

# IDPs in Hajj Ali - Update, 14 August

[This update follows two previous reports on the IDP situation in Hajj Ali – please contact me at jasper.hadman@rise-foundation.org if you have not received these reports and are interested in them.]

The schools run by RNIDPO in Hajj Ali are based on an initial request by the Ninewa Operational Command (NOC) for temporary shelters to house IDPs for the short term in areas that have been deemed safe by the NOC, but that are still close to the frontline. This is so that IDPs will be able to return to their homes once their village has been liberated and cleared of IED contamination – to an extent that the NOC is satisfied with – and the frontline has moved forward to a distance the NOC considers safe. More 'shelters' are planned in villages on the west side of the Tigris, to follow the progress of the advance.

# **New Supplies**

On 14 August, MOMD (Ministry of Migration and Displaced) arrived at the site with 11 truckloads of food and non-food items. These items broke down as follows:

- 1,000 boxes of dry food requiring cooking or preparation (flour, rice, lentils, tea, sugar, tomato paste, formula milk, cooking oil)
- 1,000 boxes of basic food (biscuits, water, condensed milk, orange squash concentrate)
- 1,000 hygiene kits (soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, baby shampoo, Dettol, sanitary towels, moisturiser, washing up liquid)
- 2,000 boxes of new clothes for men, women and children
- 1,000 mattresses
- 500 small cookers
- 250 air coolers (for the MOMD tents which have been partially erected outside Hasiyah village)
- 20 large water tanks
- 9 portable toilets (five in school 1, three in school 2, two in school 3 none yet installed for use)

Not all of these supplies will go to the IDPs housed at the schools in Hasiyah. Some will be sent to Tina, a village near Ijhalla on the west side of the river, where MOMD have already erected some tents (number unconfirmed) and where an unverified number of IDPs are staying with very little support. Some supplies will also be sent to civilians living independently elsewhere in Hajj Ali and in neighbouring Owsijah.

Many of the boxes have been unloaded and stored haphazardly outside, where they are vulnerable to animals, but MOMD have said they will be moved to another area before long.



MOMD supplies being unloaded.



#### Urgent Needs in the schools

Some needs such as clothes, cookers and toilets (once properly installed) have been answered, but some remain:

- Generators + fuel RNIDPO currently relies on the local sheikh for the supply of electricity. Although he has supplied it thus far in all three schools, he has threatened to cut it very soon as it constitutes a personal expense for him which he cannot continue indefinitely. This dependence on non-humanitarian partners for essential support is a great source of stress for RNIDPO staff.
- Mobile Clinic healthcare is very limited at the site and is reliant on volunteers.
- Cash money spent on ice, fuel for cooking, payment for the water tanker driver, and expenses for volunteer staff, is currently supplied by RNIDPO's director, which is unsustainable. Money is also required for rubbish collection (piles of rubbish are building up outside the schools) and for fuel and maintenance of the water tanker.
- A vehicle to transport people who want to go there to Debaga (RNIDPO are currently entirely
  dependent on the Iraqi Army/the Hashd for this), or to bring volunteers from Erbil to the school.

## Other Needs

- Medicines common conditions among men are diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and respiratory problems.
- Nappies for babies not included in the hygiene kits.
- Sanitary towels for women the quantity supplied in the MOMD hygiene kits is insufficient.
- Fresh foods like meat and vegetables.
- Blankets Hajj Ali is surprisingly cool at night.
- Shoes a number of IDPs fled their villages without shoes.

#### Healthcare

- Healthcare for IDPs is still reliant on volunteer staff who are unable to go to the site everyday.
- Four emergency medical cases have been identified and further discussions between RNIDPO and UNICEF on how to address these cases are planned to happen very shortly.

