



Understanding the Impacts of Displacement in Iraq through a Land and Property Lens

12 February- A land and property assessment across Iraq has fostered a better understanding of the extent and type of land and property concerns that have emerged following the massive wave of internal displacement since the end of 2013. The assessment was supported by the EU-funded “HIJRA AMINA” programme and will help in designing durable solutions for Iraq’s displaced populations.

After visiting the Erbil camps and settlements in December 2014, the assessment team conducted focus group discussions and interviews in Baghdad, Sulaymaniyah and Dohuk. Group discussions and interviews targeted IDPs living in camps, informal settlements and rented houses, and were held in close coordination with the respective local authorities. They reflected both a gender balance and Iraq’s ethnic and religious diversity. By capturing the consequences of the collective and individual circumstances of property loss, the assessment provides a more complete picture of Iraq’s displacement history and the resulting land and property context. Displaced Iraqis shared their experience of having to leave their homes and provided insights regarding possible land and property solutions that might enable them to return home. Preliminary findings indicated the enormous scope and complexity of property related issues, including illegal sales, secondary occupation and generalized destruction and looting of property.

The property assessment benefited from the perspective of the Yazidi population—a religious minority that has been the victim of persecutions in the last decades and was recently one of the main targets of armed terrorist groups. The difficulties faced by the Yazidis are unique due

to their past history, namely the confiscation of their lands and the absence of property documentation for them.

In order to include the views of Iraq’s young generation, students currently enrolled at Dohuk and Nawroz Universities who were displaced from Mosul and Sinjar contributed to the assessment. They gave valuable insight into their use of social media as a coping mechanism which allows them to share constantly updated information on property status in their respective places of origin.

Given the complexity of the property predicament faced by displaced Iraqis and its impact on the future stabilization of Iraq, HIJRA AMINA’s land and property assessment will provide pragmatic recommendations that aim to support the policy response of GoI. While the attention of the humanitarian community rightfully remains focused on responding to the immediate needs of the displaced population, the impact of displacement has also created longer term needs. Therefore, HIJRA AMINA’s land and property assessment looks towards longer term stability through providing informed guidance essential for the design of durable solutions for the displaced.

The HIJRA AMINA programme aims to develop the capacities of the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government in migration management. It builds on IOM’s comprehensive capacity building programme, implemented in Iraq since 2003. As recent developments in the Iraqi migration context have led to a drastic shift in the capacity building needs, HIJRA AMINA now focuses on developing a strong and coordinated emergency response, while concurrently planning for longer terms solutions.



Community members participate in discussions about land and property loss as a result of displacement. ©IOM 2015



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