

Iraq's Displaced: Where to Turn?

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Introduction

Refugees and IDPs are hardly a new phenomenon for Iraq. Under Saddam Hussein's long and brutal rule forced displacement was a deliberate state policy.¹ The government used expulsions as a tool to subdue recalcitrant populations and punish political opponents, mainly the Kurds and the Shi'as. Expulsions were also used to take over fertile and oil-rich land. From the Kirkuk region, Saddam Hussein uprooted more than 100,000 Kurds and also members of the smaller Turkmen and Assyrian (Christian) minorities in an effort to 'Arabize' the area. In all, when the United States invaded in 2003 close to one million people were internally displaced in Iraq. Another one to two million Iraqis lived abroad.

The U.S. invasion and the toppling of Saddam Hussein, far from resolving the problem made it worse. It catapulted the country into a near civil war between Shi'a, who had largely been excluded by Saddam Hussein's regime, and Sunnis who until then had dominated the government. The combination of intense and bloody sectarian violence, coalition military action, fighting among Shi'a militias and between the government and the Mahdi army, and generalized violence and criminality caused massive uprooting. In 2007, some 60,000 Iraqis were reported to be fleeing their homes each month.² New displacement diminished sharply in 2008 as overall security improved in Iraq. But together with those who had been displaced earlier, some fifteen to twenty percent of the Iraqi population—or 4.7 million people out of a total population of 27 million—remained

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displaced. Of this total, 2.7 million (ten percent of Iraq's population) are inside the country while some 2 million more are abroad, mostly in neighboring countries.³

Today's displaced Iraqis are not viewed as sympathetically around the world as those persecuted and uprooted by Saddam Hussein. One reason is that they are seen as a problem largely of the United States' making and one that the United States should therefore "fix." America's failure to establish security in the country after its invasion or to prepare effectively for the country's reconstruction is considered a major reason for the chaos and violence that caused the mass displacement. As a result, many donor governments have been reluctant to fully share the burden of Iraq's displaced, believing the United States should foot most of the bill together with the government of Iraq.⁴

The Iraqi government's attitude toward its displaced population has contributed to this international unwillingness to extend needed support. Even though Iraq's budget surplus from oil revenues is projected to be \$79 billion by the end of 2008, the Shi'a-dominated government of Nuri Kamal al-Maliki has delivered only minimal amounts of funding to neighboring states for the refugees.⁵ Some believe it is because many of the refugees are Sunni and Christian or because the refugees humiliated the government by departing. Nor has the government been forthcoming with support for its internally displaced population, again dampening other countries' willingness to contribute.

The U.S. government's fear of terrorism after September 11 has also cast a shadow of suspicion over Iraq's displaced. Alarm bells are constantly raised that some Iraqi refugees could be associated with terror cells and others could become potential terrorists if they remain displaced for long periods without assistance.⁶ Although UNHCR has identified up to 100,000 vulnerable Iraqis for resettlement, they are subjected to such intense screening in the U.S. that resettlement has been excruciatingly slow and the number admitted small—some 12,000 who fled since 2003, with most admitted in 2008.⁷ By contrast, the victims of Saddam Hussein fared much better in gaining admission; roughly 37,000 Iraqi refugees fleeing that regime resettled in the United States.⁸

Neighboring states, which to their credit have taken in up to two million Iraqis, also share fears that the refugees could bring their homegrown ethnic and religious struggles to their countries of asylum. In November 2005, three Iraqi nationals recruited by al-Qaeda entered Jordan and blew themselves up at Amman hotels killing sixty people.⁹ Although this violent incident did not involve the "refugees" *per se*, Jordan subsequently began barring entry of Iraqi men from the ages of eighteen to thirty-five.¹⁰

The Palestinian refugee problem has further affected how Iraqi refugees are viewed and at times has undermined a willingness to help them. For sixty years, Arab countries have borne the brunt of the Palestinian refugee crisis and are therefore mindful of the consequences of accepting large numbers of refugees for long periods. Although both Jordan and Syria

have been widely commended for admitting large numbers of Iraqis, both countries in 2006-7 began restricting their entry.¹¹

Particularly unacceptable to them has been the entry of Iraqi Palestinians. Jordan, already seventy percent Palestinian because of the Palestinian influxes of 1948 and 1967, has refused entry to Iraqi Palestinians, while Syria since 2006 has sought to bar their entry as well.¹²

Taking into account the unique situation in which Iraq's refugees and IDPs find themselves, this article examines the problems facing the displaced, the different solutions being proposed and possible ways forward.

