played a decisive role in maintaining a fairly satisfactory level of law and order. In addition, the Christian *hirasat* also played a positive role in maintaining civic order in their areas of deployment.

ECONOMIC INCENTIVES FOR MINORITY MIGRATION TO THE NINEWA PLAIN

Economically, respondents also confirmed better economic conditions compared to Mosul. This is related to the engagement of considerable portions of minorities in agricultural activities in Ninewa Plain, an area renounced for its fertile soil. Secondly, the Ninewa Plain is geographically close to the cities of KRI, which provided them with many job opportunities, thanks to extensive economic investment over the past decade. Thirdly, the engagement of ethnic and religious minorities (particularly Shabaks and Kaka'is) in the Kurdish Peshmerga and *asaish*, or (in the case of Christians) in the *hirasat*, also provided job opportunities.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND POLITICAL DIVISIONS AFFECTING INTERCOMMUNITY RELATIONS IN THE NINEWA PLAIN

Both in terms of its security and economy, the Ninewa Plain was considered a better enclave in the Ninewa Governorate. Inter-community relations were rather tolerable, including some cross-community marriages (between co-religionists), friendships, trade activities and so on. In this mainly traditional area, face-to-face interaction and individual relations and acquaintance prevailed. Villagers, irrespective of their ethnic or religious backgrounds, used to personally know one another and participate in each other's social occasions. Despite the social peace on the surface, negative stereotyping existed between the communities. For instance, Yazidis were described by informants as devil worshipers[80], while Christians were perceived as isolationists, preferring to close their community against outside intervention. This was justified by Christians' refusal to sell land or houses in the Ninewa Plain to other communities, mainly the Shabak. Christians, on their part, explained that Shabaks used to attend Christian health services in Qaraqosh, which automatically meant they were registered in that district. Christians feared that this would change the demographic composition of the Ninewa Plain.

Portraying a positive image of inter-community relations does not necessarily imply that inter-community discomfort or tensions were entirely absent. As already presented in the preceding section, communities of the area have been manipulated as pawns in political disputes, which may have ultimately harmed future community relations. For example, a number of stakeholder interviews touched on al-Maliki government's policies to support Shi'a Shabaks in the Ninewa Plain by offering financial assistance and employment opportunities in government agencies. Additionally, a number of *Hussainiyahs* (Shi'a mosques) were built in the last few years. For different reasons, some Christian respondents also expressed their frustration as they perceived themselves in a position of inferiority vis-à-vis other communities of the area. Christians in Qaraqosh or Bartella tend to believe that their areas were undergoing demographic change following the movement of other communities to these areas with a historical Christian majority. Other communities shared similar feelings.

INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION FOR THE NINEWA PLAIN

Over the last few years, a couple of political proposals for the Ninewa Plain entered the public debate: to establish a new region/governorate in the Ninewa Plain, or international protection[81]. Both proposals were interpreted as serving the Christian community exclusively. This interpretation led other communities to be much less enthusiastic than Christians towards the proposals. In addition to their negative impact on inter-community relations, the proposals added yet another source of dispute between the GoI and the KRG. As a representative in the Ninewa Governorate suggested, the creation of a region or governorate in the Ninewa Plain was seen by the GoI as a Kurdish scheme to slice off parts of the Ninewa Governorate and attach them at some future point to the KRI. With the international protection proposal, roughly the same division emerged.

Our focus group discussion revealed that international protection was only stressed by Ninewa Plain Christians and Yazidis of both the Plain and Sinjar districts. Other communities, such as Shabaks and Kaka'is, did not raise this issue. Another representative in Ninewa Governorate stated that they didn't not need international protection. Rather, they call for arming and training Peshmerga forces who, according to him, are capable of maintaining peace and security in the area. Meanwhile, a member of the Iraqi Parliament suggested that international protection would preserve peace until the KRG and Baghdad reached agreement on the Ninewa Plain as part of the overall DIBs issue. Hence, and in spite of the fact that the Ninewa Plain manifested a more peaceful social setting within the Ninewa Governorate, political arrangements, overlapping agendas of the GoI and KRG, and ongoing demographic changes had a great impact on inter-community relations in
the Ninewa Plain.

