

IDPs in Hajj Ali – Update 18 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 current number of IDPs in the 3 schools remains at around 900 with some people having gone to Debaga and some having arrived in Hajj Ali from the west side of the river. Ijhalla has been declared safe for people to return to, but Iraqi Army transport remains very limited - few if any have returned to Ijhalla from the schools in Hajj Ali. A large number of IDPs remain in Ijhalla, but they are living in houses and are no longer on the streets. Some are beginning to return to their villages nearby.

The 200 young men who arrived from Debaga at the schools on the evening of 14 August and were taken by Sheikh Mohammed's Hashd to a school and another location in Kharabah Jabbr have disappeared. It is not known where they've been taken but it's suspected that they've been transported to a Hashd training facility near Qayyarah airbase or close to Tikrit. The other 1,100-1,500 young men expected to be sent from Debaga have not been seen in Hajj Ali, and it is not confirmed whether they left Debaga.

Support and assessments

Save the Children and Oxfam visited the schools on 17 August. Save plan to return to Hajj Ali early next week to distribute baby kits for the (roughly) 150 infants under 3 years old. Oxfam are considering whether they will be able to provide generators for the schools and WASH support. They also conducted an assessment with a focus on the poor hygiene situation in the schools. Following their visit and meetings with RNIDPO, UNICEF are working to provide a comprehensive WASH package in Hajj Ali for a caseload of 10,000. This will include water trucking, chlorination, rubbish collection, installation of latrines, hygiene kits, hygiene promotion, and administrative support. RNIDPO have so far increased their staff to 10 volunteers.

Health / Hygiene

Coordinating with WHO and DOH, UNICEF organised a health team and ambulance to set up in Hajj Ali. During an inspection on 17 August, the health centre was operating with a staff of one nurse and one assistant. The ambulance had been commandeered by the local Hashd who are keeping it under their control.

The hygiene situation in the schools is poor, with pools of dirty, stagnant water around the water tanks. Most of the new plastic tanks delivered by MOMD are not in use. The 9 latrines are also not in use as they have not been installed. Therefore the toilet situation remains very bad at this point.

There is a shortage of non-potable water in the schools as reportedly there is no fuel for the tanker. This was previously paid for by the local sheikh.

Supplies

The storeroom in school 1 remains well stocked with supplies provided by MOMD. The stockpiled supplies outside have reduced considerably as many boxes have been sent to families living in Hajj Ali and Owsijah, and IDPs in Tina, over the river.



The 100 unused MOMD tents erected just outside Hasiyah village are in a bad state of repair. It is thought that the damage is due to high winds.

Political dimension

On 17 August the head of Mosul City Council arrived with her bodyguard/driver and began distributing coolers and nappies to women in school 2. When asked to coordinate with the managing NGO, RNIDPO, she refused and questioned their legitimacy. A public argument ensued with her bodyguard behaving in an aggressive manner. She was allowed to continue the distribution and left afterwards. Unannounced, uncoordinated distributions are unfair to IDPs (women in school 1 did not receive any items and they were unevenly distributed in school 2) and undermine the authority of the managing NGO, RNIDPO. Public arguments such as this are also detrimental to the peaceful atmosphere of the schools. There is a clear rift between RNIDPO and the mayor of Mosul's office. RNIDPO has the support of the NOC, the Ninewa Governor, and the Mayor of Qayyarah who is the local political authority. RNIDPO's relationship with the local sheikh fluctuates. The Hashd and police who are supposed to be providing security did nothing to prevent the head of Mosul City Council from carrying out her distribution, despite protests from RNIDPO, and did nothing to intervene when her bodyguard became aggressive. Incidents such as this have a very negative impact on RNIDPO staff morale.

Tina and We Care

Tina is a small village just south of Al Qayyarah town. Around 5,000 IDPs have gathered there, with around 40 new families arriving each day from Al Qayyarah. A severe lack of food and water are the main concerns, as well as Tina's proximity to the active frontline. There are reportedly 200 MOMD tents outside the village without any WASH facilities. The Iraqi Army controls movement. A senior Iraqi Army officer said that these IDPs will be transported to Telol Al-Baj in the Shirqat sub-district when preparations have been made to receive them.

We Care is a group of around 10 young volunteers based in Erbil who raise money and collect NFIs via a facebook campaign. They travel to Tina about twice a week with two 2-ton trucks to make a distribution. They usually raise around 3 million IQD for each trip and buy/collect ice, food, water, clothes, hygiene products etc.