



## **Humanitarian Situation Report Baghdad, Basrah, Wassit and Babylon**

**Humanitarian Coordinator on behalf of humanitarian agencies and  
organisations**

**Sunday, 30 March 2008**

### **Summary Points**

- Iraqi Shia cleric Moqtada Sadr ordered his fighters off the streets of Basra and other cities on 30 March. These clashes began following the Government of Iraq's crackdown on so-called 'criminals and outlaws' in Basra on 25 March, prompting a spiral of violence in southern Iraqi towns and cities and Shi'a-dominated areas in Baghdad.
- Access and movement restrictions vary from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. The curfew in Baghdad is in its fourth day, while in Babylon, parts of Basrah and Kut the curfew had been lifted by the 30 March although movement is still limited to within neighbourhoods.
- Key humanitarian concerns revolve around safe access to essential services, such as hospitals and shortages in essential items, primarily water. Hospitals face shortages in essential medical supplies, including blood bags, while shortages in water and food are prevalent in areas under curfew. There are consistent reports that at least 8 ambulances were attacked in the last four days, destroying or badly damaging them and that medical staff have been threatened or attacked as they have tried to reach hospitals and clinics.
- It is clear that if free movement of people and resources is restored, many of the acute humanitarian issues could be resolved. For instance, access has impeded commerce. Food prices have temporarily risen in Basrah, Kut and Babylon as a result and there are reported shortages in fresh and perishable foods.
- Between 25-30 March, 683 killed and have been killed and 1,526 injured in Baghdad, Basrah, Wassit and Babylon, according to UNAMI (in Baghdad, 277 civilians and non-civilians killed and 709 injured; in Wassit, 68 civilians killed and 91 injured; in Basra 255 killed and 661 injured; in Babylon, 83 killed and 65 injured. The majority of casualties are civilians.

### **Access and Movement**

#### **Baghdad governorate**

Access constraints and security risks continue to impede the delivery of humanitarian aid to the most affected areas. Red Crescent workers were attacked in Al-Andalus square in Baghdad on Friday, 28 March. This is

further constrained by a breakdown of electricity and damages to communication networks in Sadr City and Basra, which has made regular contact with staff members in Iraq difficult.

The curfew in Baghdad is in its fourth day. In Habibiya, Al Amin, Al Oubeidi and Al Jaffraniya neighbourhoods in Sadr City, hostilities continue. MNFI checkpoints block all access to Sadr city. Other neighborhoods, such as Shaab and Haya Benout, are calmer and people are able to buy food in local markets.

#### **Babylon governorate**

In Babylon, the curfew is imposed from 6pm to 6am and movement during daylight hours is now possible. Fighting is restricted to Hashimiya district, 40km from Hilla.

#### **Basrah governorate**

All roads leading to Basrah remain closed since hostilities began. The curfew has been eased in Basrah city centre and Gibla quarters where the two main shopping centres are open. Jubaila market was opened on 30 March but Ahsar wholesale market remains closed, impeding the provision of supplies. The situation in Hayaniah, Jumaryah and Khamsa Myn is improving, according to International Medical Core (IMC): clashes in these areas have subsided and the curfew has been lifted periodically to allow residents onto the streets and markets to reopen.

#### **Wassit governorate**

In Kut clashes between GOI and militias are ongoing in Shohadaa, Teshash and Zen Qaus neighbourhoods. Curfews were lifted on 30 March for a few hours but few shops were reported open and people were reportedly afraid to leave the safety of their houses, according to MercyCorps.

Supplies are reaching Kut from Kerbala to the south instead of from Baghdad, where the curfew continues to prevent movement.

### **International response**

UN humanitarian agencies are working with government ministries and NGO partners to monitor the situation and deliver assistance, as security allows.

#### **Water and Sanitation**

Safe drinking water is the most pressing need. Water is provided by roof tanks which require electric pumps to pump the water from the main pipeline to homes. The main electricity grid is down in the whole of Sadr City in Baghdad and parts of Babylon and Wassit governorates. The power supply was restored in Basra, Kut and partially in Amarah (Missan governorate) on 30 March. Generators are the fall-back to pump water but households may be unable to leave their homes to buy new supplies of fuel or bottled water.

UNICEF provided 50,000 litres to five locations in Basrah (three in the north and two in the south of the city), serving an estimated 1,250 families. UNICEF is negotiating with shop-keepers to fill their tanks to increase coverage to residents.

Once the security situation is deemed safe, UNICEF will, if and when needed, provide water, sanitation and health support for 70,000 families - including 39 million water purification tablets and 40,000 sachets of Oral Re-hydration Salts to treat diarrhoea in young children;

## Health

ICRC has organised daily flights with emergency medical supplies and estimates that over 2000 patients in all five main hospitals in Basra are in need of food. Medical supplies such as anaesthesia, blood bags and antibiotics are in short supply in seven Basra and Baghdad hospitals. Specifically, WHO reports that the blood bank in Sadr City is in urgent need for kits to test blood for Viral Hepatitis Type C and shortages are also reported in external fixators (used for fractures), anaesthetic drugs and IV administration sets and cannulas.

Al Karama hospital in Kut reports shortages in disposable medical supplies such as sterile syringes, cotton, surgical sutures, masks, surgical gloves, disinfectants and oxygen regulators.

WHO has delivered 1,700 blood bags to Baghdad to be delivered to Basra hospitals.

## Food and non-food items

In Hayaniah, Jumaryah and Khamsa Myn districts in Basrah, people are able to purchase staples such as rice, sugar and flour; though fresh fruit and vegetables remain scarce, according to IMC. Essential food items in these locations have increased in price. Sugar prices have increased by approximately 125%, tomatoes by 530% and water by 215%. Price increases are also reported in Babylon and Kut where local markets are open, according to MercyCorps and Mercy Hands.

Three hospitals in Kut (Al Abaas, Al Karama and Al Zahra) report food shortages.

The Government of Iraq completed the March PDS distribution before hostilities commenced. April rations are reportedly in stock and are ready to be delivered, according to WFP.

WFP has over 4,000 tonnes of food inside Iraq which could be made available for emergency response if security circumstances permit the movement to locations in need.

IOM has up to 3,400 food baskets and 3,500 NFI baskets in warehouses in Baghdad. Once the curfew is lifted, and access is possible to Sadr City, IOM will deliver food baskets as needed to the two main hospitals in Sadr City.

In the south, IOM is procuring 1,500 food baskets for the hospitals in Kut/Wassit, Hilla, Babylon, Nassiriya, Thi Qar, Dimaniya, Qadissiya, and Basrah. IOM has a stock of 1,000 NFIs in Diwaniya available if displacement from Basrah occurs. IOM is pre-positioning 2,000 additional NFIs for Wassit and Thi Qar. They will be stored in IOM partner's warehouse and can be transported to other Southern governorates if needed.

UNHCR are ready to provide water containers for up to 8,000 families in need (*no requirement of IDP/refugee status*).