3.5 The İSİS attack: Disappointment & anger towards neighbors

Despite underlying tensions exacerbated by the fall of the Ba'ath regime in 2003, various communities in Mosul city, Sinjar, Tel Afar and the Ninewa Plain described their mutual relations as relatively peaceful. However, with the ISIS assault on Ninewa, they noted, a shift occurred in inter-community trust. While some members of the Sunni Arab community and former Ba'athists were accused of collaborating with criminals and terrorists before 2014, now most or all Sunni Arabs are considered collaborators with or members of ISIS. Almost all the communities (with the exception of the Sunni Arabs themselves) covered by this research accuse local Sunni Arabs of cooperating with ISIS. They are fingered for murder, rape and looting. According to IDP minorities, their relations with their Arab neighbors, though tolerable in the past, quickly turned to enmity with the advent of ISIS. A key informant referred to the case of a Yazidi family who, having enjoyed positive relations for over 30 years with a neighboring Arab family, found their daughter turned into a domestic *jaryah*[82] in the latter's home after ISIS captured Sinjar. Throughout focus group discussions, respondents recounted numerous examples of betrayal by their Sunni Arab neighbors in Mosul city, and by Sunni Arab tribes in the surrounding areas. A representative in Ninewa Governorate said, "In the aftermath of ISIS, trust totally vanished."

Although minority communities are well aware of the diverse ethnic backgrounds of ISIS fighters, they vary in the degree of culpability they attach to Sunni Arabs for involvement in ISIS attack on their areas. In this regard, the extent of harm inflicted on communities explains the intensity of frustration and disappointment with Arab Sunni neighbors. For instance, Yazidis, who are considered the most affected in the Ninewa Governorate, are most disappointed and angry at their neighbors. Yazidi respondents, especially from the Sinjar district, focused little on ISIS foreign fighters. Instead, their attention was mainly focused on the betrayal of surrounding Sunni Arab tribes. Other communities in the Ninewa Plain, who were able to flee before ISIS overran their areas and subsequently remained relatively unharmed, perceive local Arabs as collaborators while also recognizing the multi-ethnic nature of ISIS. There were also noticeable variance within the same community. Based on our focus group discussions, we were able to discern differences between the Yazidis of the Ninewa Plain *(Bashiqa)* and the Yazidis of Sinjar.♦

Civilian house in Zummar district which was destroyed by ISIS forces, March 2015.

4. IDP perspectives on return to Ninewa

This final chapter analyses return scenarios for IDP communities to Ninewa in light of the context outlined in this report. First, the main characteristics of IDP communities affecting future return scenarios are identified. The second section provides some preliminary observations on developments in the recently recaptured areas of Ninewa. Finally, the report concludes with the main historical, security and political trends shaping future inter-community relations in and return to Ninewa after ISIS.

4.1 From segregation to revenge

INTERCOMMUNITY RELATIONS: CO-VICTIMS VS ARAB PERPETRATORS

At first glance, the discourse used by the majority of the IDP communities interviewed for this research shows that the ISIS assault on Ninewa Governorate split ethnic and religious communities into two camps. The first includes communities attacked by ISIS and thus displaced from their home areas. This camp includes the Yazidi, Shabak, Kurdish, Christian, Turkmen, and Kaka'i communities. Although respondents in our research occasionally pointed to the possibility that some ISIS collaborators came from these communities, the dominant assumption is that these communities have been assaulted and thereby deemed victims of aggression. The second camp includes Sunni Arabs who "facilitated, cooperated and participated" in ISIS attacks on minority communities. Some respondents acknowledged that not all Sunni Arabs supported ISIS and that there are Sunni Arabs among IDPs, yet Sunni Arabs are common perceived as ISIS supporters.

