



Imminent DREF Operation

Iraq Imminent Population Movement 2026

Appeal: MDRIQ020	DREF Allocated: CHF 80,000	Hazard: Population Movement	Country: Iraq
Population at risk (if available): 150,000	Operation Start Date: 05-03-2026	Operation End Date: 30-04-2026	
Event Onset: Sudden	Forecasted day of event (or peak): 2026-03-30	Operation Timeframe: 45 days	

Targeted Regions: **Babil, Baghdad, Basrah, Diyala, Erbil, Missan, Muthanna, Thi-Qar, Wasit**



Scenario analysis

When and where is the hazard expected to happen?

Since 28 February 2026, hostilities involving Iran, Israel, and the United States have intensified, characterized by coordinated strikes on strategic facilities, retaliatory missile and drone launches, aerial interceptions, and elevated military alert levels across the region. The geographic expansion of these developments has heightened instability beyond the primary areas of confrontation, resulting in diplomatic drawdowns, airspace restrictions, and strengthened defensive postures in several neighbouring states. While Iraq is not a direct party to the conflict, its geographic position, strategic significance, and the presence of international military interests increase its exposure to indirect and spillover effects. Recent security-related developments inside Iraq, including reinforced security deployments, demonstrations in Baghdad, and reported aerial defense activity in northern areas such as Erbil, reflect a progressively fragile operating environment. In addition, media reports and official figures from the Ministry of Health indicate that airstrike-related incidents within Iraq since the onset of the regional escalation have resulted in 11 fatalities and 33 injuries, highlighting the potential human toll of spillover effects. While large-scale displacement has not yet occurred, the situation remains highly volatile, and humanitarian needs could escalate rapidly if regional hostilities intensify, placing additional strain on vulnerable communities and local response capacities.

The Protection Room for CBRN and the High Leadership Committee for Civil Defense Affairs Management under the Prime Minister's Office have determined that nine governorates are at heightened risk: Erbil, Baghdad, Diyala, Babil, Wasit, Muthanna, Dhi Qar, Missan, and Basra. These governorates are considered sensitive due to their proximity to potential cross-border corridors, strategic infrastructure, transit routes, and limited surge capacity within humanitarian service structures. In this context, the most probable scenario in the near term is sudden cross-border arrivals or internal displacement that may place pressure on local systems. Two principal risk pathways could generate acute humanitarian needs.

- First, spillover security or military-related incidents within Iraqi territory, whether through indirect strikes, defensive interceptions, or localized unrest, could trigger abrupt population movements from border areas or major urban centers. A rapid influx into already vulnerable governorates may overwhelm existing Humanitarian Service Points (HSPs), disrupting access to basic services and heightening protection concerns.
- Second, potential environmental or public health risks linked to military operations affecting sensitive facilities in the region could have transboundary implications, particularly for eastern and southern governorates such as Wassit, Missan, Basra, and Muthanna. Although no contamination has been reported, precautionary preparedness is warranted given prevailing atmospheric conditions and regional interdependence.

Humanitarian consequences would likely affect vulnerable groups disproportionately, including children, older persons, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, refugees, and low-income host communities. The critical trigger for response would not be initial population movement itself, but the point at which arrivals exceed the operational capacity of local authorities and service providers to meet essential needs. Given the evolving regional dynamics and the formal identification of high-risk governorates, Iraq faces a credible possibility of sudden humanitarian pressure should hostilities escalate further. Proactive preparedness, strengthened coordination mechanisms, and timely anticipatory action are therefore essential to safeguard vulnerable populations, maintain service continuity, and prevent localized strain from developing into a broader humanitarian crisis.

Babil, Baghdad, Basrah, Diyala, Erbil, Missan, Muthanna, Thi-Qar, Wasit

Explain the underlying vulnerabilities and risks the hazard poses for at-risk communities?

Iraq remains highly vulnerable to humanitarian pressures arising from the ongoing regional escalation between Iran, Israel, and the United States. Years of conflict, economic fragility, and recurring displacement have left many communities with weakened infrastructure, overstretched public services, and limited capacity to absorb sudden shocks. High-risk and previously affected governorates, Baghdad, Basra, Missan, Dhi Qar, Muthanna, Wasit, Diyala, and Anbar, are home to communities that are highly vulnerable to disruption. Populations in these areas, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, returnees, and low-income households, rely on already fragile public services, limited healthcare, and strained humanitarian infrastructure. The combination of insecure environments, restricted mobility, and pre-existing socio-economic vulnerabilities increases the likelihood that sudden population movements or service interruptions could rapidly overwhelm local capacities, creating urgent humanitarian needs and protection concerns.