The Refugee Crisis

The flight across borders of some two million Iraqis, especially in 2006-07 is the largest in the Middle East since the Palestinian exodus. It is estimated that there are about 1 million Iraqi refugees in Syria, 500,000 to 700,000 in Jordan and more than 400,000 in other neighboring countries.¹³

Yet neither Syria nor Jordan is party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. While both initially welcomed the refugees, their non-recognition of the Refugee Convention is now putting many of these same people in jeopardy. In Syria, the refugees are considered tourists or guests and are not officially allowed to work. Although some specialized professionals, such as teachers and doctors, have been issued work permits, many work illegally or are unemployed as a result of Syrian policies.¹⁴ In Jordan, the refugees are treated as guests or sometimes as illegal immigrants and most have been denied the right to work.¹⁵ Only one-fifth of school-age refugee children were in public schools and their access to health care was also limited.¹⁶

While Iraqi refugees have provided some benefits to their host countries, rising inflation and deteriorating economic conditions have provided fertile ground for economic resentments. It is unlikely therefore that Jordan or Syria will accommodate a long-term presence of Iraqis. Neither country has developed a plan to integrate the refugees. This makes return to Iraq the only serious option, even though most do not want to return¹⁷ and the likelihood of their finding resettlement in the industrialized countries is small.¹⁸ Of the tens of thousands who have returned since mid-2007, many cannot reclaim their homes for security reasons or because they find them damaged beyond repair. Nor can they easily find jobs or basic services. Iraqi government authorities have acknowledged that they do not have sufficient capacity for handling returning refugees and UNHCR has not revised its request to Jordan and Syria not to forcibly deport refugees back to Iraq.¹⁹ Among the groups unlikely to return are religious minorities, in particular Christians (representing some 15-20 percent of the registered refugees) who have been persecuted.

Terrorists or Victims?

Frequently, fears are expressed that without adequate assistance the refugees in Syria and Jordan could become a source of terrorism and violence, destabilizing an already volatile Middle East.²⁰ Humanitarian advocates regularly bolster their arguments for providing aid to the refugees by pointing out the security consequences of not providing aid.

However, it bears emphasizing that most refugees in Syria and Jordan have been the *victims* of violence and threats, not the perpetrators.²¹ Further, it is not clear that those who had radical ties in Iraq will remain part of those organizations once out of the country. What might have been essential for survival in Iraq need not be continued in Jordan or Syria, so the argument that the refugees are potential security risks to their host countries must be carefully weighed against other factors:

- The refugees are not in camps, but dispersed in urban areas, mixed in with the general population where it would be far more difficult to militarize and manipulate their members.
- The police apparatus in Syria is tremendously controlling and in Jordan, King Abdullah II has publicly warned that, “we will never allow Jordan to become a staging ground for initiating problems within Iraq.”²²
- The profile of the refugees is markedly different from that of refugee populations where violence and jihad became a serious issue. The *mujahadeen* from Afghanistan and the Hutu *genocidaires* from Rwanda, often cited as precedents, were imbued with the desire to overthrow or undermine the governments left behind (e.g., the Soviet dominated regime in Kabul and the Tutsi dominated government in Kigali).²³ The Iraqi refugees, by contrast, are mostly middle class and urban professionals who fled sectarian and generalized violence.²⁴ They do not fit the profile of people seeking to overthrow their government. In fact the profile of the refugees points more to a serious brain drain than an insurgent threat. Since 2003, 40 percent of Iraq's professional class, including 50 percent of its 34,000 medical doctors, left the country.²⁵

The U.S. Role

Many have looked to the United States to play the principal role in resolving the Iraq refugee problem. However, the Bush Administration refused to acknowledge any special responsibility in this case or any urgency about expediting refugee resettlement. In the view of former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. John Bolton, sectarian violence, not American actions, created the refugee problem so it was therefore not the United States' responsibility: “I don't think we have an obligation to compensate for the hardships of war.”²⁶

