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THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION, THE TURKMENS AND TURKEY'S HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO IRAQ AFTER ISIS OPERATIONS

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The instability in Iraq in 2014 caused by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) intensified in June and reached a peak when ISIS captured Iraq's second largest city Mosul on 10 June 2014. The chaos that ISIS has created caused thousands of civilians to flee their homes. Turkey did not stay silent on the humanitarian tragedy in Iraq and became the first country to help. Turkey sent humanitarian aid to all Iraqis regardless of their ethnicity, religion or language. The Iraqi Turkmen also received aid from Turkey. This policy brief examines the ISIS operations since the onset of 2014 and the Iraqi Turkmen's immigration caused by the ISIS advance. Turkey's assistance to Iraq and the Turkmen in the wake of the immigration will be touched upon. Lastly, there will be suggestions about other important issues to be addressed besides the assistance provided to the Turkmen in the context of Turkey's intervention to the humanitarian crisis and the immigrants' needs.

The operations of ISIS in Iraq have deeply impacted the lives of many people. The process that has begun with the ISIS's assault towards the province of Al Anbar in Iraq took a serious turn in June. A daily average of 540 families has been displaced because of ISIS's attacks and invasion in the period from 1 January to 31 May. From 1 June to 31 July, the daily average of the displaced families in Iraq is 1,341 and from 1 August to 6 August it is 2,137 families.¹ According to the report of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), from the start of 2014 to 3 September 2014, approximately 1.8 million Turkmens, Yezidis, Christians, Shabaks and Sunni Arabs

from 1,634 settlements in Iraq had to flee their homes due to ISIS's offensive.²

The ISIS Operations and the Flight of the Turkmens

The crisis of Al Anbar in the onset of 2014 was the beginning of the advance of the terrorist group ISIS. In June, ISIS launched very comprehensive operations in Iraq, which deeply affected the people and their daily lives. ISIS orchestrated a surprise attack against Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq on 6 June and captured it on 10 June. Approximately 500,000 locals have fled their homes after the invasion of Mosul by ISIS. More than 300,000



people have fled to the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Administration's territory. Approximately 100,000 people sought shelter in Arbil. Provisional camps have been set up in Hazer, Bahirka and Basirma under the United Nations auspices, which initially provided shelter for 500 people. Others settled in hotels or with their relatives in Arbil.³ Furthermore, it is known that approximately 230,000 people have immigrated to Duhok, 56,000 people have moved to Sinjar and more than 3,000 people have relocated to Kirkuk.

The Turkmen started fleeing the towns and villages of Mosul after it was captured by ISIS. In the initial stage, approximately 5,000 Turkmen families have immigrated from Muhallebiye, Çiban, Residiye, Karakoyun and Serihan. These people were temporarily taken in the Hazer camp,⁴ Arbil, Sinjar and Duhok.

ISIS captured Tal Afar, the biggest district in Iraq, where Turkmen constitute the majority. Upon this, the Turkmen started fleeing in large numbers. Approximately 120,000

Turkmen abandoned Tal Afar, in which only 200-300 Turkmen remain there. There was some news about these people in the beginning of escapes from Tal Afar, however now their fates are unknown. Some of migrants have fled to Baghdad, Najaf, Kerbela, Babil (Hille), Divaniye, Wasit (Kut) and Amara. Some of the Turkmen have immigrated to Arbil and its surroundings. However, these refugees, who have fled to Arbil, had to flee once again due to the ISIS advance towards Arbil and were sent to the south provinces of Iraq. Some of the Turkmen, who have fled from Tal Afar, now stay in Kirkuk. Approximately 6,000 Turkmen families sought shelter in the Arab villages along the road from Tal Afar to Mosul. It is known that more than 50% of the Sunni Turkmen, who fled from the city, returned to Tal Afar.

The Turkmen women and children in Taze Khurmato abandoned the town on 18 June and took sanctuary in Kirkuk and Leylan. The Turkmen remaining in the town took up

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arms in order to defend themselves against the ISIS attacks.

In the district of Amirli of the Selahaddin Province, the local Turkmens and refugees were besieged by ISIS for 2,5-3 months. They were unable to abandon the town due to the siege. The local people and 800 policemen resisted against the ISIS attacks. For the reason that all the roads leading to the town were held by ISIS, Amirli was unable to receive sufficient aid. It was only two months later that the Iraqi central government was able to send partial aid to Amirli by helicopters. A small portion of the elderly, sick, children and women in Amirli were evacuated by helicopters.

