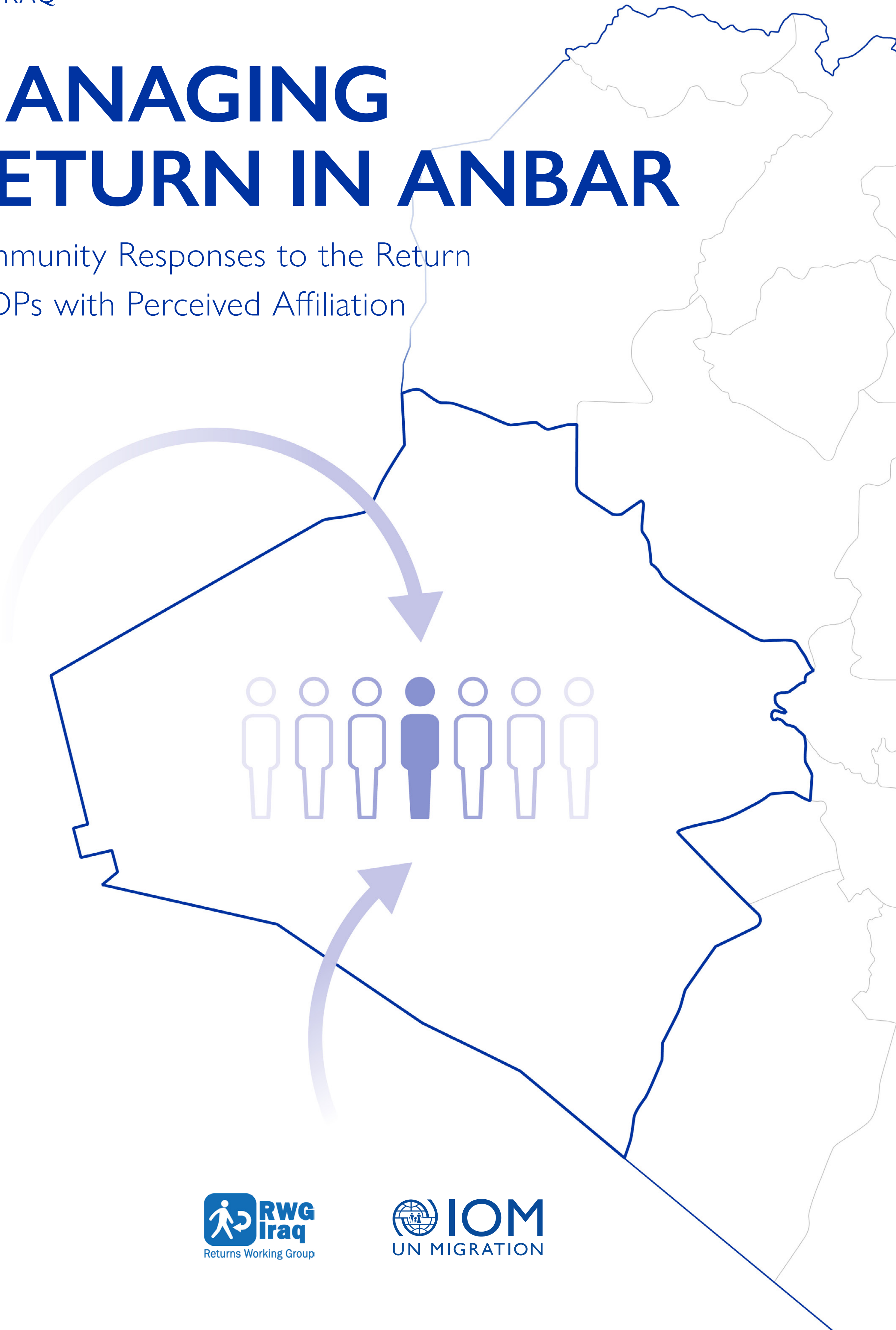
IOM IRAQ

MANAGING RETURN IN ANBAR

Community Responses to the Return of IDPs with Perceived Affiliation



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ABOUT RWG

The Returns Working Group (RWG) is an operational and multi- stakeholder platform on returns, which was established in line with Strategic Objective 3 of the 2016 Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan "to support voluntary, safe and dignified return" of IDPs, to monitor and report on conditions in return areas, and determine to what extent durable solutions have been achieved- or progress made- for returnees.

The key objective of the group is to establish coherence of information, data and analysis, strengthen coordination and advocacy, give guidance on activities related to the key areas, and enhance complementary action among its partners with the overall goal of supporting and reinforcing the national response to Iraq’s coming reintegration challenge.

This report has been authored by Olga Aymerich, with contributions from Erin Autumn Neale and Kate Elizabeth Albers.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The voluntary return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their areas of origin is one of the recognized pathways towards a durable solution to displacement. However, return, by itself, does not necessarily lead to a durable solution unless IDPs stop having displacement-induced needs, including protection.

In Anbar, nearly half a million people fled the ISIL advance between January and May 2014. A second wave of displacement took place in 2016 when the military campaign to expel ISIL reached the area. As of December 2019, over 1.4 million people have returned to Anbar, where tension exists between those who displaced during the initial advance of ISIL and those who initially remained and displaced at a later period. Although some communities have advanced towards a more nuanced understanding that having cohabited with ISIL does not necessarily imply affiliation, community members with family or tribal ties with those accused of having an affiliation continue to be perceived as sympathizers of the group. In some instances, returned IDPs with perceived affiliation have secondarily displaced after having been rejected by their communities of origin.

IDPs who are rejected by their communities are unable to pursue return and are therefore unable to access one of the recognized pathways to a solution to displacement. For returns to be safe and durable, IDPs with perceived affiliation must be accepted by the whole community. The rejection of IDPs with perceived affiliation by their communities of origin also highlights important challenges to restoring trust and social peace between those who remained during the ISIL occupation and those who fled. Social acceptance of those who remained under ISIL is critical to prevent further grievances and new cycles of conflict; however, this cannot be achieved without acknowledging the perspective of victims.

This research analyses the responses of six communities in Falluja district of Anbar governorate directly affected by the ISIL conflict to the return of displaced community members with perceived affiliation: Shaqlawiya Center, Albu Shejeel, Al Abba, Karma Center, Al Husi, and Fhelat. These communities have all experienced instances of acceptance, facilitating the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation, and/or instances of rejection, by expelling returned IDPs with perceived affiliation. The research investigates three key areas: first, the factors that contribute to high or low levels of acceptance of IDPs with perceived affiliation; second, mechanisms put in place by communities to manage return of IDPs with perceived affiliation; and third, obstacles limiting the sustainable return of IDPs with perceived affiliation.

FACTORS OF ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION

The analysis of data collected in the six communities has helped identify several factors that make communities more willing to accept, or more likely to reject, IDPs with perceived affiliation. These factors sometimes overlap and are intertwined within the same community.

- Small rural close-knitted communities tend to be less inclined to accept the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation than bigger peri-urban and urban communities with multiple tribal affiliations, as expressed by interviewed community members. However, when the return is mediated by community leaders, it has been more sustainable, since these IDPs are considered as still belonging to the community by the rest of the community members. The most significant fear in these communities seems to be the disruption of social peace and the potential for retaliatory violence by families of victims of ISIL that an unmediated return would likely cause.
- Conversely, in peri-urban or urban communities where it was commonly felt within the focus group discussions that social ties are weaker, the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation tends to be easier at the beginning, when these IDPs obtain security clearance. However, the risk of secondary displacement is higher, as IDPs with perceived affiliation are no longer considered part of the community and the levels of acceptance are lower. The lack of strong family and friendship ties makes it easier to depersonalize IDPs with perceived affiliation, inciting collective instead of individual blame. Larger communities with less rigid social ties tend be equally afraid of ISIL (or its ideology) returning to or spreading in the community and of revenge attacks by families of victims. IDPs returning to these communities might be more exposed to harassment or retaliatory acts as they are less protected by tribal customs.
- Communities who experienced high levels of intra-community violence in the recent past (2005–2012) are less willing to accept the return of community members with perceived affiliation. Keeping IDPs away is perceived as a strategy to keep the community safe from the potential harm these IDPs could inflict to the community in the future, as IDPs with perceived affiliation are seen a threat to the community (if they were to return).
- On the other hand, communities who experienced lower levels of intra-community violence seem to be more open to the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation and to accepting them back into the community. Two main reasons were mentioned for this: first, the ability to control the actions of IDPs with perceived affiliation and "keep an eye on them";

second, the willingness to confront and change those with ISIL-influenced beliefs, and therefore prevent further generations from being drawn into new waves of violent extremism.

- The collective blame of those who stayed under ISIL's occupation makes communities more inclined to reject the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation as a whole, without considering individual circumstances.
- In contrast, in some communities there is a more precise understanding of what affiliation involved, depending on the roles and actions undertaken within ISIL: if the IDPs had no decision-making power and did not commit violence against the community, their family members are more likely to be accepted than if these IDPs supported the group in roles that did involve violence.
- Communities in exposed geographic areas—bordering desert areas or on the west side of the Euphrates River—feel more vulnerable to ISIL attacks, and fear that receiving IDPs with perceived affiliation would increase the risk of being captured by ISIL with help from "within".

Understanding these factors can help shape tailored interventions seeking to support long-term, safe and sustainable returns to communities.

MECHANISMS TO FACILITATE RETURNS

Communities have put in place a set of mechanisms adapted from tribal justice practices to regulate the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation. Disavowal, denouncement, and return to a nearby area are the three more commonly used mechanisms.

1. Disavowal is the most widely used mechanism, whereby IDPs with perceived affiliation denounce and deny allegiance to ISIL. If overused, this mechanism runs the risk of losing its significance or being of little use for less sensitive cases.
2. Denouncement requires individuals to formally accuse family members of being members of ISIL and committing crimes. This mechanism starts the process of formally expelling and incriminating a member from the community, which can have repercussions in ongoing or future criminal cases.
3. Return to an area near the community of origin as a temporary measure until tribal mediation between families of victims and families of alleged perpetrators is completed. Although this mechanism is understood to be temporary by both the displaced and the community leaders, there is a risk that the family will enter into protracted displacement.

