



Summary

The programme facilitates the voluntary return from Denmark to Iraq of Iraqi nationals who want to return voluntarily. The eight-month integrated programme includes an information campaign with an IOM helpline through which potential returnees can access information on the situation in Iraq and return possibilities in order to help them make an informed decision about return. Close cooperation with the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) and multipliers including the Danish Red Cross, Iraqi national associations, IGOs, and individual returnees ensure the safe and dignified voluntary return of members of the target group to their country of origin.

IOM IS COMMITTED TO THE PRINCIPLE THAT HUMANE AND ORDERLY MIGRATION BENEFITS MIGRANTS AND SOCIETY.

AS AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL BODY, IOM ACTS WITH ITS PARTNERS IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO:

ASSIST IN MEETING THE OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES OF MIGRATION;

ADVANCE UNDERSTANDING OF MIGRATION ISSUES;

ENCOURAGE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MIGRATION; AND

WORK TOWARDS EFFECTIVE RESPECT OF THE HUMAN DIGNITY AND WELL-BEING OF MIGRANTS.



A group of Iraqi returnees at Queen Alia airport, Amman.

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Integrated Assisted Voluntary Return from Denmark to Iraq Programme

Background and objectives

Since the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime in April 2003, the international community has sought to contribute to the reconstruction of Iraq through political and economic assistance, including support to returnees.

While there may be large numbers of Iraqis seeking to return, the Iraqi Government and the UN are not promoting large-scale returns for the time being. Accordingly, IOM is not yet operating a full scale Iraq-specific return programme, and is restricting its assistance to those applicants insisting on going back now who have a place to return to. IOM is prioritizing these returns as much as possible in accordance with humanitarian consid-

erations and at the same time assessing the conditions to enable future larger-scale returns and reintegration support.

Since July 2003, hundreds of Iraqis have returned voluntarily to Iraq from the Nordic countries with the assistance of the IOM Regional Office for the Nordic and Baltic States, and the European Neighbourhood countries (East) in Helsinki.

The overall objective of this programme is to facilitate the sustainable return to Iraq of Iraqi nationals residing in Denmark by providing Iraqis with an opportunity to return voluntarily.

Programme activities

The programme involves a range of activities, including the development of information mater-



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ial for the target group, IOM participation in information meetings for Iraqi nationals, and the establishment and maintenance of a dedicated helpline.

DEVELOPMENT OF INFORMATION MATERIAL

IOM created culturally relevant information material about IOM's AVR programme. Material such as brochures, information sheets, and posters were produced in Arabic, Kurdish, and English and distributed to the target group through information meetings and IOM's multiplier network in Denmark.

PARTICIPATION IN INFORMATION MEETINGS FOR IRAQI NATIONALS

IOM colleagues participated in 11 information meetings held in reception centres in Denmark. During these information meetings IOM and its multipliers provided information about possibilities for return through IOM's AVR programme.

HELPLINE SERVICE

IOM established a toll-free information helpline for the target group and other interested parties (such as social workers and NGOs) to provide information on possibilities for return and the practicalities involved. The helpline service is based at IOM Helsinki and staffed by an Iraqi national with Arabic and Kurdish language skills. The service is provided throughout the duration of the programme.

IOM provides information about the situation in Iraq and practicalities related to the AVR programme, including advice on registering interest in the programme, how the return process works in practice, and what types of assistance are available for returnees en route and upon arrival in Iraq. IOM sent out a one-page newsletter in Arabic, Kurdish, and English to inform the target group about the existence of the helpline and to publicize the helpline number.



Returnees being assisted by IOM at Queen Alia airport, Amman.

The Iraqi helpline number is: 80 20 17 00 (toll-free within Denmark).

ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURNS

After providing information and advice on return possibilities to the target group, IOM, in cooperation with partners, facilitates the voluntary return and reintegration of members of the target group from Denmark to Iraq. IOM assistance includes:

- AVR application form processing and review of travel documents;
- Booking arrangements on commercial flights and notification of itinerary and ticket status;
- Arrangement of relevant transit assistance and transit visas/visa waivers;
- Provision of escorts in those cases where returnees can be grouped;
- Provision of IOM plastic bags for immediate identification of returnees at transit points;
- Meeting of returnees upon disembarkation at selected airports and assistance with immigration and customs procedures;
- Arrangements and provision of onward in-country transportation;
- Medical escorts, when necessary.

In order to facilitate returns, DIS arranges valid travel documents for returnees to allow them to travel to Iraq.

Institutional framework

The IOM Regional Office in Helsinki has overall responsibility for programme design, implementation, and reporting and coordinates programme activities in close collaboration with DIS. Danish NGOs working with Iraqi asylum seekers and Iraqi diaspora associations in Denmark provide grass-root implementation support.

Contact details

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