In the face of the ISIS threat against Tuz Khormatou, the people living in the town center and districts have fled to Kirkuk. Almost all of the 1,500 inhabitants of the village of Biravcili in Tuz Khurmatou have taken shelter in Kirkuk, after the attacks of ISIS. The Turkmens, who have taken sanctuary in Kirkuk, live with their relatives, in the schools or in unfinished construction sites. The village of Karanaz with a population of 750 and the village of Cardakli with a population of approximately 1,750 have been completely abandoned. In the village of Bastamli, the 90 percent of 2,000 inhabitants has fled. It is known that there are almost 3,000 Turkmen families, who fled Hasadarli, Abbud and Sah-

seven. Some of these families headed to Tuz Khurmatou, others took shelter in Kirkuk.

According to the data provided by the International Organization for Migration, there are 9,317 internally displaced families in Kerbela. Most of these families have immigrated from the provinces of Al Anbar and Mosul. In addition, it is known that there are families, who immigrated from Babil, Baghdad, Diyala and Kirkuk to Kerbela. These families are mostly Turkmens. Among these families, the 86 percent reside in religious centers; the 5 percent live in rental houses, the 5 percent live with their families and the 1 percent live in schools. According to a research conducted by the UN, the 87 of the families that immigrated to Kerbela wants to return their homes.⁵

According to the other data provided by the IOM, Najaf received 11,541 families, who fled from the ISIS threat. The immigration towards the city took place in June and July 2014. Most of the immigrant families in Najaf are Turkmens, who fled from Tal Afar. It is

known that the 81 percent of the immigrant families in Najaf live in religious buildings. The rest of the immigrants live in rental houses, schools, hotels or with their relatives.⁶

It is known that approximately 2,000 families fled from Diyala and surroundings to Karatepe, Kifri and Hanekin.

The numbers of immigrants in these cities and regions changed because of the ISIS threat. According to the data, the number of families who settled in Duhok was about 700. There are no longer immigrants in Zummar, Tilkeyf and Rabia. While approximately 200 people were in Zaho, in the current situation it is known that this number reached about 6.000. Finally, there are small number of family in Sersenk and Zavi.⁷

The Humanitarian Assistance of Turkey to Iraq

The ISIS offensive in Iraq has internally displaced millions of Iraqis, including ethnic and religious minorities. The fact that the Iraqi central government had no plans for aiding these

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people made things only more tragic. In this context, Turkey was one of the first countries, who started to provide aid to the internally displaced persons in Iraq. From the first day of the ISIS advance, Turkey has sent aid to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, sheltering, cleaning and medical material.

After the ISIS attacks, Turkey's aid program started with helping the 100 Iraqi families, who were internally displaced due to the crisis in Al Anbar. The Disaster and Emergency Management (DEMP) Presidency of Turkey has sent an aid package worth 500,000 US dollars as a result of its cooperation with the United Nations Refugee Agency, to the Iraqi

families who fled to Mansur near Baghdad, due to the security crisis in Al Anbar.

Turkey sent food package for 10,000 people on 11 June immediately after the developments in Mosul. On 13 June tents for 12,500 people, 217,000 boxes of medicine, 10,000 blankets, 2,000 cooking sets and approximately 1,000 beds were sent to the Turkmen, who fled to Duhok.⁸The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency sent 1,150 food packages to the Turkmen families, who fled to Kirkuk on 22 June.⁹

After ISIS captured Tal Afar, about 125,000 people have fled to Sinjar and had to cope with harsh living conditions there. Turkey has sent aid



trucks to the Turkmens in Sinjar district. Approximately 80 tons of food was distributed to the Turkmens in Sinjar from the trucks that the DEMP has sent. In addition, an aid campaign titled “Extend your hand towards Tal Afar” was launched on 24 June, under the cooperation of the DEMP, the Turkish Red Crescent, and trade unions Türk-İş and Memur Sen. Numerous organizations, municipalities, tradesmen and citizens have joined this campaign. The Turkish Red Crescent and the DEMP sent the collected aid to the helpless Turkmens and other groups in Iraq.

The ongoing ISIS attacks in Iraq and the soaring number of the internally displaced persons pushed Turkey to establish a humanitarian aid distribution center in the Silopi district of the province of Şırnak, in order to distribute humanitarian aid effectively. This center works under the coordination of the DEMP. The coordination center in Habur gathers all the aid materials and then sends it to helpless people in Iraq with the coordination of the DEMP.¹⁰

The President of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency Serdar Çam and his retinue traveled to Arbil on 2 August 2014 in order to make contacts and visited Hazer camp, where approximately 1,000 families live. In accordance with their observations, it is decided that “water well for drinking and cleaning will be built, warm food will be delivered for one month, and bath-rooms and laundries will be built for dealing with hygiene issues.” It is also decided that “the Ministry of Health will be asked for a continuous doctor, nurse and ambulance service and the infrastructure will be enhanced by laying gravel to the roads to cope with the negative effects of wind and dust on the living environment.”¹¹ The “Hearths of Ideal” Education and Culture Foundation collected 5,500 food packages, 1,100 clothing packages, 275 blankets and 10 tons of bulgur and sent to Iraq.