During focus group discussions and stakeholder interviews, Yazidis, Shabaks, Turkmen, Christians, Kaka'is and Kurds shared the perception that they are "co-victims" and believed

View on Zummar district, March 2015. Local authorities voice the need for security, reconstruction, services and jobs for people to return

that relations between their own communities will remain peaceful and tolerant. However, future relations with Arab communities in their areas are not restorable. Respondents regularly expressed expressions such as “trust has disappeared” and “everything is over with the Arabs”.

This does not imply that all communities in the first category will react similarly to Sunni Arabs upon return. In other words, different scenarios appear on the horizon, ranging from avoidance and segregation to revenge and even the demolition of Arab villages. The following set of considerations need to be taken into account when mapping scenarios for return to Ninewa.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE LEVEL OF COMMUNITY HARM

The extent of destruction and level of harm inflicted on communities by the ISIS assault influences their perceptions towards return. Ninewa minorities were not equally harmed by ISIS. Yazidis from Sinjar are considered the most affected. In addition to mass killings, hundreds of female Yazidis were abducted, sexually abused and eventually sold into slavery inside and outside Iraq[83]. This has caused deep psychological scaring and anger, not only to victims’ families but also to the entire Yazidi community. UN investigators say ISIS’s targeted violence against Yazidi’s amounts to genocide. Revenge by Sinjar Yazidis against Arab communities upon return are therefore very likely and such incidents have already been reported[84]. Many respondents, and some stakeholders, even considered revenge by the Yazidi community “legitimate and understandable.” Other communities, who were harmed by the ISIS assault on a more limited scale, indicated different responses, such as voluntary segregation and avoiding social contact with Arabs.

ARMED CAPABILITIES OF RETURNING COMMUNITIES

It is also relevant to note the extent to which communities have their own militias or are engaged

in other existing armed forces. They seem to vary in this regard too, with the tendency of the KRG and GoI authorities, as well as Yazidi and Christian diaspora, to establish military forces for these communities. Yazidis may have been the first to form their own military units under the name of "Sinjar Liberation Forces." This is in addition to Yazidi military units within Peshmerga forces. Recently, a number of Yazidis have established a separate military unit within the Popular Mobilization Units *(al-hash al-sha'bi).* Another Yazidi military unit *(Yabasha)* has been established within PKK forces in Zumar and the Sinjar Mountains. This may mean that the Yazidi community now has the capacity to unilaterally engage in revenge actions against suspected local ISIS collaborators. Among other communities, such as Shabaks, Turkmen, Kaka'is and Christians, preparations are underway to establish their own paramilitary units. The support from respective overseas diaspora communities for such armed units, either independently or as part of other military umbrellas, is a trend complicating future inter-community relations in Ninewa.

MEDIA COVERAGE AND COMMUNITY RUMORS

Media coverage of the ISIS assault, current developments in ISIS controlled areas and areas recently recaptured by the Peshmerga, affect IDP communities' perceptions of return. Even in displacement, these communities are influenced by TV and social media. On many occasions, their members presented events and developments as facts, although their knowledge of them was based on rumors or biased media reporting. The lack of access to independent media and the spread of emotionally motivated rumors among IDP communities affect motivations for return and prospects for inter-community relations.

CONTROL AND ORDER BY POST ISIS AUTHORITIES

An important factor is the effectiveness of future short-term and long-term policies that will be developed and implemented by various domestic and international stakeholders to prevent revenge actions and promote inter-community peace. The fact that the Ninewa Governorate's borders are disputed between the GoI and KRG creates the biggest challenge on the ground. The absence of a legal settlement or agreement on who will control and govern the areas recaptured from ISIS creates challenges on the ground in terms of establish order and coordinating efforts. Apart from minimal military cooperation between the GoI and KRG, there is no joint planning or coordination between the two parties with respect to peace and revenge prevention. Part of the problem is that Ninewa's local government is divided and coopted in KRG or GoI political agendas, resulting in an isolated governor and a powerless provincial council. These local representative institutions also seem to lack comprehensive post ISIS strategies. Humanitarian and development bodies, including UN agencies and international organizations, have already noted the great challenge of who to coordinate with in 'newly accessible areas'.

