

Finding homes in ruin, destitute Iraqis return to camps

Author:

Sun, 2019-08-25 22:51

AL-KHAZER/IRAQ: Her tent is bare, she is unemployed and her family relies on food donations. But Nihaya Issa was forced to pick an Iraqi camp over the unlivable ruins of her native city Mosul.

The northern city was freed from Daesh's grip more than two years ago, but tens of thousands of Iraqis who fled Mosul into sprawling displacement camps have yet to move back home. Many, like Issa, say they tried returning but were shocked by what they saw.

"When I went back to Mosul I didn't find my house. It was destroyed," said Issa, speaking from her stuffy tent in the Khazer camp about 30 km east of Mosul.

"I also couldn't afford renting a house, so I came back to this camp again," she told AFP, clapping her hands in exasperation.

Dark circles have formed under her eyes, and the widow and mother of eight girls said she and her children "live a tough life" in Khazer. But the 33-year-old feels she has little choice.

"We stay in the camp because of the food rations we get every 30 to 40 days," she admitted.

Across Iraq, more than 1.6 million people remain displaced, among them nearly 300,000 from Mosul alone, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

They are spread out across a handful of displacement camps in the broader Nineveh province that have developed into full-fledged tent cities.

Amenities provided by NGOs include schools and training centers, health clinics and shops, football fields and hair salons – all mostly unavailable in Mosul and other towns ravaged by Daesh and the ensuing fighting.

Ghazwan Hussein, 26, hails from Sinjar, a region west of Mosul that was overrun by Daesh five years ago as it waged a brutal campaign against the district's Yazidi minority.

The father of four fled the region to the Khazer camp, where he eked out a living until his son fell ill a few months ago. He sold his meager belongings in the camp to afford the required surgery and tried to return to Sinjar.

"I found that my house was unlivable. It was demolished and the area didn't have basic services," said Hussein, his toddler perched quietly on his lap outside their tent.

"I couldn't stay and came back to Khazer once again."

Only a sliver of Sinjar's native population of 500,000 Yazidis has returned, with the rest saying persistent destruction, the lack of services and the tense security situation have kept them in camps.

Hussein said the Iraqi government should speed up reconstruction efforts and compensate displaced citizens.

"Does it make sense to keep us in the camp without work for three years, as if in jail?" he asked.

"We just eat, sleep, and live on food baskets without any hope the situation will improve so we can go home." Mosul's migration office said up to 25 families a day are leaving their destroyed homes to return to displacement camps to access better services.

"For the past 18 months, we have also seen 'reverse migration' back to the camps or to the Kurdish region," said office head Khaled Ismail.

"The reasons for reverse displacement are varied according to the regions: It might be tied to the security situation, the family's financial conditions or the fact that their destroyed homes are unsuitable for living."

According to the migration office, about 72,000 families have returned to Nineveh since the fighting against Daesh ended two years ago.

Many are returning to the eastern side of Mosul, which was left more intact when fighting ended and where returning residents find restaurants and shops reopening.

But across the Tigris River in the Old City, mountains of rubble still seal off many streets and unexploded ordnance, rocket remnants, and even decomposing bodies lie under ruined homes.

For the most desperate families, those ruins will have to do.

IOM says nearly 30,000 returnees in Mosul are living in vulnerable conditions including destroyed homes, schools and other public buildings – the highest number of any location in Iraq.

Shaking from a medical condition, Sabiha Jassem made her way through her tiny home, the grimy walls dotted with bullet holes and flies.

She and her children could not afford to pay rent in east Mosul and returned to their home in the ravaged Old City.

"This house is a danger to us – its roof and walls could collapse. But we're poor and have no other solution but to live in it," said Jassem, 61.

"This is not a life we are living here."



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Iraq summons US charge d'affaires over military base attacks
Rocket attack kills six in Iraq's oil-rich Kirkuk

[Iran satirist to serve 11 years in jail for US cooperation](#)

Author:

Sun, 2019-08-25 22:22

TEHRAN: An Iranian court has sentenced writer and satirist Keyomars Marzban to 11 years in prison after convicting him of charges including cooperation with the US, state media reported.

The official IRNA news agency said Marzban had “collaborated” with Radio Farda and Manoto television – broadcasters that are based abroad and banned in Iran.

