

Cumulative Registered Population

16,038 individuals*

New Arrivals	Cases	Individuals
BARDARASH	4,670	14,031
GAWILAN	746	2,007

*Cumulative total NES population registered in camps as of 30 April 2020

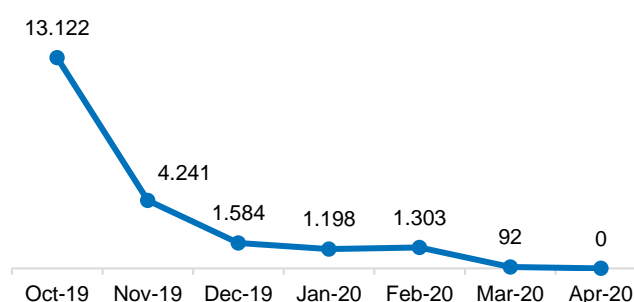
Total Arrivals

21,540 individuals entered KRI since 14 October 2019 until 30 April 2020

5,502 individuals left camps without registration and moved elsewhere in the KR-I and/or returned spontaneously to Syria

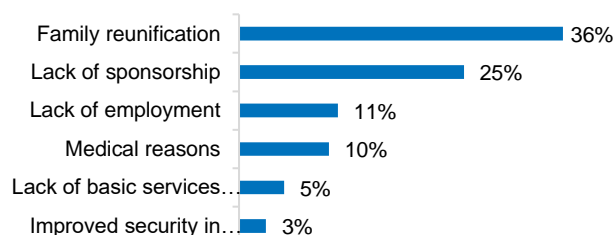
43% of new arrivals cleared by Assayesh to depart camps.

New Arrivals



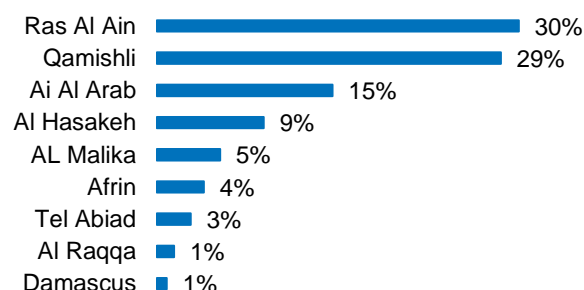
* Land borders were closed on 02 March 2020 as Covid-19 preventative measure and no arrivals have taken place since then.

Reasons for Return

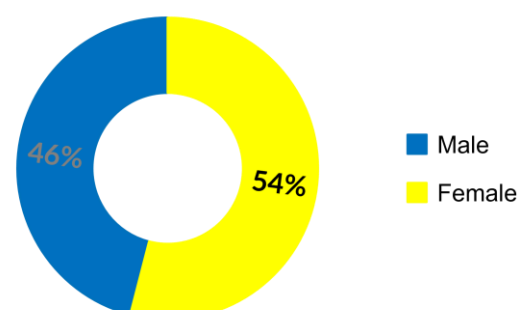


* Top reasons for return identified during return interviews at Derabon Return Centre.

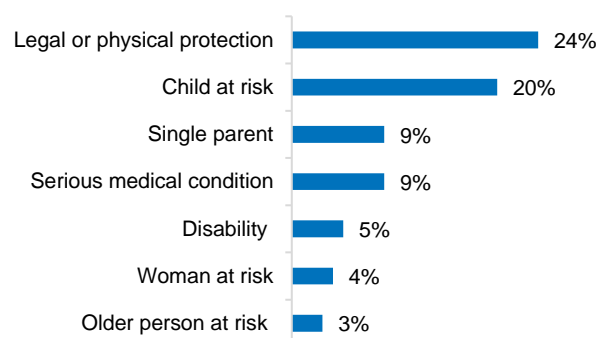
Main Areas of Origin



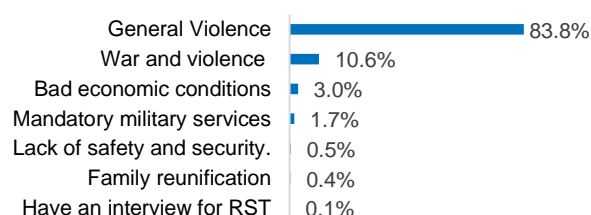
Gender Breakdown



Specific Needs



Reasons for Flight



* Top reasons for flight identified during registration interviews.