INTRA COMMUNITY DIVISION AND LEADERSHIP CRISIS

A closer look at the historical background of Ninewa communities, and more in depth sessions with the IDP members, show a great polarization and division on both inter-community and intra-community levels. Not only has the ISIS assault exacerbated inter-community tensions, but strife and tensions were also noted within communities. For instance, the Yazidi community of Sinjar was historically marginalized and impoverished compared to the better educated and less isolated Yazidis in the Ninewa Plain or the political elite in Baghdad. According to key informants, the enormous suffering of the Yazidis from Sinjar and the initial lack of response from their traditional leadership have sparked an internal revolt against the Yazidi traditional cultural hierarchy.

Also, within Christian communities, there were various political factions. Some have formed their own militias, aligned to and dominated by either Baghdad, Erbil or the diaspora. The call of Louis Sako, the Chaldean Patriarch of Baghdad, to Christians not to leave the country[85] has angered many displaced Christian communities who see migration as their only survival strategy.

Divisions are especially acute among Arab communities in Ninewa, where no Sunni leader seems to be able to present a strong alternative to ISIS or the traditionally strong Nujaifi family. Since 2003, many Arab communities in Ninewa watched with great frustration as Kurdish communities became more powerful, without a Sunni leadership able to confront them. Although Governor Nujaifi voiced strong opposition to KRG domination of Ninewa during his term in Mosul, he is now hosted by the the KRG in Erbil, leaving ISIS as the only significant Sunni Arab force confronting Kurdish domination. Divisions among Sunni Arab tribes, weakly represented by the Ninewa Tribal Committee, also leads to the poor representation of Arab IDP communities. Meanwhile, reports on the destruction of Arab villages and retaliation against Arab communities after ISIS retreat have created a constituency of support for the latter. Many Arab communities have been displaced to Mosul, where they sought protection with ISIS from the Peshmerga and Shi'a militias.

IDENTITY SHIFTS AMONG NINEWA'S ORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

Years of demographic change, resulting from either government policies, economic factors, or displacement of persecuted communities, have strongly marked community identity in Ninewa. This identity is built on the concept of the 'indigenous inhabitants' of Ninewa. Communities accuse others of not being the original residents of the area. The same accusation is made intra- community. For example, Christians from Baghdad who migrated to Qaraqosh ten years ago are viewed differently by Christian communities from Ninewa. *Mawsulis,* considered the original population of Mosul, accuse other Arab communities from rural areas in Tal Afar and Ba'aj of occupying their city and supporting ISIS. Amid this identity discourse and divisions, both between and within Ninewa IDP communities, as well as their leadership crises, Kurdish parties have come to dominate perspectives on return. The fact that the KRG is hosting the largest number of Ninewa IDPs, and that the Peshmerga (and the Governor of Dohuk) are in de facto control of Ninewa areas recaptured from ISIS, decide for Ninewa IDP communities to whom they should be loyal.

4.2 Lessons of return to 'newly accessible areas': Zumar and Sinjar

RETURN OF MAINLY KURDISH COMMUNITIES

Since the end of 2014, Peshmerga forces have been able to re-capture much of Ninewa's Kurdish/Yazidi-populated territory, also capturing Arab-populated areas along the way. Humanitarian contingency planning anticipates a return of up to 232,000 IDPs to their homes in the Ninewa Governorate over the coming months, assuming that current lines of control between Peshmerga and ISIS are maintained, the areas are cleared of IEDs, and basic services are restored. If ISIS retreats from more areas in Ninewa over the coming months, this IDP return planning figure will increase further.

Humanitarian actors assessing the recaptured areas report a situation of inter-community tensions. Developments surrounding the return of IDPs to Sinjar and Zumar are considered to herald future events on a larger scale in other parts of Ninewa. The main trends identified by

these assessments are a high suspicion among Kurds towards Arab communities who stayed behind during ISIS control. Preliminary assessments note that mainly Kurdish communities have returned. Other IDP communities have mostly not returned to their own areas either because they remain under ISIS control or deemed unsafe for returnees.