The DEMP officials announced that they started efforts for building camps in Duhok and Zaho on 14 August for the displaced Iraqis. The DEMP launched the camp proj-

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ect in Sariya district of Duhok, which will house 10,000 people. It also undertakes the Be-siva tent camp project in Zaho, which is built for 1,000 people as well. Therefore the camps of the Demp in Sariya and Zaho will host 20,000 people in the initial stage.¹²

Turkmen non-governmental organizations in Turkey, Türkmeneli Cooperation and Culture Foundation, the Iraqi Turks Culture and Charity Association, the Iraqi Turkmens Fraternity and Culture Association, the Türkmeneli Health and Social Assistance Association, the Türkmeneli Human Rights Association, the Middle East Businessmen Association, the Iraqi Turks Justice, Charity and Solidarity Association and

the Türkmeneli Cultural Center have launched aid campaigns for the displaced Turkmens in Iraq.

As seen above, Turkey has provided aid to all the Iraqis, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, language and sectarian beliefs. The aids to the Turkmens are especially a major element by itself. Thus, Erşat Salihi, the Head of the Iraqi Turkmen Front and a Member of the Iraqi Parliament from Kirkuk, stated that the Iraqi Turkmens received aid from the organizations, government agencies and the people of Turkey, and he stressed that no other country that Turkey has helped the Turkmens.

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) launched

a humanitarian assistance operation on 20 August for the people, who were displaced by the ISIS threat in Iraq. The operation was carried out through planes by Jordan, through land routes by Turkey and Jordan and through naval route from Iran and Dubai. The initial aid included 3,300 tents, 20,000 plastic sheets and 18,500 cooking sets. The United Nations' assistance operation was made possible support by the USA, England, Japan, Denmark, Kuwait, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and the IKEA Foundation, which is a corporate partner of the UNHCR, as well as the grant by the Saudi Arabia amounting to 500 million US dollars.¹³

General Assessment

The ISIS threat, which started with the Al Anbar crisis in Iraq in the beginning of 2014 and worsened through the offensive in June, deeply affected the daily life in the country. Many Iraqis have fled to other villages and towns for their own safety from the towns and villages that ISIS captured. Therefore, approximately 1.8

million Iraqis have been internally displaced. These people are having problems about hunger, lack of water, health and sheltering in the places that they have moved to. Turkey has started sending aid immediately when the crisis has begun in Iraq. It sought to send help and humanitarian assistance material to all helpless people in Iraq, especially the Turkmens.

Even though the region receives humanitarian assistance, many problems continue to plague the people. The primary problem is the lack of coordination in distributing the aid to the needy people. There are families in the region, who received no aid, whereas some families received aid multiple times. Therefore, it will be useful to arrange a commission consisting of people with needed knowledge and experience, which will distribute the aid in a regulated manner. Thus, there will no longer be a mess about distributing the aids and it will be possible to reach out to a wider number of people, through a systematical method by registering the assistance.

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Sheltering is one of the most severe problems of the displaced persons. The people are struggling to live in public building such as schools and mosques. Therefore, new camps should be built and the existing camps should be enhanced for the benefit of the displaced persons. In addition, mobile hospitals are needed in order to respond to medical problems in the camps. Moreover, mobile schools and volunteer teachers are needed in order to provide education to the children of the displaced persons.

For the displaced Turkmens in Iraq, the first priority is the preservation of the Turkmen identity in Iraq. The points above will be beneficial for the

policies that consider this priority:

- Registering the origin town of the displaced Turkmens,
- Acquiring information about where the displaced Turkmens took shelter and sending help there,
- Giving temporary residence right in Turkey to the displaced Turkmens, who are in dire conditions,
- Promoting the Turkmens' return to their villages, cities after the ISIS threat has been eliminated,
- Turkey taking an active part in enhancing the living conditions of the displaced Turkmens in Iraq by increasing contact with the Iraqi central government and the KRG,



- Raising awareness about the protection of the Turkmen's rights in political, social, legal and military aspects in international forums such as the UN and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation,

- Making a preparation and cost analysis in the Turkmen towns that are damaged by ISIS attacks, for possible returns.