However, pressure from members of Congress, NGOs and the public produced pledges by the Administration to speed up resettlement. Although in fiscal year (FY) 2006 (October 1, 2005 to September 30, 2006), 202 Iraqis were admitted, and in FY 2007 (October 1, 2006 to September 30, 2007), 1,608, in FY 2008 (October 1, 2007 to September 30, 2008) the United States admitted 12,000 Iraqis, largely in response to the adoption by Congress of the "Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act," which seeks to expedite the entry into the U.S. of Iraqi refugees.²⁷

The resources made available have also been limited. In FY 2006, the U.S. contributed \$43 million for Iraqi refugees and IDPs, increasing this to \$171 million in FY 2007, while the needs in Jordan and Syria were estimated at more than \$2.6 billion.²⁸ After pressure from Congress and NGOs, the U.S. increased its share of UNHCR's January 2008 appeal (for \$261 million) to \$95.4 million and added to its contributions to other international organizations, making for an overall total of \$208 million by April 2008.²⁹ But this starkly contrasted with the \$70 billion the U.S. appropriated for the military effort in Iraq in FY2008 and led members of Congress to call for more than \$1 billion for Iraq's refugees and IDPs in FY2009.³⁰

At present, the United States can best help promote a solution to Iraq's displacement crisis by taking the following steps:

- Insist that the government of Iraq devote the resources and develop the plans for the safe and sustainable returns of the bulk of the refugees, and provide the training and guidance for it to do so. Although the government of Iraq has set aside funds to give free transportation and start-up money to returning families, there appears to be no long-term planning or capacity to support those returning. Yet some face threats and violence upon return, encounter problems in gaining access to basic services, and have to struggle to revive their livelihoods.³¹
- Press the government of Iraq to adequately compensate neighboring states for sheltering Iraqi refugees beyond the \$25 million given in 2008.
- Mobilize U.S. and international resources to ensure that Jordan, Syria, and other neighboring states receive adequate assistance.
- Press Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the other Gulf States to admit refugees and to provide financial aid to Jordan and Syria.
- Work with Syria and Jordan to develop plans for the integration of those who cannot, or choose not to, return home.
- Take in greater numbers of refugees to the U.S., ensure their resettlement support is adequate³² and urge other states to increase the numbers they admit.

The IDP Problem

The 2.7 million people internally displaced in Iraq serve as a constant reminder that the country, in some respects, is a dysfunctional state. The Iraqi government proved unable to prevent forced displacement in Baghdad, its own capital, as well as in other urban centers. In fact, radical Sunni and Shi'a militias who drove the 2006-07 sectarian violence were tied to political parties, police and army units. The Ministry of the Interior is still widely reported to have been infiltrated by Shi'a militias, who expelled people from their homes, sometimes in police uniforms.³³ In such a political environment, it is not surprising that the government has failed to exhibit the will, resources or skills to deal with the needs of IDPs. In the Ministry of Displacement and Migration, it is not unusual to find staff that sees the displaced only from the perspective of their own ethnic or religious group.

More than 1.5 million of Iraq's IDPs were uprooted as a result of sectarian violence, mostly following the February 2006 bombing of the al-Aksari Shi'a shrine in Samarra.³⁴ Shi'a and Sunni militias systematically and purposefully began to intimidate, harass, kill and expel people of the opposite ethnicity from their neighborhoods in order to gain control over those areas and expand their power base. The result has been an Iraq increasingly fragmented along religious and ethnic lines, with segregated areas in Baghdad and other urban centers. Sunnis and Shi'a pushed from their homes have mostly gone to areas where their group is in the majority while Christians have fled to parts of Ninewah province and Kurds to the northern Kurdish areas.³⁵

At least 40 percent of those who fled do not expect to return³⁶ since their displacement reflects deep-seated political divisions within the country. Indeed, the brutality used in uprooting them was intended to ensure that they would not return to their home areas. Many, in fact, sold their homes or abandoned their property when they fled, indicating that they do not plan to return. The more prolonged the displacement becomes, the less likely substantial returns will occur.