LIMITED MOVEMENT OF ARAB RESIDENTS

Key informants report that Kurdish authorities have created military zones under Peshmerga control in parts of the newly recaptured areas, where Arab residents can only move with special permits. A security subcommittee comprised of the Governorate of Dohuk, KDP, Ashaysh and a representative of the Arab Tribal Committee is responsible for screening Arab IDPs. Residents suspected of collaboration with ISIS are sent to Dohuk courts. Two Human Rights Watch reports documented revenge and collective punishment of Sunni Arabs in the Zumar and Tel Afar districts of Ninewa and in Amerli, Salah ad-Din Governorate[86]. Other stakeholders noted that Arab communities in newly captured areas of Ninewa feel obliged to join the ranks of Kurdish parties (mainly KDP) to be able to secure employment or interact with local authorities.

Meanwhile, UN agencies and the Governorate of Dohuk, in coordination with the Ninewa Provincial Council, are planning to establish new IDP camps in Sheikhan and Tel Kaif districts in anticipation of the arrival of thousands of Mosul IDPs when the battle for the city begins. Hosting new IDPs from ISIS controlled areas in Ninewa will greatly affect the already tense community relations and further complicate IDP return.

4.3 Determining factors for İDP return to Ninewa and post conflict resolution

DESIRE FOR RETURN AND FRUSTRATION WITH DISPLACEMENT

Future peace-building efforts in the Ninewa Governorate needs to take into account disparities along geographic and community lines. In this respect, distinctions between the city of Mosul and the Ninewa Plain should be made. While minorities in the urban setting of Mosul are less geographically concentrated, in the Ninewa Plain they have a stronger hold. In addition to the heterogeneous setting on a district and sub-district levels, there are ethnically and religiously homogeneous villages. Return scenarios for IDP communities depend highly on the specific location of return and the history of such locations, especially with regard to the level of demographic change policies. The Ninewa Governorate is not only heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity, religion, economy, development, services and effective rule, but also with regards to the degree of demographic change and recent history of inter-community peace. Return scenarios will be affected by recent developments in particular in locations which have been subject to various waves of demographic interventions.

The vast majority of respondents from all ethnic and religious minorities in the Ninewa Governorate did express a strong desire to return. This is in spite of strong grievances and doubts about any political, security, economic or service related guarantees. Female respondents emphasized the difficult living conditions of IDP communities in camps and their attachment to their homes in Ninewa. Male respondents focused on the humiliating circumstances of being dependent on assistance as IDPs and on difficulties in securing employment in the KRG because of the fact that many cannot speak Kurdish.

Stakeholders within IDP communities noted that the longer their areas remained under ISIS control, the less confidence they would have in a quick military assault by the Peshmerga or Iraqi forces. With clear prospects for return diminishing, IDP communities will look for resettlement in the region or abroad. Moreover, the fact that the government of Ninewa has exhibited an inability to influence military developments or provide adequate services for the displaced has reduced their trust in local Ninewa government structures to an all-time low.

PROTECTION OF MINORITIES

IDP minority communities demand assurance that they will not experience a repeat of past atrocities upon their return. A tragic decade of violence against ethnic and religious minorities peaked with the sudden fall of Mosul, which proved the fragility of the Iraqi army and Peshmerga and their inability to protect minorities in their home areas. The main political question IDP communities wrestle with is who should underwrite their protection upon return. Opinion is divided between the GoI, the KRG, international protection or militarized self-defense units. Ethnic and religious minorities are polarized over this political question, and are further torn by the Kurdish-Arab tussle over DIBs. Meanwhile, Christians and Yazidis generally tend to stress the need for international protection. Again, in line with political affiliations, other communities are divided between those calling for arming and training Peshmerga forces in the area, and those who prefer policies of arming communities. Against this background, the Iraqi army and local police are the least trusted as future guarantors of order and security in the Ninewa Governorate.