- In some instances when IDPs with perceived affiliation return, relatives of victims may file a complaint denouncing the returning IDPs to the security forces, who then contact tribal leaders to let them know that they cannot ensure their safety, prompting the secondary displacement of these families. This might occur despite IDPs having used disavowal and denouncement mechanisms to facilitate their return. If the family becomes secondarily displaced, a tribal mediation process might start. Although this is not always the case and the secondary displacement after rejection by the communities of origin risks becoming protracted, particularly in those cases involving intra-clan violence.
- Despite their controversial nature, these mechanisms need to be understood and acknowledged as national and international actors put in place parallel structures to facilitate returns and explore how these mechanisms can be used. Since these mechanisms are not static, if tailored to comply with a rights-based approach and do-no-harm principles, they could be used as entry points for interventions looking at facilitating accepted returns.

OBSTACLES TO SUSTAINABLE LONG-TERM RETURN

Communities in Anbar face multiple challenges to return, defined as sustainable reintegration,[1] of IDPs with perceived affiliation:

- While the decision to return may be voluntary, it is also dependent on the decisions of community leaders, who may be influenced by the families of victims or the prospect of personal gain.
- Community leaders' willingness to engage in facilitating returns might be curtailed by fear of losing power among their constituencies and/or being accused of sympathizing with ISIL.
- Community leaders and community members fear increased intra-community violence if return is not regulated.
- A general climate of mistrust in the communities limits social interactions between community members and IDPs with perceived affiliation, which puts IDPs with perceived affiliation at risk of being stigmatized. In some cases, communities have neither rejected nor supported the return of members with perceived affiliation due to fears of being perceived as supporting the group, leading to low interaction with these returnees and thus the risk of ostracization.
- There is risk of increased secondary displacement if return takes place without the assent of the communities due to direct rejection or to harassment and intimidation.

Therefore, the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation cannot be deemed safe and sustainable unless it is accepted by the entire community.

INTRODUCTION

The voluntary return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to their areas of origin is one of the recognized pathways towards a durable solution to displacement. However, return, by itself, does not necessarily lead to a durable solution unless IDPs stop having displacement-induced needs, including protection.[2]

In Iraq, the displacement crisis caused by the conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) affected more than 6 million citizens.[3] In Anbar Governorate, nearly half a million people fled from ISIL between January and May of 2014, in the wake of the group's advance and territorial expansion.[4] Others, whether by choice or force, remained in the vast areas of territory under ISIL control and cohabited with the group.

Part of those who remained in territories under ISIL control displaced at a later stage, when the military campaign to expel the group reached their areas in 2016. These citizens fled the violence and conflict resulting from the military campaign as well as from potential accusations of affiliation.[5]

The cessation of hostilities allowed for the return of IDPs to their areas of origin. In Anbar, more than half a million IDPs returned in 2016.[6] However, mistrust between those who displaced at the beginning of the crisis and those who remained and displaced at a later stage ensued. Reprisal and retaliation acts of violence have occurred[7] and IDPs with perceived affiliation[8] have often been barred from returning to their areas of origin.[9] Although some communities have progressed towards a more nuanced understanding that having cohabited with ISIL does not necessarily imply affiliation, community members with family or tribal ties to those accused of having had an ISIL affiliation continue to be perceived as sympathizers of the group. In some instances, returned IDP families have been forced to displace again after having returned despite having obtained the required security clearance, because they were rejected by their communities.[10]

IDPs who are rejected from their communities are unable to pursue return and are therefore unable to access one of the recognized long-term, sustainable and durable solutions to displacement.

The rejection of IDPs with perceived affiliation by their communities of origin also highlights important challenges to restoring trust and social peace between those who remained during ISIL occupation and those who fled. Social acceptance of those who remained under ISIL is essential to prevent further grievances and new cycles of conflict. This acceptance cannot be achieved without acknowledging the perspective of ISIL victims, who in most cases have not been compensated for their loss and often strongly oppose the return of those with perceived affiliation. Failing to do so might further hamper efforts to rebuild trust and social peace in these communities, but harmonizing the interests of all groups involved poses a major challenge. The dynamics of rejection of IDPs who have been cleared to return may be also superseding the rule of law and affect an already weakened trust towards state institutions.

Understanding the community's perspective on the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation, including the victims' perspective, is crucial for designing short-, medium- and long-term solutions that aim to create a safe environment and empower returned families who may face low levels of acceptance in their communities of origin, as well as to assist victims of ISIL to co-exist with IDPs with perceived affiliation. Without community acceptance, durable solutions for those with perceived affiliation will face major challenges.[11]

OBJECTIVES

This research analyses the responses of six communities in Anbar directly affected by the ISIL conflict to the return of displaced community members with perceived affiliation.

The research investigates three key areas:

1. The factors that contribute to high or low levels of acceptance of IDPs with perceived affiliation;
2. Mechanisms put in place by communities to manage the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation; and,
3. Obstacles limiting the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation.

METHODOLOGY

This study is built as a comparative case study of six Sunni Arab communities in Anbar Governorate: Shaqlawiya Center, Albu Shejeel, Al Abba, Karma Center, Al Husi, and Fhelat. These communities were chosen because they showed either instances of acceptance to the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation, by facilitating the return of blocked community members, or instances of rejection, by expelling IDPs with perceived affiliation upon their return.

In some communities, both situations have taken place, which allows to control for the factors of acceptance and rejection.[12] For comparability purposes, these communities all include relatively homogeneous populations in terms of ethno-religious background, tribal affiliation and demographic characteristics, and data was collected during the same timeframe.

Qualitative data collection included:

- Seventeen focus group discussions (FGD) and 17 participatory mappings with community members. In each community, one FGD took place with targeted male community members of mixed ages (older than 18 years), one FGD with youth participants (18 to 26 years old), and one FGD with female participants of mixed ages (older than 18 years).[13]
- Eighteen in-depth interviews with community leaders, three in each community, including the following categories: tribal leaders, mukhtars, religious leaders, security representatives and civil society representatives.
- Nine in-depth interviews with IDPs who were rejected by the community upon return and were in camps at the time of data collection.[14]
- Fifteen in-depth interviews with returnees who were supported by the community in their return process.[15]

Fieldwork was conducted during a five-week period from 30 June to 1 August 2019 by IOM's field research team, with an equal number of male and female field researchers. The team was previously trained in data collection. The team worked in pairs with one facilitator tasked with asking the questions and one note taker.

Verbal consent was obtained from participants before starting the questionnaire. IOM field teams explained that participation was entirely voluntary and anonymous and that participants could withdraw at any time with no consequences. Participants were given a window of six weeks to withdraw any answer or comments shared during the session. No withdrawal took place.

FACTORS OF ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION

Over the past few years, the ISIL crisis has resulted in multiple waves of internal displacement and return. In Anbar, more than 1.4 million individuals who displaced as a result of the ISIL crisis have now returned.[16] In some cases, IDPs have successfully returned to their homes and rebuilt their lives, but in others, returns have failed.

One of the reasons for failed return is IDPs not being accepted by their communities of origin due to their perceived affiliation. This rejection might result in secondary displacement — either directly, by being expelled, or indirectly, by being threatened or harassed. Rejection might also force community members with perceived affiliations to experience significant economic, social and civic participation challenges in their areas of origin and expose them to violence.

In the current context of Iraq, it is important to acknowledge that return cannot always be considered an advance towards a durable solution or the most appropriate or sustainable approach to resolving displacement.

The analysis of data collected in the six communities has helped identify several factors that make communities more willing to accept, or more likely to reject, IDPs with perceived affiliation. These factors sometimes overlap and are intertwined within the same community. Understanding these factors can help shape tailored interventions in support of long term, safe and sustainable returns in the communities.

Small rural close-knitted communities tend to be less inclined, at the beginning, to accept the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation than bigger peri-urban and urban communities with multiple tribal affiliations, as expressed by interviewed community members. However, when returns to small rural communities are mediated, these tend to be more sustainable.

In smaller, close-knitted communities, beyond the fear of the return of ISIL's influence, the most significant fear seemed to be the disruption of social peace and the potential for retaliatory violence by families of ISIL victims. Interviewed community members, community leaders and IDPs were wary of a spiral of violence in the community between families of victims and IDPs with perceived affiliation.

In rural communities, where arguably people have stronger personal relationships, community members who were victims of ISIL crimes allegedly know the perpetrators and attribute them specific crimes. The tribal customs that prevail in these communities allow relatives of victims to avenge the crime committed by punishing the perpetrators' relatives.[17] Thus, the likelihood and potential for revenge attacks is higher, which could cause a sharp increase in violence within the community, especially when social relationships are tight.

The initial rejection of IDPs with perceived affiliation by some community members and leaders, however, does not imply a lower level of acceptance by community members overall. Most community members interviewed considered these IDPs as community members who should return in the long term once disputes between families of victims and families of perpetrators are settled through tribal mediation to mitigate the risk of revenge acts. The communities also feel they have a certain level of responsibility towards women, children and older people, and consider they should be allowed to return to the community.