Historical precedents highlight the potential severity of the current situation and the rapid onset of humanitarian needs. During the 2025 Iran-Israel escalation, localized military operations and regional strikes triggered displacement, disrupted essential services, constrained mobility, and placed significant pressure on healthcare facilities. Similarly, past incidents, including missile-related security events in 2018, demonstrated how insecurity can lead to precautionary population movements, market and educational interruptions, and widespread psychosocial stress, even in the absence of large-scale destruction. Drawing on these patterns, renewed spillover from the ongoing conflict could prompt abrupt internal displacement, temporary cross-border influxes, and strain on local service delivery, particularly in areas with limited absorption capacity. While the initial impact may be geographically concentrated, rapid escalation is likely if arrivals exceed operational and humanitarian thresholds. Without timely anticipatory action, reinforced preparedness, and strengthened



response mechanisms, the combined effects of population movement, disrupted services, and economic strain could escalate into a broader humanitarian crisis requiring urgent, coordinated intervention.

Source Name	Source Link
1. Reuters	https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/airstrikes-kill-least-two-iraqs-jurf-al-sakhar-pmf-spokesperson-says-2026-02-28/
2. Shafaq News	https://shafaq.com/en/Security/Iraq-urges-vigilance-assures-food-stocks-as-regional-strikes-escalate
3. Al Jazeera	https://studies.aljazeera.net/en/policy-briefs/targeting-regime-second-round-us%E2%80%93israeli-war-iran
4. K24 News	https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/897231/iraqi-militia-group-claims-drone-attack-on-us-bases-in-erbil

Plan

Which of the expected severe humanitarian impacts of the hazard are your actions addressing? Why were these impacts chosen?

Based on preliminary risk analysis and coordination between the IRCS and relevant government authorities, the anticipated humanitarian impacts of the current regional escalation have been prioritized to guide Early Actions and Early Response activities. The primary concern is the potential large-scale population movement resulting from heightened insecurity and the risk of further military escalation in the region. Current scenario projections indicate that up to 25,000 families (approximately 150,000 people) could be displaced from areas most exposed to conflict spillover and security instability. Such displacement would place considerable strain on already limited humanitarian resources and increase the vulnerability of affected populations, particularly women, children, older persons, and individuals with pre-existing health conditions, thereby necessitating timely early actions and early response activities to mitigate humanitarian consequences.



In addition, there is concern regarding the potential exposure of large population groups to radioactive contamination should damage occur to sensitive facilities in the region as a result of ongoing hostilities. Such an incident could pose significant and long-term public health risks, requiring immediate preventive measures, risk communication, and preparedness to protect communities through targeted early actions and early response activities.

Essential services are also at heightened risk of disruption. Damage to infrastructure, combined with increased population pressure and constrained resources, could affect access to safe water, sanitation services, healthcare, and food supplies, thereby increasing the likelihood of public health emergencies and deteriorating living conditions for both displaced populations and host communities. In this context, early actions and early response activities are critical to support preparedness measures and ensure continuity of basic services for affected populations.

These impacts have been prioritized because they represent life-saving humanitarian concerns with the highest potential scale and severity in the current context. Addressing them through anticipatory action and timely early actions and early response activities will enable the IRCS to mitigate the immediate humanitarian consequences of displacement, reduce exposure to health risks, and support the continuity of critical basic services. Early intervention is therefore essential to protect vulnerable populations, strengthen community preparedness, and limit the escalation of humanitarian needs should the regional situation further deteriorate.



Proposed Actions

	Sector	Activities	Budget (CHF)
 <p>Early Actions</p>	Health (public)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer mobilization and preparedness: Rapid mobilization and targeted orientation of IRCS volunteers in high-risk areas to support early warning dissemination, community guidance, and readiness for potential population movement and emergency response. • CBRN risk awareness and preparedness: Implementation of public awareness activities on chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) risks, providing clear and practical guidance on protective behaviours, sheltering measures, and precautionary actions to reduce exposure. • Community-based risk communication and information management: Delivery of timely, verified, and accessible safety and health information through trusted community networks, mobile teams, local media, and digital platforms to promote protective actions and counter misinformation. • Provision of first aid services to the people who need it and pre-positioning of first aid supplies in priority locations to enable volunteers and communities to address injuries and urgent medical needs. • Emergency food assistance: Provision of food baskets to vulnerable households affected by displacement or heightened insecurity to support immediate food needs. 	CHF 75,000
 <p>Early Response</p>	Health (public)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of first aid services to people who need it 	CHF 0
	Livelihoods and basic needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of food assistance for people on the move 	
Sub-total			CHF 75,000
Indirect Cost			CHF 5,000
Total			CHF 80,000

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