

IWPR Report Prompts Policy Shift on Returning Iraqis

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Funds to become more readily available after story on concerns of Iraqis living in Syria.

Iraqi migration officials have been prompted to change their policy on helping citizens return to the country by an IWPR report that highlighted the difficulties facing refugees in Syria.

After reading the article **Iraqi Refugees in Syria Fear For Future**, officials in Baghdad decided to expedite payments to people wanting to return to Iraq.

In 2008, the Iraqi government launched a financial aid programme to help the more than two million refugees who left the country after the 2003 United States-led invasion to return home. According to the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR, half of all Iraqis seeking asylum abroad went to Syria, and nine out of ten refugees in that country are from Iraq.

The deputy minister for migration and displacement, Asghar al-Mosawi, read about the situation facing Iraqi nationals in Syria, in a piece he said stood out for its “simplicity and emotional images”.

As a result, he said, the return and resettlement process would be accelerated so that people could get back to Iraq as soon as possible.

“After reviewing the report, we decided to make more resources available, and to ensure that the money gets to Iraqi families quickly and urgently,” he told IWPR.

Mosawi’s ministry has also sent a team into Syria to work with Baghdad’s embassy and award grants to Iraqi nationals.

Over 6,000 people have been killed in Syria since unrest began in March 2011, according to the United Nations.

Many Iraqis living there anticipate a bloody sectarian war similar to the conflict after Saddam Hussein’s removal in 2003. Nevertheless, some remain uncertain about returning to face continuing instability in Iraq, especially since the withdrawal of US troops in December was followed by an escalation in attacks on civilians.

Iraqi government efforts to encourage people to return have faced criticism, but the migration ministry says this programme is under review following publication of the IWPR story.

“We have taken this [IWPR] report into account.... Sometimes such reports suggest better solutions than the ones we have in mind,” he said, adding that officials sometimes “unintentionally forget about such matters”.

Liqaa Wardi, who chairs the parliamentary committee that oversees the migration and displacement ministry, said, “We hope that getting such reports containing neutral facts and information will help us find solutions.”

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Location: [Iraq](#)
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