> *Let me explain: they [the community] are afraid from them [returning IDPs with perceived affiliation] because they might allow ISIL to return. But we are also afraid for security their [IDPs with perceived affiliation], because the people who were hurt by ISIL could seek revenge from them."*
>
> – Local authorities representative, Al Abba

> *Yes, I foresee that violence will increase if they [IDPs with perceived affiliations] return because of revenge acts and the resulting strife between them and the families of the victims."*
>
> – Youth male, FGD, Albu Shejeel

> *They belong [here]; they are not strangers, they are neighbors, relatives and friends and they have lived with us for many years, but the events have caused a rift between us."* – Male returnee, Albu Shejeel

Additionally, when the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation has been facilitated by the community through the involvement of community leaders—in some instances this happens after settling the issue through adaptations of tribal customary law as described in the next section—returns have been more sustainable over time and returnees less exposed to secondary displacement than in larger communities with less tightknit community relations. This might be due to smaller, tighter communities having stronger, established social ties prior to ISIL, clearer and long-established mechanisms in place to regulate disputes, and higher levels of conformity among community members towards the decisions made by tribal leaders. Thus, when a tribal leader has sponsored the return of certain IDPs or mediated in a case between a victim and the perpetrator' family and reached an agreement, the tribal leader's authority prevails and the decision is respected by the community. The returned IDPs with perceived affiliation, thus, had a higher level of protection.

However, smaller, tight, rural communities also face some of the most challenging situations if such issues are solved by tribal mediation. These communities tend to be composed of fewer clans.[18] When community members of one clan are accused of committing crimes against members of the same clan, the accused and their family lose the extended network of support provided by the tribe and are therefore are less protected against retaliation attacks. Also, the family must cover the full price of the compensation (blood money) to the victims to settle the case, a sum which is typically two thirds covered by the tribe.[19]

> *I consider those who have not returned to the community because of their affiliation to ISIL as part of this community. Despite what they have done and the harm they have caused to the community, we cannot deny that they were born here."*
>
> – Male, FGD, Al Husi

Conversely, in peri-urban or urban communities where it was commonly felt within the focus group discussions that social ties are weaker, the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation tends to be easier at the beginning, when these IDPs obtain a security clearance. This is so because IDPs, despite carrying the stigma of having cohabited with ISIL, are less often associated with specific crimes attributed to relatives. This was attributed by interviewed secondarily displaced IDPs and returnees to the fact that community members are less likely to know each other or have close bonds, as would be the case in smaller communities.

Although return to these communities seems easier at first, levels of acceptance by community members towards IDPs with perceived affiliation tend to be lower. The very same anonymity that might facilitate the initial return plays against the IDP families with perceived affiliation, as community members tend to consider that those families no longer belong to the community.

> *Those who have been expelled and who have not returned because of their association with ISIL do not belong to the community and are not welcome to return."* – Male, FGD, Karma Center

The lack of strong family and friendship ties makes it easier to depersonalize IDPs with perceived affiliation, inciting collective instead of individual blame. Granularity is lower, as community members do not know the specific circumstances of each family. Thus, in these communities, community members had stronger feelings against the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation overall, without distinguishing between individual cases. Linked to the above, larger communities with less rigid social ties tend be afraid of ISIL or its ideology returning to or spreading to the community as well as of revenge attacks by families of victims.

Additionally, IDPs returning to these communities might be more exposed to harassment or retaliatory acts as they are less protected by tribal customs. Their return is less sustainable as the mechanisms put in place by tribal or community leaders to secure their return are less likely to be respected, which increases the likelihood of secondary displacement and leaves little room for a potential mediated return to the community in the medium or long run.

> *The most important thing is that we left the region to escape from retaliation and revenge, knowing that we were not guilty. My brother was, and we disowned him, but the community is not satisfied with this."* – Youth male, FGD, Al Husi

TRIBAL CUSTOMARY LAW IN IRAQ

The prominent role of tribes in Iraqi society stretches back centuries, with considerable variation in power and legitimacy vis-à-vis the state. The Ottoman and British empires practiced forms of indirect rule over the tribes, granting them local authority without sufficient power to challenge their occupation of Iraq.[20] *Tribalism was subsequently revived under Saddam Hussein, who began incorporating tribal figures into the military and security apparatus.*[21] *Following the 2003 US-led invasion, tribes were stripped of state patronage but the ensuing breakdown in state-provided security and services in recent years made them regain responsibility in handling community disputes on a local level through tribal customary law.*

Tribal customary law aims to restore harmony, solidarity, and honor to communities, in particular in the wake of disruptive conflict. With its focus on preserving traditional social values, tribal law seeks to prioritize relationships and unity of the tribe as a whole over individual rights.[22] *Harmony is sought by delivering compensation to the victims of any wrongdoing and mitigating further conflict. In Anbar, tribal law is widely practiced and followed for the purposes of mediating disputes, with citizens seeking the support of tribal sheiks over other security actors in order to resolve all manner of civil and criminal cases. In some cases, law enforcement officials and courts choose to refer cases to the tribal system for settlement.*[23] *Tribal justice and formal justice are not divorced from one another; on the contrary, coordination occurs regularly with tribal leaders interacting with security forces to address crimes.*[24] *Rather, tribal leaders tend to consider themselves as filling a "justice gap" that is needed due to the flawed implementation of Iraqi law.*[25]

However, tribal customary law is vulnerable to manipulation. Various factors such as the political connections, social status, gender, and corruption and bribery might influence tribal negotiations.[26]

Communities who experienced high levels of intra-community violence in the recent past (2005–2012) tend to be less willing to accept the return of community members with perceived affiliation. Keeping IDPs away is perceived as a strategy to keep the community safe. On the other hand, communities who experienced lower levels of intra-community violence seem to be more open to their return and to reconciliation.

Another contributing determinant of acceptance or rejection is the degree of the community's exposure to previous violence emanating from within the community. Communities highly affected by cycles of intra-community conflict in the past –linked to the rise of Al Qaeda in Iraq and the ensuing Anbar Awakening–[27] were less willing to receive IDPs with perceived affiliation back into the community. In these communities, community members were more likely to say that those individuals who joined ISIL, or who were related or otherwise connected to the group, can no longer be part of the community and should not be allowed to return. The exposure to violence from within the community during the rise of Al Qaeda and ensuing Anbar Awakening and related violence during that period (from 2005 to 2012) seems to have made community members less inclined to forgive and accept IDPs with perceived affiliation.

> *I want the return of all displaced people, including those who are rejected, because my role as a cleric is to help reform society and fight extremist beliefs through guidance and explanations, through the mosque."* – Religious leader, Al Husi

By contrast, communities that were less directly exposed to intra-community violence in the recent past were more accommodating and inclined to accept and receive returnees with perceived affiliation. Two main reasons were mentioned for this: first, the ability to control the actions of IDPs with perceived affiliation and "keep an eye on them"; second, the willingness to confront and change those with ISIL-influenced beliefs, and therefore prevent further generations from being drawn into new waves of violent extremism.

> *I am not carrying a grudge against anyone and I welcome all the displaced families, and the reason is the fact that they are our people and our neighbors and we must forget the past and forgive the families that hurt us during the crisis (…) forgiveness should exist because this will make us move on and we should be generous and forgive as at the end we are all humans who make mistakes."*
>
> – Youth male, FGD, Karma Center

Therefore, it appears that communities who have suffered from higher levels of intra-community violence in the recent past considered IDPs with perceived affiliation as a threat to the community (if they returned), and stress the potential harm these IDPs could inflict to the community in the future. Keeping them away from the community is therefore perceived as a strategy to protect the community. Contrarily, in communities that were less affected by intra-community conflict before the ISIL crisis, the return of these IDPs is perceived as a strategy to mitigate future risk by including them again in the community.

The collective blame of those who stayed under ISIL's occupation makes communities more inclined to reject the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation. On the other hand, communities with a more detailed understanding of what this affiliation entails are more likely to accept these IDPs back.

> *They [IDPs with perceived affiliation] carry a stigma, and unfortunately, because of the traditions and customs, this stigma will affect their families and the tribe. However, the community is starting to realize that each individual is accountable for the sins it commits, not the group."* – Female, FGD, Al Abba

Acceptance of IDPs with perceived affiliation is less likely to occur when blame is collectively attributed to community members, as a whole, who cohabited with the group, without considering individual circumstances. In contrast, in some communities there is a more precise understanding of what that affiliation involved, according to the roles and actions undertaken within ISIL.

Roles

Communities reject the return of those whose first or second line relative occupied a core role in ISIL, such as being appointed mukhtar or by being an active combatant.[28] Thus, community members who cohabited with the group but were forced to join the group and had no decision-making power, according to the communities, are accepted to return to a higher extent.

Actions

Communities reject the return of IDPs whose first or second relative was involved in the alleged killing or property or land destruction of other community members.

Thus, community members and leaders pay attention to the roles and acts allegedly committed by the person involved with ISIL: if they had decision-making power or committed violence against the community itself, their family members are less likely to be accepted than if the person involved supported the group in roles that did not involve violence.

> *The extent to which we accept our neighbours depends on the neighbour's actions during the events."* – Youth male, FGD, Karma Center

Communities located in areas more exposed geographically tend to feel more vulnerable to attacks by ISIL, and fear that receiving IDPs with perceived affiliation would increase the risk of being captured by ISIL with help from "within".

This was particularly the case in Al Husi and Fhelat, which border a desert land that has been used by the group as a hideout. These two communities are isolated from bigger urban areas, making them more difficult to protect by security forces.[29]

> *Residents decided to organize night patrols to protect the region because it is exposed from the desert's side and ISIL elements could infiltrate our areas."* – Female, FGD, Fhelat

Both communities are also on the west side of the Euphrates River. Because of their geographical location, the route IDPs took to flee the group was particularly challenging as the river acted as a natural barrier, jeopardizing their escape. IDPs who stayed during ISIL's occupation said they had to pay costly bribes to be smuggled across the river to the east side of the Euphrates.

COMMUNITY MECHANISMS TO MANAGE RETURN

The long-term and entrenched presence of tribal identity and tribal customary law in the communities of study influences the way the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation is managed by communities of Anbar. In particular, communities used three mechanisms from tribal customary justice that have been adapted to the specific context and used to regulate the return of those community members: disavowal, denouncement and return to a nearby area.

These mechanisms have been broadly used by the communities included in this study and are used and accepted not only by tribal leaders, but also by community members who have been impacted by the violence resulting from the ISIL crisis and/or related displacement. The three mechanisms, mainly disavowing and denouncement, sometimes intertwine and are used in combination with each other.

