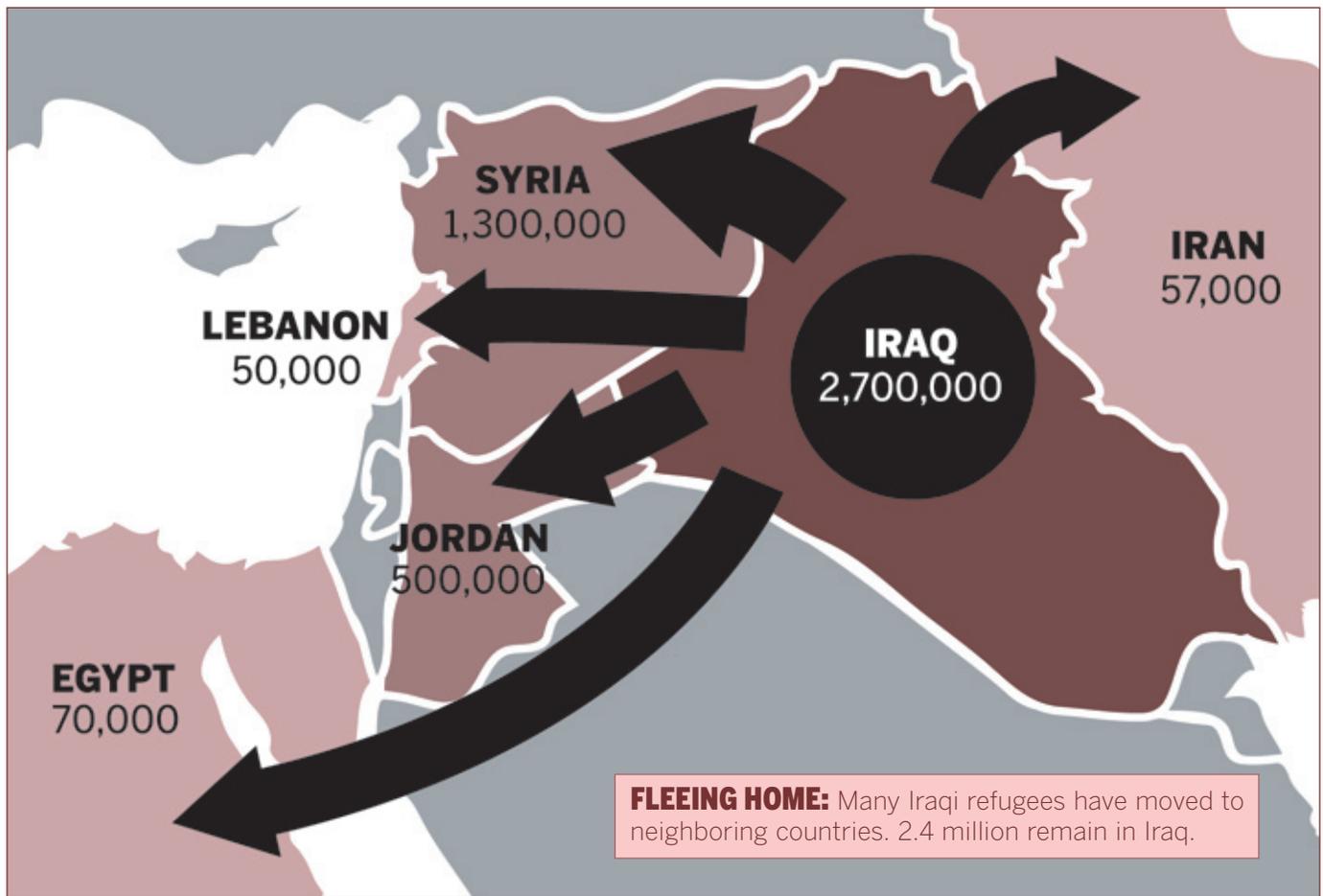


The Iraqi Refugee Crisis



Refugees, Internally Displaced, and Casualties Since the US Invasion

The Iraq War and US occupation is a catastrophe for Iraqis. The violence has touched every corner of the country, killed hundreds of thousands, and displaced millions. Estimates of the war's costs differ in magnitude but agree that the impact has been devastating.