Sizeable numbers of minority groups—Kurds, Christians, Sabians, Turkmen, and Roma—as well as foreign nationals—Palestinians and Sudanese—are among those displaced. From Kirkuk and its surrounding areas, which contain 10-20 percent of Iraq's oil reserves) some 100,000 Kurds as well as Turkmen and Assyrians had been expelled by Saddam Hussein. Since 2003, displaced Kurds have returned to the region while some 100,000 Arabs have fled or were pushed out by the Pesh Merga. Meanwhile, Kirkuk's Turkmen look to Turkey to protect their interests there. Because of the intensity of competing claims, Kirkuk has become a tinderbox of potential conflict and displacement.³⁷

Most of Iraq's internally displaced persons, whether in the north, center or south, face extreme hardship with urgent needs for shelter, food, medicine, clean water, employment and basic security. The decrease in sectarian violence since the summer of 2007 has reduced displacement but

has not significantly improved conditions for the displaced.³⁸ In fact, in August 2008, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported a “worsening” in the situation, estimating that more than 70 percent of IDPs do not have regular access to food rations from the Public Distribution System; 14 percent have no access to health care; 33 percent cannot obtain the medications they need; and 31 percent have found their property occupied by others.³⁹ While the vast majority of IDPs stay with families and friends or rent homes, their situation has become precarious as rents increase, jobs grow scarce, and their hosts begin to run out of resources. At least 20 percent of the displaced can now be found in abandoned buildings, military bases, schools, parks, cemeteries, and soccer fields. One to two percent are in tented camps, which tend to be in remote areas.⁴⁰ Although most of Iraq's eighteen governorates set up camp areas for IDPs, by the beginning of 2008 they began to restrict the number coming into their areas. According to an UNHCR official, the displaced have been “left largely to fend for themselves.”⁴¹

National and International Response

Thus far, the national government has not demonstrated that it has the skills, resources, or political will to take care of its displaced population or provide the security, access to basic services, and livelihoods needed for the return of large numbers to their homes.

Local authorities, neighborhoods and mosques have sometimes proven more effective in aid distribution although they can also be ‘partisan’ and do not usually provide housing and jobs. Assisting these efforts at the community level have been local NGOs, like the Iraqi Red Crescent, which have provided assistance to large numbers of IDPs, but most have limited capacity.

Filling the void left by the government have been radical sectarian Sunni and Shi'a groups (the largest being the movement affiliated with Moqtada al-Sadr). Indeed, a study found that, increasingly, “Iraqis are looking to militias and ad hoc neighborhood organizations as their option of first resort when seeking protection and assistance.”⁴²

In July 2008, the government introduced, in collaboration with the UN, a National Policy to Address Displacement.⁴³ It commits the government to assist and protect IDPs, as well as refugees who return, without discrimination and promises to mobilize the resources to improve the national response. It promises to improve the access of the displaced to basic services, help them find employment, protect them from evictions and violence, assist them reclaim their property and encourage reconciliation. Much of the policy, however, is in the form of recommendations that will need to be carried out. While it marks an important first step toward addressing displacement, the capacity and will of the government to implement its provisions, needs to be demonstrated.

The international community has also been slow to recognize the humanitarian and security crisis inside Iraq. For years, the U.S. assumed that the domestic situation would stabilize and that IDPs would return home. As a result, billions of dollars in international aid focused on recovery and development programs that couldn't be implemented because of the violence. More recently, a reassessment of donor priorities and U.N. programs has begun to take place.

Greater international humanitarian presence is one of the priorities. Unlike in most other crises, international humanitarian organizations do not operate directly on the ground in Iraq except in parts of the north. Since the 2003 bombing of U.N. headquarters, most organizations moved their international staff out of Baghdad to Amman where they have operated by "remote management."⁴⁴ In August 2007, the U.N. Security Council voted to expand the U.N.'s mandate and presence in the country, and the U.N. Assistance Mission for Iraq is expected to work with the government in support of the delivery of humanitarian aid and to promote the safe and voluntary return of IDPs and refugees.⁴⁵

The extent, however, to which the U.N. will be able to increase its humanitarian presence throughout Iraq is not yet known. The decrease in violence since the summer of 2007 has not ended security threats against humanitarian staff, especially U.N. staff, often perceived as being allied with coalition forces. Iraq remains "one of the most dangerous places in the world for humanitarian agencies to work."⁴⁶ Between March 2003 and late 2006, some 81 local and international humanitarian and human rights workers were killed there.⁴⁷ At the same time, international agencies have begun to expand their staff on the ground.⁴⁸

Proposed Solutions

Several solutions have been proposed to help Iraq deal with the IDP problem.