1. DISAVOWAL

Disavowal is the act of formally denouncing ISIL in front of the community or tribal leader, or the court, denying any allegiance to the group and pledging to having done no harm to the community.

This mechanism is broadly used to facilitate the return of IDPs who stayed under ISIL rule but who have no proven direct association with the group and no first or second-line relatives facing criminal charges or accusations of ISIL affiliation in core roles. These individuals have the option to formally renounce ISIL to obtain sponsorship[30] from the local tribal leader, or from local authorities or a security actor representative—which might facilitate receiving security clearance to return to areas of origin.

> *They should return and continue their lives here, provided that they pledge not to create problems and not to harm anyone. They also must confirm that they have not been involved in illegal activities."* – Male, FGD, Al Husi

Disavowal is the most commonly used mechanism, often used in conjunction with other mechanisms, as it facilitates obtaining a sponsorship. Disavowal has been broadly used by IDPs from Anbar with perceived affiliation who displaced at the later stages of the ISIL crisis, anticipating the military campaign to retake territory from the group. This mechanism has also been used by those not perceived to have supported ISIL, but who cohabited with the group, to speed up the process of obtaining sponsorship from tribal leaders, local authorities or security officials.

> *When I returned home, I found a vandalized house. My cattle and livestock were stolen. The tribe's elder told me I would have to leave if I did not pay the required money (10,000 USD). […] The army, the sheikh and the tribes refuse our return. To be able to return, we have to pay huge amounts of money that we do not have; this is as a bribe to the tribe's sheikh to sponsor us and talk to the army and the police so they let us return.[…] All of them hinder our return because they are asking us to pay a lot of money to give us the clearance. We do not have such money."*
>
> – Female IDP from Saqlawiya Center

Although widely used, this mechanism has a number of drawbacks. First, requiring IDPs to formally renounce ISIL implies indirect acceptance of having been involved with the group, when the displaced person in question may have no ties to ISIL. Second, the ubiquitous application of this mechanisms to expedite obtaining sponsorship has somewhat undermined its potential utility to regulate the return of high-sensitivity cases of IDPs with perceived affiliation who fear for their safety upon return and would benefit from a formal sponsorship. Third, there have been instances in which requiring sponsorship to ease return has been exploited by the sponsors, who may ask for bribes or some form of payment to initiate the process. This payment, which tends to range between USD 1000 to USD 3000 but as in the case below can go up to USD 10 000, works against families with lower financial resources who are unable to pay the amount, hence affecting their ability to return.

2. DENOUNCEMENT

Denouncement is the second mechanism the study's communities use to manage the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation.

This mechanism is applied to those IDPs who have first- or second-degree relatives who allegedly joined ISIL. It consists of formally accusing the concerned relative of being an ISIL member and committing crimes punishable by law, in an adaptation of tribal tradition of *tabriya*. *Tabriya* refers to an expulsion or an eviction from the community, in which a person rejects a family member who, in some way, dishonored the tribe by committing a serious crime. The rejected individual is then cast out from the tribe, with the ensuing consequences to social status and losing the protection of the group.

> *The families whose sons joined ISIL were not allowed to return until they made a pledge of denouncing their sons."* – Female, FGD, Al Husi

> *Some of the elderly, tribal sheikhs and clerics tried to mediate between the families of IDPs with perceived affiliation and the victims' families They [the elderly, etc.]also coordinated with local authorities to facilitate the return procedures and make the pledge of denouncing their sons who were affiliated to ISIL and to place these families under the supervision of community leaders."* – Religious leader, Al Husi

In the current context, this mechanism is most often employed if the accused relative is either deceased or missing, because the denouncement could potentially be used against the accused in a future trial or as a criminal proof against a relative who is still alive. Some of the interviewed IDPs expressed unwillingness to accuse their family members. In addition to the emotional toll that this mechanism implies, and the fact that the accusation can be used in court, denouncement can also have inheritance implications for widowers. This mechanism also raises protection concerns: there have been instances, revealed by this research study, in which women who disavowed their husbands have been subjected to violence by the husband's family as their disavowal was considered a source of shame to the husbands' family.

> *I wish to return to my house in Saqlawiya, but I do not have a permit to return. My brother is detained. My father is an older man of 65 years who has many diseases. We tried to return but I hate to go back and disown my brother, how can I return to my area without my brother?"* – Female IDP from Saqlawiya Center

Despite its controversy, some community members see this practice as a way to avoid potential retaliation against relatives of those accused of having ISIL ties –since retaliation would be allowed under tribal customary law if the case is not settled– and to facilitate holding individuals accountable for their actions.

The mechanism of denouncement has evolved in some of the communities of study in the wake of increased return of IDPs with accused first- and second-line relatives. The mechanism can now be employed without the family members mentioning the name of the relative they are accusing of involvement with ISIL. Although still highly problematic, this adaptation has made denouncing a mechanism more acceptable to use by IDPs with perceived affiliation.

> *Now, the mechanism has become easier, without the need to issue a case, it is performed by only signing a document of entry and taking the consent and assurance of the sheikh and the mayor without mentioning the name of the person who was accused of being affiliated with ISIL. When these procedures are completed, the family can return".*
>
> – Tribal leader, Karma Center

3. RETURN TO A NEARBY AREA

The third mechanism is the return of IDPs to an area nearby the community of origin. This mechanism has been employed generally in two situations. First, when the families of victims have accused one member of the displaced family of committing a crime that, according to tribal custom, can be avenged, and a tribal mediation process has started to settle the case. In these cases, and while mediation is taking place, the offender and his family are sent away until a settlement is agreed upon by the two families. This option offers protection to the accused and their family and protects the victim's family honor.[31]

In this case, residing in a nearby area is understood as an intermediary step before IDPs are allowed to return home. In theory, it is aimed at ensuring their safe return home because once the case between the families is settled, the victim's family cannot take revenge.

> *Some of them [members of the community] threatened to kill the families [of accused community members] if they returned, so their return was approved with the condition that they live in other homes, or other places in the same area. This option only works for families who have a son proven to have killed and taken part in killings during ISIL."* – Youth male, FGD, Al Abba

This mechanism presents several drawbacks. First, if the relatives of the alleged perpetrator do not have enough resources to settle the payment of "blood money" to the victim's family and the tribe is not willing to cover for the payment –for example in case the victim and perpetrator are from the same clan– this temporary displacement carries the risk of becoming protracted.

Second, in some communities, certain community leaders have actively been involved in facilitating the return of women and children from the camps, but they reside in separate areas of the community and are secluded from community affairs.

This mechanism is perhaps safer, but less beneficial for the IDP with perceived affiliation in terms of achieving a full return to their community of origin. Given limited contact with the community, IDPs are protected from revenge attacks and the community is less likely to experience renewed cycles of violence. Nonetheless, these community members are socially and economically isolated from the community, with little contact with other community members. This isolation prevents them from being active members in the community and restricts their ability to find jobs, access their homes and engage in civic participation, all of which are important in advancing towards a durable solution of displacement.

In the long run, isolating these families or family members will diminish the likelihood of their social reintegration back to the community and heighten the risks of these families or future generations to be fall into new waves of violent extremism.

> *There are families who are expelled from the region because of the proven charges against their children, of belonging to ISIL […] Some of these families disowned their children and we therefore allowed them to return, others were accepted only by part of the community. To avoid this situation, we have allowed them to live in homes other than their homes so that there will be no contact between them and the affected families, at least for a period of time that will allow the wound to heal and hearts to calm down."* – Tribal leader, Karma Center

WHEN RETURN FAILS: SECONDARY DISPLACEMENT OF RETURNEES WITH PERCEIVED AFFILIATION

In some instances when IDPs with perceived affiliation return, relatives of victims may file a complaint denouncing the returning IDPs to the security forces.

Security forces then contact tribal leaders to convey the message that they cannot ensure the safety of the families with perceived affiliation and request that the families leave, prompting the secondary displacement of these families with perceived affiliation.

> *I know a friend whose brother belonged to ISIL and was killed during the battles to retake the area. The family disowned him in front of the judge and got the security clearance to enter the area but they were rejected by a neighbor whose son was killed by the ISIL affiliated, dead son of that family."*
>
> – Youth male, FGD, Abu Shejeel

This might happen despite IDPs having used disavowal and denouncement mechanisms to facilitate their return.