# **Political Dimension**

Hussein Ali, the mayor of Mosul, arrived at school 1 on the 14<sup>th</sup> with the supplies provided by MOMD. He was not at all happy to find an RNIDPO logo on the outside of the building and was verbally aggressive towards RNIDPO staff and female IDPs. The mayor wants overall control of the supplies provided by MOMD, which in the past has led to obstructions. MOMD say they need to operate through a government official and cannot deliver aid directly to an NGO. Having to rely on the cooperation of politicians for the delivery of stockpiled supplies to IDPs is a continual source of stress and anxiety for RNIDPO. At the moment, however, RNIDPO have full access to the supplies that they need, which have been delivered by MOMD.

Some local political figures, such as the mayor of Al Qayyarah, have gone out of their way to assist RNIDPO. The local sheikh has also become more cooperative, although he has said he will cut electricity if the fuel for his generator is not paid for. The sheikh also provides fuel for the water tanker, which now also requires maintenance thanks to its constant use. If the sheikh stops paying for fuel for the water tanker, or if money cannot be found for its maintenance, there will be a serious water shortage.

# RNIDPO staff

RNIDPO staff are under relentless pressure and are approaching exhaustion. Some of the six staff members have not left the schools for almost a week and they shoulder an enormous amount of responsibility. The



mayor of Mosul's visit has had an extremely negative impact on morale. Having to worry continually about the availability of the electrical and water supply is another great source of stress. With the situation as it is, it is unlikely that the staff will be able to continue for much longer. RNIDPO can mobilise more volunteers which would alleviate the burden, but cash is required for expenses and transport to get them to and from the site.

Support - A UN delegation including members of UNICEF arrived to inspect the schools on the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup>. RNIDPO will be meeting with OCHA on the 15<sup>th</sup> to talk about emergency funding. Save the Children have expressed interest in visiting the site soon to assess what they can do in terms of child protection and possibly WASH. Moral support has also been forthcoming from other international channels and others have expressed a willingness to offer support. As of 15 August, as far as I am aware, no actual support has yet been received from international NGOs or the UN. The difficulty remains the security situation regarding Hajj Ali's proximity to the frontline.

### **Security Situation**

Security within the schools has been much improved with the arrival of reliable and supportive police. The local Hashd has not caused any problems recently, but have been cooperative. Military operations by the Iraqi Army and Hashd to liberate Al Qayyarah town and surrounding villages are ongoing, and it is hoped that this goal will be reached within a few days. This will bring greater security to Hajj Ali and to villages on the west side of the river. The Iraqi Army might then allow those IDPs who want to, to return back to their villages from the schools. The advance will also create more IDPs in the Al Qayyarah-Makhmour area.

The Iraqi Army still do not allow NGOs to cross the temporary bridge leading to ijhalla, so the situation in that village cannot be confirmed. However, according to the Iraqi Army, the situation there is far better and there is only a small risk to civilians there, chiefly from mortars. Detailed information on the humanitarian situation in the village was not obtained, but it can be assumed that food and water remain scarce and that other services like healthcare are virtually non-existent.

## New arrivals in Hajj Ali

200 men (mostly single young men of mixed tribes in their late teens and early 20s) from Debaga arrived at the schools at 7pm on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Their relocation was organised by Baghdad MP Mishan al Jibouri and they have been brought to Hajj Ali under the care of Sheikh Mohammed al Jibouri, a Hashd leader of the Jibouri tribe. With around 900 IDPs to look after, RNIDPO are at capacity and were unable to accept these men at the schools in Hasiyah. There was also a very strong objection to the new arrivals from the men already inhabiting school 3, which has little extra room. The new arrivals were taken to another empty school previously surveyed by RNIDPO in Kharabah Jabbr, the southernmost village in Hajj Ali, and a house in the same village used by the Hashd. The school is relatively clean and has working toilets. The men had not eaten for a long time and were given water and biscuits while they waited, some for several hours, to be transported away.

These men come from villages on the west side of the Tigris and are keen to go home when it is possible. They are under the care of the Hashd, which a significant portion are likely to join – whether under duress is not known. Between 1,100 and 1,500 more men are expected to arrive from Debaga over the next 2-3 days.



200 male IDPs from Debaga arriving in trucks and being lined up outside school 1.