Camps or Safe Havens. A solution put forward during the height of the sectarian violence was the creation of IDP camps or safe havens to enhance access to the displaced, take the strain off host families and contain refugee flows.⁴⁹ But many compelling reasons dictated against setting up camps. In today's Iraq, they could easily be taken over by one ethnic group or another and become targets of sectarian attack. They could be an easy source of recruitment for militias. And they also could become detention centers surrounded by troops or police that are hard to trust given their association with opposing militias. Iraqis, moreover, strongly prefer to stay with extended families and friends. The Representative of the U.N. Secretary-General on the Human Rights of IDPs, Walter Kälin, has therefore called for camps to be used in Iraq as "a last resort."⁵⁰ He has recommended alternative measures such as providing resources to families to allow them to construct additional rooms in their homes for the displaced

or supporting communities to enable them to build housing for the displaced and expand public services for them.

Special safe areas for Iraqi Christians have also been proposed. However, many of the attacks against them have taken place within the area where Christians predominantly live (Ninveh province) and to where they fled to escape attacks in other parts of the country.⁵¹ Clearly needed instead is responsible governmental protection of minorities.

Population Transfers. Another solution put forward at the height of the violence was organized population transfers so that Sunni, Shi'a and Kurds, with the help of the international community, could relocate, albeit voluntarily, to areas of the country where their ethnic group was in the majority.⁵² Not surprisingly, this solution proved distasteful to many because it was intended to accompany "a soft partition" of the country into Kurdish, Shi'a and Sunni areas and would put the international community into the position of facilitating ethnic cleansing and promoting mass displacement.

Although historically, population transfers were viewed positively, they came with "tremendous costs."⁵³ Millions of people in Europe after the two world wars and on the Indian subcontinent were uprooted and became "dispossessed, and sent penniless and homeless on what, for many, were death marches."⁵⁴ Although billed as voluntary, they were not in fact because "[t]here was no individual buy-in, or consent, to the exchanges, and little in the way of compensation or restitution of property."⁵⁵

Advocates of the idea have nonetheless argued that population transfers might be the only way to protect Iraqis from sectarian violence; if they asked to be relocated for protection, they should be helped.⁵⁶ Others have countered that population transfers overlook the right of IDPs to return to their homes.⁵⁷

In deciding the future status of Kirkuk, however, it is reported that population transfers could become a part of the solution.⁵⁸ The liabilities of the approach should therefore be carefully studied so that steps will be taken to mitigate the effects.

Property and Compensation Mechanisms. To encourage the return of IDPs and refugees to their homes as well as enhance their ability to resettle elsewhere, it is crucial that effective property restitution or compensation mechanisms be established for those forced from their homes since 2003.

For Iraqis who lost their land and property as a result of the policies of Saddam Hussein, mechanisms were created.⁵⁹ These procedures need to be extended to those more recently displaced and improvements made in how they work. The processing of claims for the victims of Saddam Hussein has taken far too long. By the end of 2007, the Commission for the Resolution of Real Property Disputes was able to decide only one-fourth of the claims submitted (some 37,000 out of 135,000).⁶⁰ There was also a low rate of enforcement. Other problems arose as well—people with informal or collective land claims (such as the Marsh Arabs) found little or no help in

retrieving property; there was little legal clarity over whether *damages* to property were covered; and the requirement of formal documentation to prove ownership excluded too many claims, pointing to the need for more flexible interpretations and applications of the law.⁶¹

Property specialists recommend that the Iraqi authorities announce that the appropriation and destruction of property since 2003 will be reversed through the use of legal remedies. Iraq, they say, should stand behind the provisions in its Civil Code, which specify that “true title does not pass with property acquired unlawfully; that transfers of property made under duress are invalid; and that those wrongfully dispossessed are entitled to the return of their property as well as compensation.”⁶² Some warn that the absence of a meaningful process of restitution in which hundreds of thousands are dispossessed could threaten long-term national and regional stability.

International organizations should be tapped to help set up such mechanisms in Iraq, as called for in the National Policy on Displacement. The international community's long experience with property claims in the Balkans and other areas, and the lack of capacity and frequent politicizing of state institutions in Iraq, make this essential.