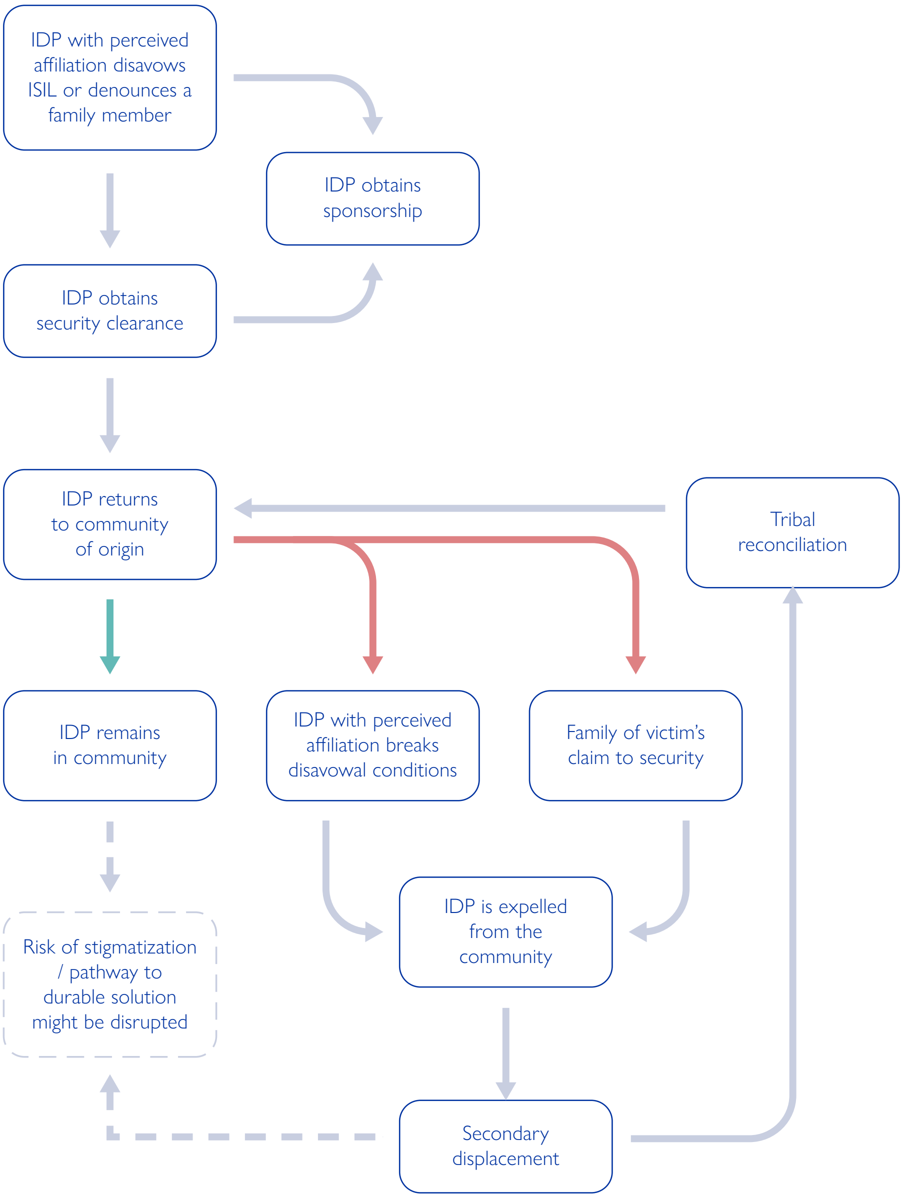
> *A number of families returned to the area and after a while they were expelled because the families of the victims wanted their sons' blood avenged."* – Female, FGD, Al Husi

Once secondarily displaced, the tribal mediation process can start between the relatives of victims who filed the complaint and the expelled IDPs. Once the case is settled (usually involving the payment of blood money) and the required payments made, the accused IDPs are able to return and the victims are unable to incite or perpetrate violence against them.

Secondary displacement is perceived by community members and community leaders as a preventative measure to avoid increased violence, given that the return of this population of IDPs can ignite cycles of revenge attacks by victims. IDPs themselves have explained that they view secondary displacement as a temporary measure to ensure their safe return.

However, as in the return to a nearby area, secondary displacement as a temporary solution runs the risk of turning into protracted displacement. In cases involving intra-clan violence, expelled IDPs might not be able to access the tribal support network required for successful tribal mediation. As well, pressure from relatives of victims on community leaders to reject the return of expelled IDPs and/or the community leaders' fear of being seen as sympathizers of IDPs with perceived affiliation might all factor into secondary displacement becoming protracted instead of temporary. These factors not only condition the return of secondarily displaced IDPs but are overall obstacles to sustainable long-term returns as described in the next section.

Figure 1. Return and Secondary Displacement Process in Anbar Communities


IDP with perceived affiliation disavows ISIL or denounces a family member
IDP obtains sponsorship
IDP obtains security clearance
IDP returns to community of origin
Tribal reconciliation
IDP remains in community
IDP with perceived affiliation breaks disavowal conditions
Family of victim's claim to security
Risk of stigmatization / pathway to durable solution might be disrupted
IDP is expelled from the community
Secondary displacement

OBSTACLES TO SUSTAINABLE LONG-TERM RETURN

Communities in Anbar face multiple challenges to return, defined as sustainable reintegration,[32] of IDPs with perceived affiliation, and in some occasions, the return falls short of being safe and fully voluntary.

The decision to return might be voluntary but dependent on community leaders.

Although returns of IDPs with perceived affiliation are taking place, the return is often dependent on multiple factors beyond obtaining a security clearance. The sponsorship system is one avenue, which emerged in many areas to facilitate returns for those IDPs unable to directly obtain a security clearance or who have obtained it but whose return is opposed by community members in general or relatives of victims in particular. While a variety of community members may act as a sponsor, community leaders are often required to "verify" the sponsorship arrangement, along with local security, administrative and political actors. Obtaining a security clearance alone is therefore not sufficient for IDPs with perceived affiliation to return.

The reliance on community leaders can be double-edged. Community leaders often expressed more willingness to accept the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation than the communities themselves, and are willing to take an active role facilitating the returns process. One mitigating factor is that community leaders often need to consult with the families if ISIL victims prior to allowing returns. Unlike other governorates such as Salah al-Din, which initially imposed a five-year ban on the return of families whose relative was accused of affiliation since the earliest stages of retaking the area,[33] tribal leaders in Anbar refused to implement a similar ban in order to be able to actively mediate in such cases.[34] These decisions have since been reviewed, with officials and tribal leaders in Salah al-Din actively working on returns. In July 2016, tribes in Anbar Governorate were the first to attempt to develop a comprehensive approach to the question of the return of ISIL-affiliated IDPs and their families.[35] This may also be due to the fact that Anbar was retaken from ISIL earlier than other governorates.

On the one hand, a determinant that seems to influence the stability of returns is the extra effort that tribal and religious leaders, clerics and community members take to mediate disputes, and their willingness to take an active role in supporting safe and sustainable returns. On the other, community leaders might seek to regain power and influence through returns.

Also, the effort of community leaders in facilitating the return process and appeasing critical voices against the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation is subject to the perspective of victims' families. Community leaders seek the approval of victims' families, but this is not always possible due to their lack of confidence in the criminal justice system and lack of compensation received for their suffering and injustice at the hands of ISIL. In the absence of national-level policies or resources, the desire of community leaders may thus be curtailed by victims' families and others in the community who oppose the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation.

Afraid of losing power among their constituencies and of being accused of siding with the family of the "perpetrators" instead of those of the victims, or to be labeled as pro-ISIL, some community leaders have opted to stay away from the issue.

> “*I am not saying that I cannot do anything [to facilitate returns] but I am also subjected to many pressures by the families who lost their sons or homes, or whose agricultural lands were burned. Because of that I cannot help them."*
>
> – Local authorities representative, Al Abba

> “*IDP families have asked my support to facilitate their return but I refused so I not to get in trouble with the families of ISIL victims."*
>
> – Local authorities representative, Al Abba

Thus, pressure from the families of victims has influenced the community leaders' decision of allowing returns.

> *The population in general here is committed to what the council decides. But the community can influence these decisions when they affect the community. For example, the issue regarding the return of families whose sons belonged to ISIL: when the council decided to allow the return of some of them, we were surprised by the community's rejection of the decision, which had to be changed. The community voted and it was decided that these families would not return."* – Local authorities representative, Al Abba

Community leaders and community members fear an increase in intra-community violence if the return is not regulated.

One of the fears that limits the involvement of community leaders and community members in facilitating returns is the fear of an increase in violence if returns take place without a mediated process through which the claims of the victim's families are dealt with and the cases against IDPs with perceived affiliation are settled. Community leaders and members fear increased violence in the community regardless of their personal opinion on returns and whether they consider IDPs as part of the community or not.

A general climate of mistrust in the communities limits social interactions between community members and IDPs with perceived affiliation, which puts IDPs with perceived affiliation at risk of being stigmatized.

Community members who think that IDPs with perceived affiliation should return home have remained neutral and have not publicly shared their opinion because they are afraid of being associated with the group and of the reaction of the victims' families. This reason has prompted some community members to refuse to testify in support of IDPs with perceived affiliation in tribal mediation processes.

> *I tried to contact friends who knew my son was not associated with ISIL, but they refused to testify in my favor for fear of threats."*
>
> – Male IDP from Karma Center

Even when return has taken place with no outspoken rejection, there was also no acceptance by community members and contact with these IDPs has been limited. This midpoint, in which there is no rejection but no clear acceptance either, might lead to stigmatization of the returned families with perceived affiliation.

> *People who are not hostile to the ISIL-affiliated families do not mind them returning, but there is no desire to communicate with them. People do not want to have a relationship with ISIL families. [...] Some families have accepted the return of the rejected families, but without dealing or communicating with them. [...] There is no mixing between the families of ISIL and the rest of the community, even among women."*
>
> – Religious leader, Al Husi

The return of IDPs with perceived affiliation cannot be deemed safe if it is not accepted by the community as a whole. There is risk of increasing secondary displacement if returns take place without the assent of the communities.

If the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation is not accepted by the community, returns could be unsafe. Some of the IDPs who return to the community have subsequently re-displaced once more because they were rejected by the broader community, either directly, being expelled, or indirectly, being harassed. These IDPs did not engage in a tribal mediation process following secondary displacement, which limits their possibility to return in short term.

> *[The community] did not oppose [our return] explicitly, but we felt rejected, to the point that I did not leave the house unless I really needed to. We felt that [the rejection] from the way they treated us. When I say hello to our neighbor, he does not reply. I cannot stand how badly the community treats me; my family is sad because of the way we are treated."* – Female IDP from Fhelat

> *Some of my neighbors accepted my return, while others have opposed it. The reason for rejecting my return is I was present in the area during ISIL's occupation. Some of them said "whoever was not displaced and remained is considered as affiliated to ISIL." However, this is not correct at all. I was exposed to harassment and verbal abuse; my children were at work and harassed. Of course, my family and I felt threatened. My house was hit more than once by live bullets. I do not know who opened fire on my house."*
>
> – Male IDP from Al Abba

DISCUSSION

Understanding the community's perspective on the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation is the first step to design short, medium and long-term programmes and interventions aimed at ensuring return as a pathway towards a durable solution, and to create a safe community environment where returned families who might have a lower level of acceptance among community members are empowered.