Half of the Iraqis displaced by the war and US occupation, more than 2.5 million men, women and children, have left Iraq. Most have moved to neighboring states ill-equipped for the influx. The United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) said, "The international community needs to provide more support to Iraqis themselves through the programmes that assist Iraqi refugees

in Syria, Jordan and other host countries. Up until now the international assistance has been out of proportion to the challenges that these countries face." (28 Feb. 2008, UNHCR) Jordan, the country with highest per-capita number of refugees in the world, started to restrict access after one in seven of its residents were Iraqis. On September 10, 2007, Syria announced that Iraqis would need visas to enter the country.

Internal Refugees

Internally displaced people (IDPs) are families who have been forced from their homes and are unable or unwilling to leave the country. Many of Iraq's IDPs have left their homes because of violence from occupation troops, threats of abductions or assassinations, or need for food, water, healthcare and education. "If the situation continues to deteriorate, we're going to see hundreds of thousands more displaced," said

Andrew Harper for the UNHCR. UNHCR estimates that 2.4 million Iraqis are internally displaced. This violent resettlement of ethnic-religious groups has not been stemmed by the US military occupation, and the tragedy of the displacement is further compounded by the inability of the Government of Iraq, because of security, logistics and funds, to provide humanitarian assistance.

A report by the Refugee Studies Center (June 2007, Forced Migration Review) observed that not only does the Government of Iraq lack the logistical resources to adequately address the needs of IDPs, but that the security situation has forced NGOs to work outside of Iraq with poor information and inconsistent aid delivery. This has led to a deterioration of IDP quality of life:

- It is estimated that 40% of Iraq's professional class and 35% of doctors have left Iraq since 2003. This is what is frequently referred to as a "brain drain", making rebuilding efforts particularly difficult. (2 Nov. 2006, Brookings Institution)
- Nationwide class attendance in Iraq is close to 30%. Comparatively, only 55% of Iraqi refugees in Lebanon and 13% in Syria go to school. (June 2007, Forced Migration Review and Feb. 2008, Brookings Institution)
- The collapse of infrastructure since the US led invasion has been devastating for basic government services. Only 32% of Iraqis have access to drinking water and just 19% live in areas with working sewers. (June 2007, Forced Migration Review)

A Worldwide Crisis

Despite tremendous visa restrictions, 100,000 Iraqis have moved out of the Middle East. Through 2007, the United States offered 19,800 amnesty visas. Countries with large populations of Iraqis

include: Germany - 36,200, U.K. - 22,000, Netherlands - 21,800, Sweden - 23,600, Australia - 11,100, and Denmark - 9,900. (September 2007, UNHCR, November 2007, Refugees International)

The Violence They Flee

Casualty figures will continue to grow as military operations, sectarian militia violence and a declining humanitarian situation prevail. Several estimates seek to predict the civilian Iraqi loss of life:

- Opinion Research Business, a British polling firm, conducted a survey of Iraqi homes to calculate the death toll. More than a quarter of Iraqi adults have had a family member murdered and 23% living in Baghdad have had a family member kidnapped in the last three years. They estimate that more than a million Iraqis have died due to the violence. (Sept. 2007, www.opinion.co.uk)

- Using statistical methods tested in other conflict zones, a Johns Hopkins Study published in 2006 estimated 655,000 war related deaths since March 2003. That accounts for about 2.5% of Iraq's population. (11 Oct. 2006, www.lancet.com)

- In November of 2006, Iraq's Ministry of Health put civilian deaths at 150,000 since the March 2003 invasion. The numbers were based on an average of 100 deaths a day as treated by hospitals and morgues. They have subsequently stopped

reporting casualty totals. (9 Nov. 2006, International Herald Tribune)

- Iraq Body Count, a website that reports casualties based on news sources, places the total between 81,632 and 89,103. (4 March 2008, www.iraqbodycount.org)

MARCH 2008

"The aftermath of war in Iraq, where thousands upon thousands may die or spend the rest of their lives in pain and wretchedness, will be greater unrest in the Middle East and hatred of America for generations to come."

Paul Lacey
AFSC Presiding Clerk

"The displacement of Iraqis from Iraq is now the fastest-growing refugee crisis in the world."

Refugees International

"The needs of Iraqi refugees and internally displaced are enormous and growing by the day, so, too, is the strain on host governments and communities struggling to cope with the massive numbers of Iraqis who have fled their homes."

António Guterres
UNHCR

"The flight of Iraqis has become the largest forced displacement in the history of the Middle East."

José Riera and Andrew Harper
Forced Migration Review