Update on Response and Achievements

Operational Context and Background

Since the start of military action in north-east Syria (NES) on 9 October 2019, some 21,540 individuals crossed into the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) seeking refuge. Unlike previous influxes of Syrian refugees into the KR-I, authorities allowed newly arrived persons entry to only two designated camps namely Bardarash and Gawilan. All refugees were transported directly from the border area to Bardarash or Gawilan Refugee camps.

Of the total number of arrivals, some 74 per cent of this population (16,038 individuals) registered, while others are believed to have spontaneously returned back to Syria or moved elsewhere to other parts of the KR-I without registering in the Duhok Governorate. The reasons for this appear to be largely attributed to the encampment policy applied to new arrivals which had not previously been applied in the KR-I and the accompanying sponsorship process to depart the camps. In the latter, only families or individuals with sponsors were permitted officially to leave the camp subject to registration with the authorities.

This situation was exacerbated by several other challenges especially during the first few weeks of the influx. They included, *inter-alia*, the relatively large number of new arrivals (720 individuals daily average or 60 per cent in October alone), pre-registration/clearance procedures by Assayesh and the Board of Humanitarian and Relief Affairs (BRHA), low registration staff capacity and the roll-out of UNHCR's proGres v4 database which required steady internet bandwidth and connectivity. While registration and connectivity issues were resolved by early November, the government's policy of encampment and required sponsorship was not. Although basic assistance and primary health care were being provided, refugees were interested to leave the camp as quickly as possible. Consequently and prior to registration, many new arrivals departed the camps without authorization and moved onwards to other parts of the KR-I while others decided to return to Syria spontaneously.

Bardarash camp was constructed by the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) in 2015 for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and semi-decommissioned in December 2017 after the return of IDPs. It was re-opened in October 2019 as a refugee camp to receive over 3,000 Syrian refugee families from NES. In Gawilan Refugee camp, Sector F was newly established in late October to accommodate some 490 families as Bardarash Refugee camp began to reach its capacity.

By January 2020, the average daily arrival rate fell to about 42 individuals. On 2 March, the government announced the closure of all land borders including the Sahela Entry Point as a preventative measure to control the spread of COVID-19, and by doing so curtailed the movement of Syrians across the border into the KR-I.



Figure 1: Bardarash Refugee Camp in winter. UNHCR / R.Rasheed

Response and Achievements



PROTECTION

Response

■ Registration

The registration of the new arrivals from NES started on 14 October. At the same time, a Registration Centre was being equipped and set up inside Bardarash camp and necessary registration staff deployed. By early November, the centre was fully functional with stable internet capacity, electricity and active protection counselling partners. As a result, registration activities started to pick up pace. In Gawilan camp, the existing Registration Centre scaled up its activities to cover registration of new arrivals and those of the already resident population.

By the end-April 2020, **about 14,031 individuals** who had arrived since mid-October were registered in Bardarash and **2,007 individuals** registered in Gawilan camps. Some **9,368 individuals** obtained clearance to depart the camps to join family members out of camps in Duhok and in other governorates.

Females comprise just over half of the total registered population (54 per cent), the majority of whom are between 18 to 35 years of age. Some 33 per cent are young males, who reportedly fled forced recruitment by armed groups in Syria.

In furtherance of the encampment policy, a key concern, particularly in Bardarash camp, relates to withholding the issuance of UNHCR's asylum-seeker certificates to refugees even upon registration. Without a certificate, refugees cannot obtain residency documentation in the KR-I which limits their freedom of movement, inhibits legal employment and eviction by landlords. Exceptions to this policy were made only to those approved to depart the camp formally after securing sponsorship. Through continued advocacy with Assayesh, authorization was obtained to issue photocopies of UNHCR's asylum-seeker certificates to refugees which would facilitate their movement to the neighbouring municipality to purchase groceries and other basic commodities including for livelihood purposes within the camp.

■ Protection Monitoring

Since October 2020, over **780** protection monitoring assessments were conducted by protection actors at the Sahela Entry Point and in both refugee camps. Following the closure of the entry point in March 2020, protection actors focused their efforts on camps and resorted to remote protection monitoring when COVID-19 movement restrictions were imposed by the government.

According to monitoring reports, the most commonly cited reasons for flight from Syria were generalized violence engendered by the escalation of conflict, indiscriminate bombardments, fear of forced recruitment by armed groups (reported mostly by young men). Others were loss of livelihoods, lack of basic services and the pursuit of better prospects in the KRI and third countries.