Acknowledging the community's perception is also paramount to ensure that the return of these community members is safe and dignified, and leads to a durable solution that allows IDPs to return and actively coexist and participate in community life without discrimination. Legal and security mechanisms alone are not enough to ensure return is safe and dignified; returns need to be underpinned by social acceptance –such as in Anbar– and have the acceptance of the community and tribes.

Communities have put in place mechanisms to manage and regulate the return of IDPs with perceived affiliation. Despite their controversial nature, these mechanisms need to be understood and acknowledged, as national and international actors put in place parallel structures to facilitate returns and explore how these mechanisms can be used. Since these mechanisms are not static, if tailored to comply with a rights-based approach and do-no-harm principles, they could be used as entry points for interventions looking at facilitating accepted returns.

Failing to ensure a sustainable return of community members with perceived affiliation who do wish to return might also put them at risk of falling into negative coping mechanisms, and might lead to new intra-community violence in the medium or long run. Throughout this process, however, it is important to hear the victims' voices and demands and to acknowledge their rights. Victims are active actors in the process of accepting IDPs with perceived affiliation back into the community as full-fledged members. A triple approach that considers the victims' families, families with relatives accused of ISIL affiliation and community members in general might be the way forward in the return process, understood as the sustainable reintegration of all IDPs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On long-term targeted programming for sustainable returns and reconciliation

1. Actors should continue to take a long-term view when confronting the process of reconciliation for families with a perceived affiliation with the aim to support durable solutions for displaced populations and promote stability in conflict-affected communities. Sustainable programming in this field should also seek to increase the capacity of communities to respond to and resolve existing and future conflicts.

2. A community-based targeted approach should be used, providing assistance not only to returning IDPs (including those with perceived affiliation) but also other community members who may need assistance, such as host communities and returnees who returned at an earlier stage.

3. Specific interventions designed to support solutions for families with perceived affiliation must be coupled with a broader set of interventions, including reconstruction and rehabilitation of housing, improvement in access to basic services and improvement in access to economic opportunities. These activities serve to reduce resource-related pressures on communities to which families with a perceived affiliation may return, while also preventing exacerbation of resource shortages in case of additional returns.

4. Programming should include substantial components aimed at addressing the marginalization and exclusion experienced by returnees with perceived affiliation after they have returned to their communities. In these communities, partners should seek to increase awareness around issues such as the risks of marginalization and promote and facilitate positive interactions between returnees with affiliation and community members.

On supporting local-level return and reconciliation mechanisms

5. Existing local-level return and reconciliation mechanisms initiated by local authorities and actors should be supported as long as they comply with a rights-based approach and do-no-harm principles. There should be an evaluation process to determine whether these processes comply and, should they not, efforts should be made to adapt these mechanisms to adhere to these principles.

6. Initiatives to ensure that communities, IDPs / returnees with perceived affiliations, victims' families and security actors are all involved in the process should be created or scaled up as a means to ensure a representative and sustainable return process.

On policy and advocacy to complement support of local level returns

7. Initiatives and advocacy should continue to be directed at increasing access to documentation and security clearances, including for families who have already returned through local return agreements. While local return agreements may signal increasing community acceptance and open the door for return and reintegration, they do not substitute a security clearance, do not always include security clearance approval or complete coordination with security actors and do not yet adequately address the marginalization and exclusion that can continue after return as a result of lack of access to documentation and security clearances.

8. Efforts to support transitional justice at multiple levels of society and government should continue in parallel to local return and reconciliation initiatives; these efforts are complementary and cannot substitute each another. These efforts could include initiatives to increase access to compensation and reparations for victims, efforts to strengthen the criminal justice system and truth-seeking efforts in Iraq on all levels, as well as broader rule of law and governance reforms.

On monitoring and assessing communities and local return agreement models

9. Actors undertaking activities in stabilization and in support of durable solutions should continue to evaluate local return agreement models, including the components and stakeholders necessary for agreements, their effectiveness over time, and their medium- to long-term impact on returnees with perceived affiliation, as well as communities of origin as a whole. This should include analysis of the factors and characteristics of models applied in different contexts, such comparing the close-knit and rural vs. the larger and less coalesced communities discussed in the report.

10. Programming should include conflict assessments prior to return, to ensure an accurate understanding of all community conflict dynamics and how these might impact returns and reconciliation. As well, monitoring of returns and conditions for returnees needs to be undertaken in the months and even years after return to ensure the sustainability of returns.

11. Partners should establish monitoring mechanisms to track conditions in secondary displacement. Monitoring serves the purpose of feeding into programming measures to improve the conditions that may contribute to a sense of marginalization and exclusion felt among families with a perceived affiliation.

ANNEX 1: COMMUNITY BACKGROUNDS

SAQLAWIYA CENTER

Demographics

Before 2014, Saqlawiya Center had a population of approximately 17,000 people.[36] Its main tribe is the Muhammadi tribe, which is part of the Al Dulaim confederation.[37]

Socioeconomic Features

Saqlawiya Center is urban[38] and is one of the few locations in Saqlawiya district that does not depend on agriculture for its economy.[39] The main sources of livelihood are trade businesses (including furniture making, electrical appliances, and shops for butchery and grocery), service businesses (photocopying, printing, mobile phone maintenance, etc.) and industry (such as smithery and carpentry).[40] Not all business operating before 2014 have reopened[41] and less than half of residents report being able to find employment opportunities. Less than half of the houses are destroyed and at least a few are being repaired.[42]

Perceptions of Security

The southern neighborhood of Saqlawiya Center was highly contaminated with landmines due to the proximity to Falluja, one of the most violent frontlines in the fight against ISIL.[43] Residents are somewhat concerned about unexploded ordinances, ISIL and revenge attacks,[44] clashes between armed groups and/or security forces, and difficulty at checkpoints,[45] with people only leaving their houses when necessary and streets sparsely populated.[46]

Displacement and Return (2014 to 2019)

Between 65 and 85 per cent of the population displaced due to the ISIL crisis, which includes two phases. The first wave was due to ISIL's advance on the area starting in 2014 and the second was caused by the coalition campaign to retake the area from ISIL ending in mid to late 2016.[47]

ISIL occupied Saqlawiya Center in September 2014,[48] causing the displacement of residents. Those displaced fled mostly to Habbaniya Tourist City Camp. Members of the community also displaced to Khaldiya camps, Ameriyat Al Falluja camp, Al Madina Al Seyaheya camp. Those with enough resources to live outside camps went to Baghdad and the northern regions of Iraq.[49]

Saqlawiya Center was one of the first communities in Anbar retaken from ISIL in June 2016.[50] Families started to return as soon as the town was retaken in June 2016[51] but most returns took place in 2017 and 2018.[52] As of December 2019, approximately 9,000 individuals have returned.[53] Most of returnees live in their habitual residences, a small percentage of which are destroyed.[54]

Of those who have returned to Saqlawiya, 60 per cent had displaced due to ISIL's advance in 2014 and 28 per cent of returnees were those displaced in 2016 due to the campaign to retake areas controlled by ISIL.[55]

ALBU SHEJEEL

Demographics

Around 8,000 people lived in in this community before 2014.[56] The Muhammadi tribe is the most represented in the community.[57] Residents also belong to Jumaili, Halbosi, and Al Assaf tribes.[58]

Socioeconomic Features

Albu Shejel is a rural area[59] where residents rely mostly on agriculture for their livelihood. Only some of the agricultural and business activities that were taking place before 2014 have resumed after the area was retaken from ISIL.[60] The economy continues to suffer from ISIL's occupation and subsequent military campaign to retake ISIL-controlled areas.[61] Less than half of residents have access to employment and not all businesses that were open before 2014 have reopened.[62] Less than half of the houses are destroyed and at least a few are being repaired.[63]

Perceptions of Security

Residents are somewhat concerned about unexploded ordinances and ISIL attacks.[64] Residents only leave their homes when necessary and streets are sparsely populated.[65]

Displacement and Return (2014 to 2019)

The community of Albu Shejeel links the Saqlawiya subdistrict to Falluja Center, which made it a useful control point for ISIL.[66] ISIL entered the community in September 2014.[67] Between 87 and 100 per cent of the population displaced to Ameriyat Al Falluja camps and other camps in Anbar during the two waves of displacement.[68] Those who displaced to non-camp locations mostly went to Anbar, Baghdad and Erbil.[69]

Iraqi forces retook Albu Shejeel in June 2016.[70] Around 7,000 people have returned, the majority of who returned after

September 2016.[71] Among the returnees, 88 percent were displaced in 2014 due to ISIL's advance and 2 per cent were displaced due to the campaign in 2016 to retake territory controlled by ISIL.[72]

AL ABBA

Demographics

The population of Al Abba community was between 700 and 800 people prior to the ISIL crisis.[73] The population predominantly belongs to Jumaili tribe.[74] Other community members are from Karboli, Fahdawi, Halbosi, and Al Asady tribes.[75]

Socioeconomic Features

Most residents work in agriculture.[76] There is no primary school or primary health care center in Al Abba but key informants report that most or all of residents manage to access primary schooling and medical care in nearby locations.[77] Access to employment remains challenging; less than half of residents have access to employment opportunities.[78] Less than half of the houses are destroyed and at least a few are being repaired.[79]

Perceptions of Security

The community did not report concerns of unexploded ordinances, attacks, and clashes, although residents reported that movement restrictions have slightly more impact on their daily life than the other communities in the study.[80]

Displacement and Return (2014 to 2019)

ISIL took over the area in early January 2014.[81] Between 80 and 95 per cent of the population displaced due to the ISIL crisis.[82] Between 35 and 40 per cent of the displaced went to camps, including Ameriyat Al Falluja and Habbaniyah camps, and the remaining went elsewhere in Anbar or to the northern Kurdish governorates.[83]

Iraqi forces retook the area in May 2016.[84] Around 650 people have returned to Al Abba, with most returns taking place after September 2017.[85] Of those that have returned, 85 per cent displaced in 2014 due to ISIL's advance on the community.[86]

