

Update on selected West Mosul neighbourhoods, 20 April

Neighbourhoods bordering the south of the Old City

The security situation in the neighbourhoods south of the Old City has deteriorated. Last week residents in Al Akidat felt safe enough to be out on the streets despite the risk of indirect and direct fire; on Thursday this week the streets were empty. As well as increased mortaring and sniper activity, a successful ISIS counterattack on the northern fringes of the neighbourhood was reported, although details are unknown. This incident unnerved the population and as a result a significant number of families have reportedly moved south to safer neighbourhoods.

Al Nabi Shiet, Al Dawasah and Al Dandaan neighbourhoods are almost empty. We were told that around 20 families remain in Al Dandaan and very small numbers (roughly 1%) in Al Nabi Shiet and Al Dawasah. Around 20-30% of families from these neighbourhoods were taken to the Old City by ISIS several weeks ago; the remainder fled south during the fighting to the airport and from there to Hamam al Alil.

In Al Dawasah, the few men we found to speak to said they had decided to stay in the neighbourhood (accompanied by their families) to look after their businesses. They are provided with food and water by the FedPol – a relatively light burden due to the very small number of remaining families. There is a water project in Dandaan in need of rehabilitation, although access is difficult due to the current security situation. When security improves, the functioning of this water project will help encourage families to return to these neighbourhoods. Contractors have begun repairing the pipe network, although their work is continually hampered by the security risks.

Most IEDs have reportedly been cleared in the southern parts of Al Dawasah – when civilians come across UXOs or IEDs they inform the FedPol who send an EOD team to the location. There is currently a high risk from mortars, snipers and drones in Al Akidat, Al Nabi Shiet, Al Dawasah and Al Dandaan. It was reported that the mortaring is particularly heavy at night. In addition, FedPol medical officers have reported an increase in chemical attacks (a decontamination unit has been set up in the field hospital at the northern end of Mosul airport to deal with casualties). Because of the proximity to the Old City, it is unlikely that civilians will start returning to these neighbourhoods until at least the southern quarters of the Old City have been fully secured.

The main street that runs along the southern edge of these neighbourhoods to the 4th bridge was practically deserted on the afternoon of 20 April, in stark contrast to the previous week. The street is wide and open; areas where there is a direct sight line up to the Old City have proved to be vulnerable to snipers.



Al Risalah – general situation and needs

IDPs coming out of Al Tanak are often surprised at the contrast they find in neighbourhoods a short distance to the south, within a few kilometres of the frontline. In Al Risalah and Al Amil, well-stocked markets give the impression of streets returning to normality; for many, however, accessing clean drinking water remains the greatest challenge and hardship. One market seller on the road between Al Amil and Al Risalah estimated that only around 15% of the local remaining population had money to spend in markets; in an area where drinking water has been highlighted consistently as the main need, he sells on average only ten 9-packs of 500ml water bottles and four 17-litre bottles per day (at 1,000 and 2,000 IQD respectively).

The rehabilitation of the water system is the priority need throughout the retaken areas of West Mosul, but in the meantime, a coordinated and carefully monitored water trucking response is the most urgent request of civilians. Many have to drink water from public or private boreholes which causes medical problems – particularly skin conditions – even after boiling. An INGO has set up 3 water trucking points at the Ghazlani Water Project in Al Wadi al Jawsaq. Collectively they pump 100m³ per hour for 10 hours each day. IHAO have said they plan to start water trucking in Al Risalah, Nablous and Rajim al Hadid among other neighbourhoods next week, but this should be part of a coordinated response. There is an unspecified water facility in need of inspection and rehabilitation in northern Nablous, although the location is currently unsafe.

There has been limited support in terms of food and water in Al Risalah and ISOF remains the main source of aid for the population. There is, however, a large PHC run by IHAO in partnership with the Ninewa Health Department which reportedly receives around 700-800 patients per day from Al Risalah and surrounding neighbourhoods. IHAO distribute some hot meals to residents but there are reportedly no other organisations – only ISOF – supporting with food and water in Al Risalah, Nablous and Rajim al Hadid.

The threat from mortars remains in Al Risalah, and snipers pose a danger in the northern parts of the neighbourhood. Nablous and Rajim al Hadid remain unsafe areas. However, for many families in Al Risalah, the inability to afford essential supplies is a more pressing concern than security and the main reason why some families are deciding to leave their homes.