APPENDIX

Table -1 The Turkmens', Yazidis', Christians' and Arabs' first migration destinations after the threat of ISIS and the estimated number of immigrants in these centers

First Immigration Centers	Estimated Number of Immigrants
Sinjar	Approximate 13 thousand persons
Bahrka Camp	Approximate 3.500 immigrants from Tal Afar
Arbil	Approximate 350 Families
Duhok-Zavi	Approximate 300 Families
Sümevil	Approximate 150 persons
Kuş-Tilkeyf	Approximate 2 thousand persons
Zummar	Approximate 1.500 persons
Rabia	Approximate 200 Families
Zaho	Approximate 200 persons

Source: These figures were taken from the local authorities in Iraq.

Table-2 The humanitarian assistance by Turkish government agencies and organizations for the Turkmens, Yazidis, Christians and Shabaks who were displaced in Iraq

Institution	Humanitarian Aid
DEMP	12,214 food packages, 15,000 blankets, 325 multi- purpose tents, 960 family-type tents, 5,000 mat/sleeping bags, 1,920 beds, 2,000 kitchen sets, 18 tons of food and water, 40 pieces of container
Ministry of Health	441,539 boxes of drug
Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency	3,000 food and hygiene package for families
Turkish Red Crescent	17 pieces of multi-purpose tent, 3,815 pieces of blanket, 888 pieces of bed, 171,714 kg water, 6,058 pieces of food package, 199,920 kg sugar, 16,320 canned fried meat, 75,616 tons of dry food, 259,458 packet of biscuit, 330,240 packet of cake, 120,000 packet of chocolate, 20 tons of hygiene materials, 2,106 pieces of household materials, 192 pieces of clothing, 327 pieces of shoes, 5,825 boxes of diaper, 8,000 package of sanitary pad, 110,800 lt milk

Table-2 cont'd

Institution	Humanitarian Aid
Office of the Governor and Local Administrations	45,000 boxes of drug and medical supplies , 10 wheelchair, 3,500 food package 92 tons of food materials, 17,000 loaf of bread, 52,760 kg water, 6,000 package of milk, 1,000 hygiene package, 1.000 package for baby, 1,000 diaper, 200 blanket, 100 bed
ATO	3,000 food package
The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey	9,000 food package
Nongovernmental organizations	24,800 food package, 10 tons of food, 1,100 clothing package, 5,275 blanket, 1,200 pieces of diaper, 2,500 pieces of sanitary pad, 44,800 boxes of drug and medical supplies,62 package of medicine, 10 pieces of wheelchair, 500 tent, 10 tons of water

Source: These information was obtained from AFAD.

Table-3 The Places in Iraq that received humanitarian aid by Turkey and contents of these humanitarian aids

Places	Contents
Sinjar	4,000 food package, 17 pieces of multi-purpose tent, 3,000 pieces of blanket, 748 pieces of bed, 88,848 kg water, 232,262 packets of biscuit, 282,240 packets of cake, 120,000 packets of chocolate, 2,106 pieces of house material, 192 pieces of clothing, 327 pieces of shoes, 8,000 pieces of sanitary pad, 21,600 packets of milk, 56,157 boxes of drug
Duhok	26,632 pieces of food package, 1,000 package for babies, 15,000 pieces of blanket, 1,920 pieces of bed, 2,000 pieces of kitchen set, 250 pieces of multi- purpose tent, 217,982 boxes of drug, 10 tons of bulgur, 1,460 tents
Tilkeyf	food and hygiene packages for 3,000 families

Tablo-3 cont'd

Places	Contents
Kirkuk	12,008 pieces of food package, 47,701 pieces of clothing, 1,090 blanket, 140 pieces of bed, 55,800 boxes of drug, 67,888 kg water, 5,825 diaper package, 25 tons of food materials, 25 tons of bulgur, 20 tons of macaroni, 48 tons of dry food, 20 tons of hygiene materials, 7,616 kg nourishment
Arbil	100,600 boxes of drug and medical supplies, 16 boxes of medical supplies, 10 wheelchairs, 199,920 kg sugar, 13,072 food package, 188,832 packets of cake, 398,888 packets of biscuit, 328,884 packets of chocolate, 24,978 kg water, 16,320 canned fried meat, 1,200 pieces diaper, 2,500 pieces of sanitary pad, 100,000 liters of milk
Tal Afar	55,800 boxes of medicine
Zaho	75 multi- purpose tents, 1,500 food packages, 40 pieces of container, 5,200 blankets, 5,000 mats, 100 beds, 66 tons of nourishment, 17,910 packets of biscuit, 20,000 packets of cracker, 102,760 kg water, 1,000 hygiene packages, 60 food packages, 20,125 packets of milk, 34,000 breads, 1,000 diapers, 62 packages of medicine

Source: These information was obtained from AFAD.

ENDNOTES

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