A Viable Political System. The way Iraq evolves politically will heavily affect how displacement is addressed. The U.S. has by and large supported a unitary state as the best way of preventing Iraq from falling into chaos. The development of a “loose federalism,” it is argued, would be an effective means of preserving a unified Iraq.⁶³ Others, however, have argued in favor of partition. The existence of an autonomous Kurdish north, a Shi'a region in the south, a Sunni enclave in the center and west, with a weak national government in Baghdad would be “a better outcome than a Sunni-Shiite civil war.”⁶⁴ The different groups would work out the borders of the three areas, the sharing of oil revenues, and the division of Baghdad. Opponents of partition, however, consider the reality on the ground more complex. Local militia leaders and sheiks have begun to control areas with shifting boundaries in which “Shi'a are often at odds with other Shi'a and Sunni at odds with other Sunni.”⁶⁵ Any move to partition the country, these experts contend, will not only have little bearing on what now exists but will meet with substantial resistance.

As of this writing, the Shi'a dominated al-Maliki government has been consolidating its strength over the center and south of the country. But whatever political system emerges, it should be in the interest of both the central and local authorities to initiate and carry forward programs to address the needs of internally displaced populations. Reintegrating IDPs is not only a humanitarian imperative but a strategic one. Large masses of people without the basic necessities of life are a threat to national as well as local security.

Implementation of the National Policy to Address Displacement. As noted above, the policy sets forth the rights of the

displaced and the government's obligations toward these populations. To promote its implementation, it should be reinforced by:

- A comprehensive database to provide information about the needs of the displaced in all governorates, updated by regular countrywide assessments.
- The setting up of consultation mechanisms to achieve a close working relationship with IDPs, local communities and NGOs.
- The active involvement and coordination of all relevant central and local government offices (e.g., displacement and migration, housing, health, education, finance, human rights and the judicial system) in implementing the policy.
- The assignment to government offices of sufficient trained staff to carry out the policy.
- The training of police and military to protect displaced persons and humanitarian staff and to hold accountable those involved in sectarian violence, forced displacement, the destruction of houses, the expropriation of land, and attacks on aid workers and their supplies.
- The allocation of adequate resources, in particular a fixed percentage of oil revenues, to address the needs of the displaced. A substantial portion should be given directly to displaced families, with resources also assigned to governorates, local communities and families hosting the displaced. Local NGOs should be apportioned funds as well to build up their capacity in helping IDPs.
- The setting up, in collaboration with the U.N., of property restitution and compensation mechanisms for those uprooted since 2003, with special attention paid to Kirkuk where property claims are becoming explosive and where mechanisms instituted now could prevent violence and more displacement later on. In addition, there should be more rigorous application of existing compensation laws applicable to claims prior to 2003.
- Evaluations of conditions for return throughout the country, and the setting up of special programs to help with return or resettlement once conditions are deemed safe and sustainable.

Conclusion

Absent a political accommodation among Shi'a, Sunnis and Kurds, the return and reintegration of most of Iraq's displaced will be difficult to achieve. Although some steps have been taken on the political front, progress has been limited on the major issues—the sharing of oil revenues; the development of an effective national police able to deal with sectarian and tribal violence (there appears to be progress with respect to the army); the disbanding of local militias; the implementation of a more decentralized

form of government; and a decision on the future status of Kirkuk. Without movement on these issues, large scale violence could potentially resume in different parts of the country with substantial deaths and the increased displacement of people.

One clear test of whether Iraq will emerge as a functioning state is, how it addresses the needs of the more than four million persons displaced inside the country and throughout the region. Government action too often has been marred by sectarian preferences, a lack of urgency, and incompetence. The International Medical Corps has called for a “civilian surge” to develop the technical capacity and efficiency of the Iraqi government to deal with the humanitarian emergency.⁶⁶ The government’s new National Policy to Address Displacement constitutes an important framework for addressing the needs of the displaced but it will require a great deal of national and international effort to implement its provisions, reinforced by greater portions of Iraq’s growing oil revenues. To date, the government has set aside only meager amounts of its \$70 billion budget for 2008 for refugees and IDPs. Unless it is willing to tackle the humanitarian crisis inside the country and the refugee crisis and brain drain that it has caused, Iraq will not be able to work out effective responses to the larger issues of its internal stability and political future.

