

# NRC's operations in Iraq

## Humanitarian overview

Since the end of the conflict between Iraq and the Islamic State and the Levant (ISIL) in 2017, programming in Iraq has gradually transitioned from humanitarian assistance to recovery and stabilisation efforts. However, the humanitarian situation in Iraq continues to be characterised by general instability and economic dysfunction, protracted internal displacement, lack of public services and limited response capacity of the government, as well as unresolved tensions and grievances amid highly diverse ethno-religious demographics.

Nearly 4.89 million formerly displaced individuals have returned to their areas of origin, mostly through their own means. However, over 1 million Iraqis remain displaced, with around 15% still residing in camps as of October 2024, according to IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). As a result, the country continues to face complex challenges in addressing the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, host community members, and the wider population.

Despite moving to a post-conflict context, significant humanitarian and protection needs remain. Since 2019, the government's policy of closing IDP camps has led to forced evictions, hindering sustainable reintegration and recovery for displaced individuals. Of the 1 million internally displaced, 295,602 IDPs live in difficult conditions, most of whom have been displaced for over seven years.



Photo: Ahmed Kaka/NRC

## Our core activities



Education



Information, counselling  
and legal assistance (ICLA)



Livelihoods  
and economic inclusion



Protection  
from violence



Shelter  
and settlements

### NRC in Iraq

Established	2010
International staff	18
National staff	289

## Our areas of operation

- Anbar
- Baghdad
- Dohuk
- Erbil
- Ninewa



## Humanitarian overview (continued)

Returnees in Iraq face significant barriers to reestablishing normal lives. Nearly 605,000 returnees, with 12% being in areas with particularly challenging living conditions, and a further 1.91 million (40%) are in conditions of medium severity. Barriers such as limited access to services, stigmatisation, harassment, and limited livelihood opportunities heighten protection risks for women, girls, persons with disabilities, and marginalised groups, leading to negative coping mechanisms.

Additionally, as of March 2025 and according to UNHCR, Iraq hosts over 338,138 refugees and asylum-seekers, 90% of whom are Syrian and live in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I). While some 73% of the refugees live in urban areas, 27% live in 9 refugee camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. 65% of refugees are women and children under 18.

Furthermore, the Government of Iraq (GoI) continues to repatriate Iraqi nationals from Al Hol displacement camp in northeastern Syria to the Jeddah One transit camp (J1) in Iraq. As of early 2025, official estimates indicate that al-Hol holds around 52,000 people, including more than 32,000 Iraqis. Humanitarian needs in J1 remain significant, particularly for protection, education, legal assistance, and health and psychosocial support. Meanwhile, prospects for returning or relocating after leaving the camp are further complicated by numerous barriers, such as limited access to documentation, lack of opportunities for income generation, and social stigma and discrimination.

## Our activities in detail

Established in 2010, NRC works in Dohuk, Erbil, Ninewa, Anbar and Baghdad governorates, targeting displacement-affected women, men, girls, and boys in urban and rural areas, including IDPs in camps and informal settlements, returnees, Syrian refugees, and vulnerable host communities.

NRC prioritises addressing lingering humanitarian needs, particularly among displaced groups not yet receiving government-led social services. Through integrated programming, NRC in Iraq provides a holistic response to magnify the impact on households and communities, thus achieving self-reliance and contributing to long-term solutions.



**22,344 people reached in 2024 ▼**

## Education

Under the Education programme, NRC ensures that displacement-affected children and youth have continuous access to quality and relevant learning opportunities.

NRC's Non-Formal Education (NFE) programme supports the transition back to formal, certified education, wherever possible. NRC also supports children at risk of dropping out or falling behind grade level with remedial classes to prevent dropouts.

Finally, NRC provides education and training for NEET (not in education, employment or training) youth aged 15–24 years through flexible and relevant continued education, technical and vocational training, and social engagement programming that prepares young people for work and life.



**5,826 people reached in 2024 ▼**

## Information, counselling and legal assistance (ICLA)

Under the ICLA programme, NRC's team of lawyers and paralegals works directly with ministries, line directorates and the Iraqi judiciary to increase access to legal identity and civil documentation; housing, land and property (HLP) rights; as well as employment rights of IDPs, returnees and vulnerable local community members in Iraq.

NRC disseminates tailored information on legal issues to help foster community awareness, provides one-on-one legal counselling and legal representation before authorities and courts in complex and/or vulnerable cases integrating use of cash modality for legal fees, supports the inclusion of people within available state-managed social protection systems, and analyses legal barriers facing Syrian refugee communities in Iraq specifically as they relates to access to decent work.



**11,882 people reached in 2024 ▼**

## Livelihoods and economic inclusion

Under the Livelihoods programme, NRC works on strengthening skills and connecting individuals to market-driven systems and solutions.

NRC provides households with business grants that help promote self-employment opportunities and contribute to local market development; supports the recovery of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) through provision of business scale-up grants and quality business development services; improves access to financial inclusion pathways; and enhances employability and income-earning opportunities for youth through apprenticeships and job placement/internship programmes or job referrals.



**1,056 people reached in 2024 ▼**

## Protection from violence

Under the PfV programme, NRC provides protection case management services, including tailored support for individuals recovering from or exposed to protection risks.

It works closely with ICLA teams to address protection-related issues, particularly those associated with the lack of legal documentation, prioritising assistance for complex cases involving both legal and protection-related risks. NRC also employs community-based solutions and civilian self-protection strategies to address challenges and support behavioural change that proactively minimises and eliminates protection issues.

## The Protection Consortium of Iraq

NRC leads the Protection Consortium of Iraq, partnering with the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC). The consortium provides integrated protection and legal assistance and collective supports on protection issues.



121,970 people reached in 2024 ▼

## Shelter and settlements

Under the S&S programme, NRC supports IDPs, host communities and returnees in protracted displacement in providing essential

infrastructure resilience components to overcome infrastructure barriers in achieving durable solutions. NRC is also a well-respected climate, water and drought resilience actor in the country, promoting advocacy for climate adaptive solutions to support communities at risk of climate-induced displacement through annual drought and climate impact surveys as well as engagement with national roundtables, conferences, etc.

## We work in coordination with:

- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Youth and Sport
- Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of Water Resources
- Ministry of Displacement and Migration
- Ministerial and judicial wings of the Government of Iraq
- Camp management bodies
- Communities and national and international organisations in the areas of operation

## We are grateful for the generous support from our donors:

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- European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)
- Education Cannot Wait (ECW)
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
- United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR)
- United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)
- The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)

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