KARMA CENTER

Demographics

Before 2014, Karma Center had a population of 8,500 people.[87] The peri-urban community mostly belongs to the Al Jumaili tribe, with others belonging to Karboli, Halbosi, Fahdawi, Jarrah, Falahat, Albu Khalifa and Albu Shihab tribes.[88]

Socioeconomic Features

The economy relies on agriculture.[89] Some businesses that were active before 2014 have reopened but less than half of residents have access to employment.[90] There is no primary health care center in the community, but residents manage to access health care in nearby locations.[91] Less than half of the houses are destroyed and at least a few are being repaired.[92]

Perceptions of Security

The community did not report concerns of unexploded ordinances, attacks or clashes. Residents reported that movement restrictions have slightly more impact on their daily life than the other communities included in the study.[93]

Displacement and Return (2014 to 2019)

ISIL took control of the area in early January 2014.[94] Between 95 and 100 per cent of the population displaced during the ISIL crisis, half of which to camps, mostly Amariyat Al Falluja, and the other half to non-camp locations, mostly in Baghdad.[95]

Iraqi forces regained control of Karma in May 2016.[96] Additional residents from nearby subdistricts in Falluja are residing in Karma Center, bringing the total of returnees to around 10,300 people[97] — the majority of which occurred after June 2017.[98] Among the returnees, 67 per cent had displaced during ISIL's advance on the community in 2014.[99]

AL HUSI

Demographics

Most residents belong to the tribe of Albo Issa.[100] Other members come from the Jumaili and Muhammadi tribes.[101] Before 2014, the community had a population of between 7,000 and 10,000 people.[102]

Socioeconomic Features

The area is rural and the population relies on farming and agriculture to sustain livelihoods,[103] but less than half of residents in the community have access to employment opportunities.[104] Some but not all businesses that were open before 2014 have reopened.[105] Less than half of the houses are destroyed and at least a few are being repaired.[106]

Perceptions of Security

The community did not report concerns of unexploded ordinances, attacks or clashes, although residents only leave their homes when they have to; therefore, streets are sparsely populated.[107]

Displacement and Return (2014 to 2019)

ISIL took control of the area between April and May 2014.[108] Between 75 and 100 per cent of the population displaced due to the ISIL crisis.[109] These individuals left for camps in Anbar, including Amiriyat Al Falluja camp, and in Ramadi.[110] People from Al Husi also displaced to Baghdad and Erbil governorates.[111]

Iraqi forces retook the area between June and September 2016.[112] Around 6,000 individuals have returned.[113] Returns began in September 2016 and 80 per cent took place after October 2016.[114] Among those who have returned, 47 per cent displaced in 2014 due to ISIL's advance on the area and 42 per cent displaced due to the campaign to retake areas from ISIL in 2016.[115]

AL FHELAT

Demographics

Before 2014, it had a population of around 500 people.[116] Most residents belong to the Albo Issa tribe.[117]

Socioeconomic Features

The area is rural and residents rely on agriculture for livelihoods. However, none of the agricultural and livestock activities that were ongoing before 2014 are taking place now and none of the residents can find employment.[118] Businesses that were open prior to 2014 have not reopened.[119] There is a primary health care center present but it is heavily damaged and therefore residents do not have access to primary health care services.[120] Eighty percent of houses are destroyed.[121]

Perceptions of Security

Residents report fear of ISIL attacks.[122] They are concerned about clashes between armed groups and harassment at check points.[123]

Displacement and Return (2014 to 2019)

ISIL entered the community between April and May 2014.[124] Around 80 per cent of the community displaced during ISIL's occupation of the community in addition to the campaign to retake the area.[125] Sixty per cent of the displaced families displaced to camps, while the remaining 40 per cent displaced to Baghdad and governorates in northern Iraq.[126]

Iraqi forces retook the area between June and September 2016.[127] Around 450 people have returned.[128]

TABLE 1: COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Key

		·	No impact
√	Present	x	Not Present
+	Some are/have	-	Some are not/have not
++	Most/many or all are/have	--	Most/many or all are not/have not

		SAQLAWIYA CENTER	ALBU SHEJEEL	AL ABBA	KARMA CENTER	AL HUSI	AL FHELAT
POPULATION	**Pre-2014 Population (Individuals)**	17,000	8,000	700 to 800	8,500	7,000 to 10,000	500
DISPLACEMENT AND RETURN	**Total Displacement Numbers**	65% to 85%	87% to 100%	80% to 95%	95% to 100%	75% to 100%	80%
	No. of Returnees (as of 31 December 2019)	9,000 (approx.)	7,000 (approx.)	650 (approx.)	10,300 (approx.)*	6,000 (approx.)	450 (approx.)
	% Returness Displaced in 2014	60%	88%	85%	67%	47%	na
	% Returnees Displaced in 2016	28%	2%	na	na	42%	na
TIMELINE	**Date Community Was Taken by ISIL**	September 2014	September 2014	January 2014	January 2014	Between April and May 2014	Between April and May 2014
	Date Community Was Retaken from ISIL	June 2016	June 2016	May 2016	May 2016	Between June and September 2016	Between June and September 2016
FEATURES OF COMMUNITY	**Urban or Rural**	Urban	Rural	Rural	Peri-Urban	Rural	Rural
	Primary Tribe	Muhammadi	Muhammadi	Jumaili	Jumaili	Albo Isa	Albo Isa
	Other Tribe(s)	na	Muhammadi, Jumaili, Halbosi and Al Assaf	Karboli, Fahdawi, Halbosi and Al Asady	Karboli, Halbosi, Fahdawi, Jarrah, Falahat, Albu Khalifa and Albu Shihab	Jumaili and Muhammadi	na
SERVICES	**Functioning Primary School**	√	√	x	√	√	√
	Functioning Primary Health Center	x	√	√	x	√	x
LIVELIHOOD / EMPLOYMENT	**Agricultural Activities Have Resumed**	na	+	na	++	+	-
	Businesses Have Reopened	-	-	+	-	-	--
	Employment Opportunities Are Available	-	-	-	-	-	--
HOUSING AND RECONSTRUCTION	**Houses Are Intact**	-	-	-	-	-	--
	Reconstruction Taking Place	+	+	+	+	+	+
DAILY LIFE	**Daily Life Resumes Despite Movement Restrictions**	·	·	-	-	-	·
	People Feel Comfortable in the Streets	-	-	+	+	-	+

* Karma Center currently hosts population originally from other sub-districts within Fallujah district.

ENDNOTES

[1] Walter Kälin, "Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons," United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Thirteenth Session, A/HRC/13/21, 2010; "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," United Nations Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights, Forty-fourth Session, E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2, February 1998.

[2] The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), "Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons," United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Thirteenth Session, A/HRC/13/21/Add.4, 2010.

[3] International Organization for Migration (IOM) Iraq, "Iraq Displacement Crisis 2014-2017," October 2018.

[4] Between January and May 2014, about 480,000 individuals left Anbar, an average of 533 families (3,198 individuals) daily. These IDPs largely moved to the north and west of the Anbar, settling within Fallujah and Ramadi. IOM, "Iraq Displacement Crisis 2014-2017," October 2018.

[5] On 22 May 2016, the ISF and PMFs, supported by the coalition forces, engaged in an offensive against ISIL to retake the city and surrounding areas. The campaign prompted immediate displacement (...). In June, there were nearly 300,000 individuals displaced within the governorate, an increase of 10% since the beginning of the year. IOM, "Iraq Displacement Crisis 2014-2017," October 2018.

[6] 534,054 individuals. IOM, "Iraq Displacement Crisis 2014-2017," October 2018.

[7] Human Rights Watch, "Marked With An 'X' Iraqi Kurdish Forces' Destruction of Villages, Homes in Conflict with ISIS," November 2016; Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Looting, Destruction by Forces Fighting ISIS," February 2017; IOM Iraq, "Obstacles to Return in Retaken Areas of Iraq," March 2017.

[8] IDPs with perceived affiliation refers to individuals who are not criminally liable, but face challenges to return due to community perceptions and/or familial or tribal association with accused individuals.

[9] IOM-DTM, "Unlocking Returns: Current Trends, Key Factors and Population Groups of Concern," 2017.

[10] In July 2018, an assessment conducted by IOM DTM, shown that the main reason of unsuccessful returns leading to secondary displacement in Anbar was the perceived affiliation of returnees, who were rejected by the community upon return (56% of locations in Anbar with secondary displacement). For more information contact iraqdtm@iom.int.

[11] Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), 2010.

[12] Snowball technique led to identifying returnees in communities initially categorized as communities with instances of rejection or rejected IDPs in communities with instances of acceptance.

[13] Initially, 18 FGDs were planned, six in each community. One FGD with male participants aged 18 to 26 was planned in each community (six youth group discussions in total). In two communities, the youth FGD had female youth participants due to the lack of sufficient male youth participants and one of them took place in the camp. In one community, this FGD was cancelled.

[14] All the interviewed IDPs had obtained the required security clearance to return and were not formally accused of any charges of affiliation with ISIL.

[15] Snowball technique led to identifying returnees in two communities initially characterized as communities with instances of rejection, which increased the number of interviews with returnees from 9 to 15.

[16] As per December 2019, more than 155,000 individuals from Anbar remain displaced (11% of the total IDP caseload). IOM-DTM, Round 113, 31 December 2019.

[17] The extended family group known as a khamsa consists of all male members who share the same great-great grandfather. It functions in cases of conflict, notably blood feuds. Under tribal customs, male members of a khamsa are obligated to avenge the injury or death of another member. All members of the murderer's khamsa are considered to share responsibility and thus are legitimate targets for reprisal. Forms of reprisal can include killing someone from the murderer's khamsa or working out a blood price (diyya) to be paid by one khamsa to another. Patricio Asfura-Heim, "'No Security Without Us': Tribes and Tribalism in Al Anbar Province, Iraq," center for Naval Analyses, June 2014; UNHCR, "Tribal Conflict Resolution in Iraq," 15 January 2018.