MILITIAS, RETALIATION AND CONCERN FOR RENEWED CONFLICT

Another main concern for IDP communities in connection with return is the potential for renewed conflict. The ISIS assault exacerbated already tense relations between communities, especially between the Arab community and other minorities. Any acts of violent or revenge will impact future preparedness to return. Apart from retaliation against supposed ISIS collaborators, trauma resulting from the ISIS assault will have a great impact on social harmony within communities, particular within the Yazidi community.

One of the most dangerous outcomes of the ISIS assault is the emergence of ethnic and religious militias. Not only is there a growing trend for communities to take up arms, but both the GoI and KRG are also implementing policies for arming military units composed exclusively of minorities from affected areas. In spite of the fact that both sides assert that these policies seek to involve local people in the future liberation of Ninewa, such policies would enable community groups to act beyond the remit of official governorate authorities. Bearing in mind the area's fragility in the aftermath of the ISIS assault (inter-community distrust), such a policy increases the space for acts of revenge. It is highly likely that militia forces will take part in any future attack on the Ninewa Governorate. This, first, may create a high potential for ethnic and religious violence and, second, it is not clear how longer term relations between such diverse military wings will develop in such a relatively small geographical area. Therefore, concerns over newly created community military units will continue to be an issue and will require urgent attention by different domestic and international actors.

DIBS SETTLEMENT DECISIVE FOR POST CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NINEWA

The lack of a settlement on DIBs underpins all the uncertainties surrounding the future of Ninewa and the return of IDP communities in a post ISIS context. As stated earlier in this report, an agreement between the KRG and GoI over future control of disputed areas is decisive for a peaceful return of IDP communities, whose lack of confidence in such a settlement is clear and

continues to undermine their willingness to return. The military support for the Peshmerga in their struggle against ISIS is favoring the Kurds in the DIBs and further polarizes the volatile situation. A recent report by the International Crisis Group notes that Kurdish forces make deals with local leaders by, "imposing their own leadership and the making the local figures dependent on them for protection and services essential for return of the displaced"[87]. Humanitarian assessments show that upon recapturing areas from ISIS, the KRG has consolidated its position in Ninewa. Some observers noted that Article 140 has been de facto implemented and point to a policy of reversing *Arabization* and creating facts on the ground to influence a future census or referendum on the DIBs[88].

DISPLACEMENT AS A TOOL FOR DEMOGRAPHIC ENGINEERING

This report has outlined the enormous and devastating consequences of demographic engineering in Iraq's recent history. Demographic interventions have had a great impact on inter- and intra-community relations in Ninewa. Scholars even analyze these policies in direct relation with sectarian conflict: "Measures undertaken by these regimes, particularly the strategic uprooting of civilian populations, were instrumental in deepening these divisions and essentializing the identities attached to them… They aggravated, rather than subdued, patterns of sectarian or ethnic dominance."[89]

While accurate data on demographic changes is unavailable, it remains beyond doubt that the population dynamics in Ninewa have been altered by government policies. The fact that Ninewa is part of DIB areas has exacerbated these effects and tensions even further. With the empowerment of Kurdish communities in Ninewa since 2003, a trend has been observed in the opposite direction. Renewed displacement in areas recaptured on ISIS risk inflicting similar damage on the continued existence of historical communities and on inter-community relations in the Ninewa Plain.

Return of IDP communities is an important tool of demographic engineering. If not all communities will be able to or feel secure to return, this could sow the seeds for future conflict. Displacement has been regarded as a result of demographic engineering but, as Ninewa's recent history shows, displacement is also a result of and driver for conflict. In Ninewa's history of population dynamics, displacement has been used as a strategic weapon of war by all actors in the conflict, serving as both a cause and result of violence and political and economic instability. The multiple displacement patterns in Ninewa have furthermore affected the identity of Ninewa communities, fueling inter and intra-community strife prior to before, during and after the ISIS assault.♦

1 Population size in line with ethnic and religious breakdowns is one of the most contentious issues for social and political studies. Ethnic and religious