The United States must fully acknowledge the special obligation it has toward Iraq’s displaced, since its actions have spawned the overall crisis in Iraq. Assuming this responsibility will mean working with the government of Iraq to support its development of programs for the safe and sustainable returns of most refugees and IDPs. It will also mean sharp increases in its own financial support for refugees and IDPs as well as a willingness to bring into the United States larger numbers of Iraqis and to mobilize a more generous international response. America will also have to pay greater attention to how security will be provided for civilians once the United States draws down its troop levels. It remains unclear how effectively Iraqi national police and army will be able to provide security for IDPs and returning refugees and contain radical militias should they resume propagating sectarian violence. This makes the option of an international or regional police force worth considering.

U.N. envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello, while dying in the rubble of the Canal Hotel bombing in 2003, urged that the United Nations not leave Iraq. It is time for the world community to heed his appeal and play a more engaged role in the reconstruction and development of Iraq, the return and reintegration of its displaced populations and its movement toward a more politically sound future.

Notes

¹ See JOHN FAWCETT AND VICTOR TANNER, BROOKINGS INST., *THE INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE OF IRAQ 1* (2002), available at http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2002/10/iraq_fawcett.aspx.

² Andrew Harper, *Where to Now? Decreasing Options for Displaced Iraqis*, MIGRATION INFORMATION SOURCE, Sept. 2007,

<http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?id=644>.

³ See *IOM Emergency Needs Assessments*, IOM BI-WEEKLY REPORT, Mar. 15, 2008, at 1, available at

[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2008.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/LS-GZ-7J4BDV-full_report.pdf/\\$File/full_report.PDF](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2008.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/LS-GZ-7J4BDV-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.PDF); Statistics on Displaced Iraqis Around the World, U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, Sept. 2007, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?tbl=SUBSITES&id=470387fc2>;

and Kenneth H. Bacon & Kristele Younes, *Outside and Inside Iraq's Border, a Forgotten Exodus*, WASH. POST, Jan. 20, 2008.

⁴ Sweden has been an exception and plans to take in more than 25,000. See KELLY O'DONNELL & KATHLEEN NEWLAND, MIGRATION POLICY INST., *THE IRAQI REFUGEE CRISIS: THE NEED FOR ACTION 22* (2008), available at

http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/MPI-The_Iraqi_Refugee_Crisis_The_Need_for_Action_011808.pdf.

⁵ Walter Pincus, *Iraq's Slow Refugee Funding has Ripple Effect*, WASH. POST, May 17, 2008, at A12.

⁶ See DANIEL L. BYMAN & KENNETH M. POLLACK, BROOKINGS INST., ANALYSIS PAPER NO 11: THINGS FALL APART: CONTAINING THE SPILLOVER FROM AN IRAQI CIVIL WAR 5 (2007), available at

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2007/01iraq_byman.pdf.

⁷ Walter Pincus, *U.S. to Admit 17,000 Iraqi Exiles*, WASH. POST, Sept. 14, 2008, at A12.

⁸ Lawrence E. Bartlett, U.S. Dep't of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Statement at Georgetown University Panel Discussion on Iraq: The Human Cost of War (Mar. 21, 2007).

⁹ Nir Rosen, *Iraq's Jordanian Jihadis*, N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 19, 2006 (magazine), at 54.

¹⁰ Thanassis Cambanis, *Exodus from Iraq Unsettles Mideast*, THE BOSTON GLOBE, Dec. 3, 2006, at A1.

¹¹ See *id.*; and PATRICIA WEISS FAGEN, IRAQI REFUGEES: SEEKING STABILITY IN SYRIA AND JORDAN 21 (2007), available at

<http://isim.georgetown.edu/Publications/atPubs/Iraqi%20Refugees.pdf>.

¹² See Eric Londoño, *Iceland Takes Palestinians Leaving Iraq*, WASH. POST, Sept. 9, 2008, at A15 and ASHRAF AL-KHALIDI, SOPHIA HOFFMANN & VICTOR TANNER, BROOKINGS INST., IRAQI REFUGEES IN THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC: A FIELD-BASED SNAPSHOT 14-15 (2007), available at

http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2007/0611humanrights_al-khalidi.aspx

¹³ See Bacon & Younes, *supra* note 2.

¹⁴ See O'DONNELL & NEWLAND, *supra* note 4, at 13.

¹⁵ See O'DONNELL & NEWLAND, *supra* note 4, at 15.

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