■ Child Protection & Prevention & Response to Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) & Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

Protection actors identified **520** unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) during the six-month period, the majority of whom are boys. All children were interviewed, counselled and referred to relevant services that included facilitating fast-track registration and **411** family reunifications.

Partners conducted **152** best interest assessments (BIAs) and undertook detailed case management such as arranging alternative care arrangements for unaccompanied children in the camp. Special advocacy with the Assayesh office in the Duhok Governorate was made to obtain clearances for vulnerable children, without first-degree family members in the KR-I, to join other family members or relatives in the region.

Of note is that the number of UASC identified during the influx is particularly high when compared with the total number of UASC (320) living in the Duhok Governorate prior to the influx. Unaccompanied and separated children (young males ages 15 – 17 years old) reported fleeing the threat of forced recruitment as main reason they left Syria.

At the beginning of the influx until early December 2019, child protection assessments were conducted for some 1,664 families in Bardarash and Gawilan camps to identify immediate needs. Amongst other information gathered, the assessments showed that children, who attended school prior to flight, followed various curricula with no uniformity in the language of instruction which could be Kurdish, Kurdish with Latin script, or Arabic. Thus, it would be difficult for children from NES to integrate into the local schools using Kurdish (Sorani/Kurmanji) scripts and without having school transcript and records being accredited by the Syrian government.

Three child/youth friendly spaces were established in Bardarash camp providing recreational activities for approximately 600 children aged 5 to 17 years, while the children in Sector F of Gawilan camp were integrated into the two child/youth friendly spaces already available inside the camp. Group activities were paused from mid-March 2020 due to COVID-19 prevention measures. Protection actors have provided child-friendly COVID-19 awareness-raising messages using mobile communication.

Partners provided SGBV-related services to **65** refugees (54 in Bardarash and 11 in Gawilan camps) which include mental health and psychosocial services, medical or legal assistance, and case management. The majority of the identified SGBV cases experienced psychological abuse, physical assault, mostly by family members, and denial of resources in current locations. These were exacerbated by lack of job opportunities and worsening economic situation while in displacement. All females of reproductive age between 11 – 49 years were regularly provided with dignity kits containing sanitary and hygiene items.

By April 2020, 30 SGBV cases were closed while 35 remained under case management by partners. SGBV actors held 12 awareness sessions for 258 refugees. Two sessions on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) were held for 11 community sector leaders and 34 newly recruited Camp Management staff in Bardarash camp.

■ **Support to Person with Specific Needs (PSNs):**

Partners identified, profiled and supported **1,138** PSNs in both Bardarash and Gawilan camps as part of the integrated protection response. Upon arrival at the Sahela Entry Point, persons with disabilities were identified and information sent to the receiving camps to prepare for their arrival. Other specific needs included persons having serious medical conditions, such as chronic illnesses, and single parent households. All individuals were counselled and referred to relevant service providers.

■ **Returns to Syria:**

Despite the steady stream of new arrivals into the KR-I from Syria since October 2019, some **1,014 spontaneous returns** to Syria (864 from Bardarash and 150 from Gawilan) were recorded at the Derabon Return Centre as of end-April 2020.

The Derabon Return Centre serves as a processing point for Syrians who voluntarily and spontaneously choose to return to their country of origin. For newly arrived refugees from NES, return is organized by Assayesh directly from Bardarash and Gawilan camps. This process is applicable only to this group of persons due to the restricted movements of refugees compared with other Syrians who are able to reach Derabon by themselves. Each case receives pre-return counselling in the camps and again at the Return Centre to ensure that their decision to return is voluntary and well-informed. Advocacy is done for individuals who change their minds after the counselling to ensure they are able return to the camps.

At Derabon:

Key reasons cited for return were: family reunification (36%), absence of sponsors to depart camp (25%), lack of economic/livelihood opportunities (11%), medical reasons (10%), lack of basic services in-camp (5%), perceived improved security in areas of origin (3%), attend family events (2%), and other reasons (8%).

At the camps:

Key reasons cited for return were: family reunification (48%), lack of economic/livelihood opportunities (20%), medical (13%), absence of sponsors to depart camp (11%), lack of basic services in-camp (4%), perceived improved security in areas of origin (2%) and other reasons (2%).