Child in Zummar district, March 2015

Endnotes

demographic errors arise from one or a combination of three sources: inaccuracy of Iraqi censuses (see for instance Ismail, K. 2005. Dohuk and Ninewa: A Study in Demographic Attributes of Population. Sulaimani: Kurdistan Center for Strategic Studies and Ismail, K. 2011. Iraqi Kurdistan in Light of Population Censuses: Erbil: Salahaddin University Publications), Demographic change policies of Iraqi former governments and current KRG government (Arabization Process) particularly in ethnic and religious mixed areas (for a comprehensive work in English see Anderson, L. and Stansfield, G. 2009. Crisis in Kirkuk: The Ethnopolitics of Conflict and Compromise. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press and Bengio, O. 2014. The Kurds of Iraq. Translated to Arabic by Abdulrazaq Botani. Erbil: Aras Press for Publication and Distribution) and political agendas of minorities to exaggerate their population size, and by the GoI/KRG to present minimized figures of minorities population.

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Appendix 1

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS NINEWA IDP MINORITIES

- Generally speaking, how do you describe your life prior to ISIS control?
  How satisfied were you with your life?
  Which aspects of your life you were satisfied with most?
  Probes:
  - Family life/employment/security/political freedom/religious tolerance/services
  Which aspects of your life you did not particularly like? Why?

- Why do you think ISIS targeted your community or your area in particular?
  Probes:
  - Ideological reasons (religion, ethnicity, clan)/political interests/sectarian conflict/security vacuum?

- Do you think that your community's return to your original areas is a possibility in any near future?
  If so why? If not, why?

- In case ISIS retreats from your area, are you willing or ready to return directly?
  If yes, why?
  Probes:
  - emotional attachment/frustrations of IDP living conditions/employment/dignity/security/children's education
  If no, why?

- If returning is not a strong option for you, what do you think need to be done to encourage your fellow community to return?
  Probes:
  Compensation: What kind? Who should compensate you?

- Political restructuring: What kind? On the local level? National level?
  - job opportunities/security guarantees/services improvement

- What are you expecting about your relationships with other communities after return?

- What can be done to build peace and harmony in your areas?
  Probes:
  - Politics/education/economic development

- Has your community started any preparations to return?
  If so, which kind? If not, why?

Appendix 2

Table 03.
Focus groups and locations February-March 2015

Communities	Respondents	Gender	Camp or İDP	Site	Governorate
Shabak	18	Male	Bahrka	Camp	Erbil
Shabak	13	Female	Bahrka	Camp	Erbil
Shabak	10	Male	Mamilian	Camp	Dihok
Shabak	11	Female	Mamilian	Camp	Dihok
Christians	14	Male	Ainkawa-	Kiramlis	Erbil
Christian	17	Female	Ainkawa-	Kiramlis	Erbil
Christians	10	Mixed	Alqush	Sub-district	Dihok
Turkuman	11	Male	Bahrka	Camp	Erbil
Turkuman	8	Female	Bahrka	Camp	Erbil
Turkuman	11	Male	Bersiv	Camp	Dihok
Turkuman	9	Female	Bersiv	Camp	Dihok
Yazidis	9	Male	Ashtar School-	Ainkawa	Erbil
Yazidis	9	Female	Ashtar School-	Ainkawa	Erbil
Yazidis	30	Male	Sharya	Camp	Dihok
Yazidis	30	Female	Sharya	Camp	Dihok
Kakayees	15	Male	Bahrka	Camp	Erbil
Kakayees	15	Female	Bahrka	Camp	Erbil
Sunni Arabs	4	Male	Bahrka	Camp	Erbil
Sunni Arabs	8	Female	Bahrka	Camp	Erbil
Kurds	25	Male	Khebat	District	Erbil
Kurds	14	Female	Khebat	District	Erbil

Godebaldkwartier 74
3511 DZ Utrecht
The Netherlands

www.paxforpeace.nl
info@paxforpeace.nl
+31 (0)30 233 33 46

P.O. Box 19318
3501 DH Utrecht
The Netherlands