[18] Clans are made of several extended families. Several clans form a tribe, which in turn together with other tribes form a tribal confederation according to the standard Arab tribal structure. Integrity, 2018.

[19] Hamoudi, H. A., Al-Sharaa, W. H., and Al-Dahhan, A. The resolution of disputes in state and tribal law in the South of Iraq: Toward a cooperative model of pluralism, 2015.

[20] Katherine Blue Carroll, "Tribal law and Reconciliation in the New Iraq," The Middle East Journal, Volume 65, Number 1, Winter 2011, page 18.

[21] Patricio Asfura-Heim, "'No Security Without Us:' Tribes and Tribalism in Al Anbar Province, Iraq," The Middle East Institute, June 2014, page 4.

[22] Asfura-Heim, 2014, page 8.

[23] Carroll, 2011, page 27.

[24] Haley Bobseine, "Tribal Justice in a Fragile Iraq," The Century Foundation, 7 November 2019, page 8

[25] Bobseine, 2019, page 9.

[26] Bobseine, 2019, page 7.

[27] Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) emerged following the 2003 US-led military campaign. Initially, the group was welcomed by the Sunni tribes in Anbar. However, tension soon emerged due to divergence in goals and AQI treatment of its hosts; revolts against AQI started in 2005. AQI harshly reacted by killing tribal leaders and punishing the population, which further alienated the Sunni tribes opposed to AQI, who formed the Sahwa (awakening) in 2006 and actively fought against AQI from 2006 to 2012; Michael, G. "The legend and legacy of Abu Musab al Zarqawi". Defence Studies, 7(3), 338-357. 2007; Phillips, A. "How al Qaeda Lost Iraq". Australian Journal of International Affairs, 2009; McClure, S. "The lost caravan: the rise and fall of Al Qaeda in Iraq, 2003-2007". Naval Postgraduate School Monterey CA, 2010; Fishman, B. "Using the mistakes of al Qaeda's franchises to undermine its strategies." The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 618.1, 2008.

[28] In the communities of this study, the highest leadership roles were most often attributed to foreign members of the group by respondents.

[29] Existing literature on fragility and resilience to conflict points to the critical role of geography. Given that the environment can significantly influence the security of a given community, it follows that the physical landscape itself is a factor shaping resilience to perceived threats and potential violence. Ami C. Carpenter, "Community Resilience to Sectarian Violence in Baghdad," Peace Psychology Book Series, Springer, 2014 edition, page 66.

[30] Sponsorship is the process by which IDPs seek support from a community leader, usually the tribal leader, or a local authorities or security representative to facilitate obtaining security clearance to return. In the sponsorship system, the sponsor, usually a tribal leader, guarantees the peaceful behavior upon return of IDPs to the community, and commits to surrendering them to the formal or tribal justice system in case evidence of their involvement in previous crimes arise. Sponsorship facilitates the process to obtain a security clearance from security actors. Integrity, "CSSF Iraq: Informal and Tribal Justice Structures in Anbar, Kirkuk and Ninewah," November 2018.

[31] This mechanism is known in tribal customary law as "jail" or exile. Patricio Asfura-Heim, "'No Security Without Us': Tribes and Tribalism in Al Anbar Province, Iraq," center for Naval Analyses, June 2014.

[32] Walter Kälin, "Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons," United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Thirteenth Session, A/HRC/13/21, 2010; "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," United Nations Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights, Forty-fourth Session, E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2, February 1998.

[33] IOM Iraq, "Obstacles to Return in Retaken Areas of Iraq," March 2017.

[34] IOM Iraq, CSU workshop with Anbar authorities, 17-18 November 2019.

[35] Integrity, "CSSF Iraq: Informal and Tribal Justice Structures in Anbar, Kirkuk and Ninewah," November 2018.

[36] Key Informant Interviews, July 2019.

[37] Key Informant Interviews, July 2019.

[38] Members of the community also belong to the Jumaili tribe. IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[39] Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[40] IOM, “Community Revitalization Programme Community Assessment Report: Al Shuhaada 2, Part 1,” March 2018, page 24.

[41] IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[42] IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[43] Peter Beaumont, "People are scared': deadly legacy of ISIS continue to shape lives of Iraq," The Guardian, 15 November 2018.

[44] Revenge attacks include families of victims targeting families with perceived affiliation and vice versa.

[45] IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[46] IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[47] Key informant interviews, July 2019; IOM-DTM, Integrated Location Assessment (ILA) Round IV, 2019.

[48] IOM, "Community Revitalization Programme Community Assessment Report: Al Shuhaada 2, Part 1," March 2018, page 9.

[49] Mostly Erbil and Kirkuk. Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[50] Peter Beaumont, "'People are scared': deadly legacy of ISIS continue to shape lives of Iraq," The Guardian, 15 November 2018; Dan De Luce and Henry Johnson, "Can the U.S. Control Iran's Militias in the Fight for Fallujah," Foreign Policy, 9 June 2016.

[51] Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[52] IOM-DTM, Rounds 55 – 113, September 2016-December 2019.

[53] DTM, Round 113, 31 December 2019.

[54] 2.3% of families live in their habitual residences that are destroyed and not suitable for living. Less than one per cent of families live with host families. IOM-DTM, ILA IV, May-June 2019.

[55] IOM-DTM, ILA IV, May-June 2019.

[56] Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[57] Key informant, February 2020.

[58] Focus group discussions, July 2019.

[59] IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[60] IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[61] Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[62] IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[63] IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[64] IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[65] IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[66] France 24 NEWS Agency, القوات العراقية تدخل مركز ناحية الصقلاوية شمال غربي الفلوجة, June 2016.

[67] Johnlee Varghese, "ISIS Militants in Iraqi Army Uniform Massacre Hundreds, Capture 400 Soldiers in Camp Saqlawiyah," International Business Times, September 2014; EREM NEWS, مقتل 300 جندي عراقي بغاز الكلور في الصقلاوية, September 2014.

[68] Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[69] IOM-DTM, ILA IV, May-June 2019.

[70] "Iraqi Forces Control Strategic Areas near Fallujah City (Updated)," Al Manar, 1 June 2016; Azadeh Ansari and Mohammed Tawfeeq, "Anti-ISIS forces defeat militants in battle for Falluja," CNN, 6 June 2016; Dan De Luce and Henry Johnson, "Can the U.S. Control Iran's Militias in the Fight for Fallujah," Foreign Policy, 9 June 2016.

[71] DTM, Rounds 55-113, 31 December 2019; Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[72] IOM-DTM, ILA IV, May-June 2019.

[73] Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[74] Focus group discussions, July 2019.

[75] Focus group discussions, July 2019.

[76] Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[77] IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[78] IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[79] IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[80] Al Abba and Karma Al Somod reported movement restrictions have little impact on daily life. Al Husi, Saqlawiya centre, and Albu Shejeel reported movement restrictions have no impact on daily life. IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[81] Bill Riggio, "ISIS suicide assault team strikes government complex in Samarra," Long War Journal, 4 March 2014.

[82] Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[83] IOM-DTM, Round 113, 31 December 2019; Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[84] Tim Hume and Mohammed Tawfeeq, "Iraqi troops retake key town from ISIS in Falluja offensive," CNN, 26 May 2016.

[85] Key informant interviews, July 2019; IOM-DTM, Rounds 55-113, September 2016-December 2019.

[86] IOM-DTM, ILA IV, May-June 2019.

[87] Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[88] Focus group discussion, July 2019.

[89] Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[90] IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[91] IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[92] IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[93] Al Abba and Karma Al Somod reported movement restrictions have little impact on daily life. Al Husi, Al Shuhaada 2, and Albu Shejeel reported movement restrictions have no impact on daily life. IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[94] Bill Riggio, "ISIS suicide assault team strikes government complex in Samarra," Long War Journal, 4 March 2014.

[95] Key informant interviews, July 2019; IOM-DTM, ILA IV, May-June 2019.

[96] Key informant interviews, July 2019; Tim Hume and Mohammed Tawfeeq, "Iraqi troops retake key town from ISIS in Falluja offensive," CNN, 26 May 2016.

[97] Key informant interviews, July 2019; IOM-DTM, Round 113, 31 December 2019.

[98] IOM-DTM, Round 113, 31 December 2019.

[99] IOM-DTM, Round 113, 31 December 2019.

[100] Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[101] Focus group discussion, July 2019.

[102] Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[103] Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[104] IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[105] IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[106] IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[107] IOM-DTM, Return Index Round 7, November-December 2019.

[108] Some territories experienced back and forth fighting for control and it is therefore not possible to assign an exact date to the shifting of control. Key informant, January 2020.

[109] Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[110] Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[111] IOM-DTM, ILA IV, May-June 2019.

[112] Some territories experienced back and forth fighting for control and it is therefore not possible to assign an exact date to the shifting of control. Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[113] IOM-DTM, Round 113, 31 December 2019.

[114] IOM-DTM, Round 113, 31 December 2019.

[115] IOM-DTM, ILA IV, May-June 2019.

[116] Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[117] Focus group discussions, July 2019.

[118] IOM-DTM, Returns Index, February 2020.

[119] IOM-DTM, Returns Index, February 2020.

[120] IOM-DTM, Returns Index, February 2020.

[121] IOM-DTM, Returns Index, February 2020.

[122] Focus group discussions, July 2019.

[123] IOM-DTM, Returns Index, February 2020.

[124] Some territories experienced back and forth fighting for control and it is therefore not possible to assign an exact date to the shifting of control. Key informant, January 2020.

[125] Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[126] Key informant interviews, July 2019.

[127] Some territories experienced back and forth fighting for control and it is therefore not possible to assign an exact date to the shifting of control. Key informant, July 2019.

[128] Key informant interviews, July 2019.

IOM IRAQ

⌂ iraq.iom.int
✉ iomiraq@iom.int

UNAMI Compound (Diwan 2),
International Zone,
Baghdad / Iraq

@IOMIraq

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