In November 2019, when refugees first expressed interest to return, the reason cited in Bardarash camp related to the restrictive movement policy and lengthy Assayesh clearance procedures which prevented departure from camp even for short periods of time such as for employment or shopping at nearby towns. The only departure authorised was tied to having first-degree family sponsorship in urban areas. Thus, the frustration was palpable particularly for families who did not have any first-degree family members to sponsor them in the KR-I. This continued to be the key reason for returns until February 2020 when crossing points and were increasingly linked to the lack of employment opportunities in the camp and ability to leave the camp to seek work.

In Gawilan camp, where both UNHCR asylum-seeker certificates and residency permits were provided to NES arrivals, returning families cited family reunification and limited employment opportunities both in and outside the camp as the main reasons for going back to Syria.

Advocacy was done to enable the Residency Department to have an office inside camp but the work has been delayed due to COVID pandemic and subsequent government lockdowns. Obtaining residency documents may lead to easier movement outside camps for refugees to seek livelihood opportunities.

■ **Communication with Communities (CwC)**

With the support of Community Outreach Volunteers (COVs), 218 awareness sessions took place benefitting **11,265** refugees in Bardarash and Gawilan camps on various themes including, registration, fraud, health and sanitation and available services in the camp. After the outbreak of COVID-19, the COVs together with the Primary Health Care Centre (PHCC) community mobilizers disseminated COVID-19 awareness-raising messages through leaflets and posters reaching the whole camp population.

Through consultations with the community and camp management, Refugee Welfare Committees (RWC) were established in Bardarash camp to strengthen the meaningful participation of women in community life. Eleven community leaders, five of whom are women, were elected in January 2020. The committee members received training on leadership including on their Terms of Reference, Code of Conduct, PSEA/GBV, community participation and mobilization. Regular meetings are held with the RWC and issues of common concern are raised and solutions sought.

Protection actors established help desks in both camps for new arrivals seeking information on available services and protection related issues. Some **9,087 refugees** have been assisted and referred to services through these help desks thus far. The main services sought and questions asked ranged from those on residency permits, UNHCR registration, job opportunities, resettlement, cash assistance, health and family sponsorship to depart the camp for other areas of KR-I.

Key Observations and Outstanding Challenges

The protection response to the NES emergency has been positive. Initial challenges related to the pace of arrivals while setting up the camp were resolved relatively quickly with the support of partners. Despite repeated advocacy at various levels, restrictions preventing refugees from leaving camps except through sponsorship arrangements from individuals with residency status persist, infringing upon their fundamental right to freedom of movement.

To facilitate easier movement of refugees out of camp, a Residency Office is being established in Bardarash to issue residency cards. This office already exists in Gawilan camp and newly arriving Syrians could access the services from December 2019 onwards. Unfortunately, with the closure of all government offices mid-March due to COVID-19 preventive measures, the processing of all residency and renewal of asylum-seeker documentation have been halted. Measures have been agreed with the authorities to waive any fees for renewal of expired documentation.

Freedom of movement for refugees is further challenged by COVID-19 imposed measures across the KR-I, although there were some relaxation measures towards end-April. Monitoring and advocacy were conducted to ensure that fresh food supply into the camps could continue e.g. shopkeepers' movement into Bardarash urban areas to avoid relying on intermediaries resulting in increased prices and that prices would not become inflated as compared to those in the local markets. The impact of these measures on new arrivals in Bardarash and Gawilan camps is being closely monitored.



SHELTER AND NFIS

Response

All refugees arriving at the border crossing point were assisted with essential core relief items (CRI) such as blankets, heaters, and mattresses during their overnight stay. Upon arrival in camps, refugees were assigned shelters and given basic CRI kits based on family composition. A multitude of partners regularly provided complementary items including scarves for women, winter clothes and shoes for adults and children, kerosene for heating and blankets amongst others. Gas cookers and cylinders were provided to all households in both camps and refilled regularly. Winter linings for tents and insulation mats were also provided and installed to provide protection from the cold, rain and snow.

Starting in December, all refugees residing in camps were entitled to receive IQD 480,000 as winter cash and settling in assistance to support their purchase of essential items during the cold months. For the new arrivals, everyone who registered by 5 December 2019 received the financial assistance. Those registered since then until 31 March 2020 received their entitlement together with the cash supplement provided to support during COVID-19. In total, **4,364 refugee households** in Bardarash and Gawilan (Sector F) Refugee camps received winter and COVID cash assistance. Other partners provided varying forms of additional cash assistance especially for vulnerable and/or single parent households.

Bardarash, a former IDP Camp that had been semi-decommissioned in December 2017, was reopened on 15 October 2019 to host refugees arriving to the KR-I from north-east Syria. Shelter plots were extended, tents pitched, tall grass removed and the internal roads cleared of debris. Four Rubb halls were established – two were used as Reception Centres and the others as storage facilities. Partners worked around the clock to make sure that shelters were set up and connected to the electricity grid in time for arriving refugees to move into.

Warehousing, distribution facilities and other suitable areas were identified for partners working inside the camp to set up their office spaces. Camp Management, Police and Assayesh facilities were rehabilitated and the perimeter fence repaired. In the first quarter of 2020, heavy snow and rainstorms damaged shelters and core relief items. These were swiftly replaced following damage assessments. A new Residency Office is being established to facilitate the issuance of residency cards aimed at expediting movements out of camp.

In Gawilan camp, a former transit site was re-established, the grounds prepared, water and electricity networks connected and tents set up. The transit site, now called Sector F, was further improved to construct open channels, compacted internal roads and set-up first communal and then individual WASH facilities.

To support partners receiving refugees at the border points, four Rubb halls were set up, and additional reception areas were rehabilitated and improved to host incoming persons especially in preparation of the rainy and cold winter months.

Key Observations and Outstanding Challenges

While partners tirelessly worked to make sure that basic infrastructures are available and maintained in camp, the transient nature of its population, the unclarity of the camps' lifespan or the authorities' evolving position vis-à-vis allowing persons of concern to enter the KR-I make it difficult to plan comprehensive rehabilitation works. Basic shelter, road and open channel upgrades are necessary, especially with a view to the next winter season. Tents may need to be repaired, replaced or even removed as refugees depart to other locations including back to Syria.



WATER AND SANITATION

ACTIVITY	BARDARASH	GAWILAN
Water Supply	2,200 households received water tanks	310 households received water tanks
WASH Facilities	Rehabilitation of latrines/shower units for 2,852 households	Combined toilet/shower units in Sector F for 366 households
	Distribution of 900 garbage bins	50 communal latrines and 45 communal bath units (gender segregated) installed
WASH Items	3,700 kits Hygiene Kits distributed in November-December 2019	600 kits distributed in November-December 2019
Hygiene Promotion	Ongoing hygiene promotion campaigns conducted at the household level	Ongoing hygiene promotion campaigns conducted at the household level
COVID 19	1,661 COVID-19 hygiene kits distributed in April 2020 in Gawilan and Bardarash.	

Other

Al Waleed Reception Centre:

Two prefabricated latrines were installed, the drinking water pipeline extended and drinking water storage taps and stands set up .

Sahela Entry Point:

Four prefabricated latrines, prefabricated latrines were installed, the drinking water pipeline extended and drinking water storage taps and stands set up. In addition **ten** pre-existing latrines were rehabilitated.

Key Observations and Outstanding Challenges

During October-December 2019, **five** water tankers were hired to supply emergency water in the camps (three for Bardarash and two for Gawilan). In the later stages Gawilan camp also benefitted from the installation of a water network which provides water at the household level.

Setting up a WASH response coordination mechanism specific to the new refugee influx was essential to properly respond to the rapidly evolving needs of the emergency. Moreover, the large number of partners involved in the initial response led to some confusion regarding responsibilities and overlaps in activities. This was effectively resolved through the development of an implementation matrix and streamlining the response into long-term partners decreasing the activity overlap.

Longer term rehabilitation of the WASH infrastructure and water networks are desperately needed in Bardarash camp, however due to the transient nature of its population and uncertainty of the future of the camp, such interventions are challenging to plan and justify. With the summer months started, careful management of water provision and use including ensuring regular solid waste management and desludging are essential.

Several WASH actors have also reported significant challenges in finding donors to fund and invest in durable WASH solutions such as household latrine rehabilitation or concrete block installation which provide greater dignity to refugee families and decrease long-term costs of care and maintenance of communal facilities. Additionally, the spread of COVID-19, has increased the criticality of water boilers to ensure proper hygiene practices. The lack of access to hot water increases the risk of lice, scabies, and skin conditions.



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