Marzban had been facing charges of “assembly and collusion against national

security, cooperation with a hostile state, spreading propaganda against the system, and insulting sanctities and officials,” IRNA quoted his lawyer as saying.

The court cleared him of the first count of assembly and collusion but found him guilty of the other four charges, said the lawyer Mohammad Hossein Aghasi.

In line with Iranian law, he would have to serve only the longest of the sentences – 11 years behind bars for cooperating with a hostile state – if he loses an appeal.

“We will definitely appeal this verdict as we believe that there has been no connection between the client and American government,” said Aghasi.

“We also don’t accept (the charge of) insulting sanctities.”

IRNA said that according to posts on social media, Marzban had left Iran in 2009 and returned eight years later before being arrested in Aug. 26, 2018.

Iran has meanwhile blacklisted US-based think-tank the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and its chief Mark Dubowitz on accusations of being behind “economic terrorism” against the Islamic republic.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry said in a statement that it had “added the so-called Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD) and its director to the sanctions list.”

The FDD and Dubowitz were blamed for “seriously and actively trying to harm the Iranian people’s security and vital interests,” according to the English-language statement posted on the ministry’s website.

They were accused of doing so through “fabricating and spreading lies, encouraging, providing consultations, lobbying, and launching a smear campaign” against Iran. As a result, they would be “subject to legal consequences,” it said.

The move would be “without prejudice to any further legal measures that the other administrative, judicial or security institutions and organizations may take” against them and their “collaborators and accomplices.”

The FDD describes itself as a Washington-based “non-partisan research institute focusing on national security and foreign policy.”

The think-tank responded to Tehran’s move with a statement saying: “FDD considers its inclusion on any list put out by the regime as a badge of honor and looks forward to the day when Americans and others can visit a free and democratic Iran.”

It strongly opposed the 2015 deal that saw world powers lift sanctions against Iran in return for limits on its nuclear program.

Tensions between arch-foes Iran and the US have escalated since President

Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the US from the accord last year and began reimposing sanctions against the Islamic republic.



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Iran, US tension is a 'clash of wills': Guards commander Iranian oil tanker pursued by US says it is going to Turkey

[Three rockets fired from Gaza into Israel: army](#)

Author:

Sun, 2019-08-25 22:37

JERUSALEM: Three rockets were fired from Gaza into southern Israel on Sunday, the Israeli army said.

"Three launches were identified from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory," it said in a statement. "Two of them were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defence system."

One projectile fell in wasteland, starting a fire, according to the Sha'ar

HaNegev Regional Council.

A concert organised as part of a music festival in the town of Sderot was interrupted by a siren, a spokesperson for the municipality said. Since the start of August, an uptick in rocket fire and Palestinian attempts to cross from Gaza into Israel have been met with Israeli strikes, threatening a fragile ceasefire between Israel and the coastal enclave's rulers Hamas.

With less than a month to go before Israeli elections, analysts say Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is keen to avoid a flare-up – despite his rivals calling for tough action against Hamas.

The movement has not claimed the latest rocket fire or infiltration attempts, but speculation has grown that supporters in the blockaded enclave are hoping to pressure him into further concessions under a truce deal.



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Gaza Palestinians fire rocket at Israel
Impoverished Gazans lament stagnant livestock market

Sudan's sovereign council declares state of emergency in Port Sudan

Author:

Sun, 2019-08-25 22:26

KHARTOUM: Sudan's newly-created sovereign council formally declared a state of emergency in the city of Port Sudan on Sunday, following tribal clashes that police say have killed at least 16 people.

The acting governor and the head of the national security service for the eastern Red Sea state, of which Port Sudan is the capital, were both dismissed, said Brigadier Altahir Abuhaja, spokesman for the sovereign council.

This comes at a delicate time for Sudan, following the signing of a power-sharing agreement earlier this month.

The joint military-civilian sovereign council was sworn in last week, as was Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, who is set to form a government later this week.

Clashes between members of the Beni Amer and Nuba tribes, which have flared up in the past, were re-ignited on Wednesday and continued into Saturday morning, a police statement said.

Eyewitnesses told Reuters they heard and saw gunfire in the Port Sudan neighbourhoods where both tribes live.

Port Sudan is Sudan's main sea gateway, and is used by South Sudan to export oil.

"The relevant authorities have observed the use of firearms in the conflict for the first time, which reveals the existence of external and internal interference to fuel the conflict and spread it to other areas," Abuhaja said.

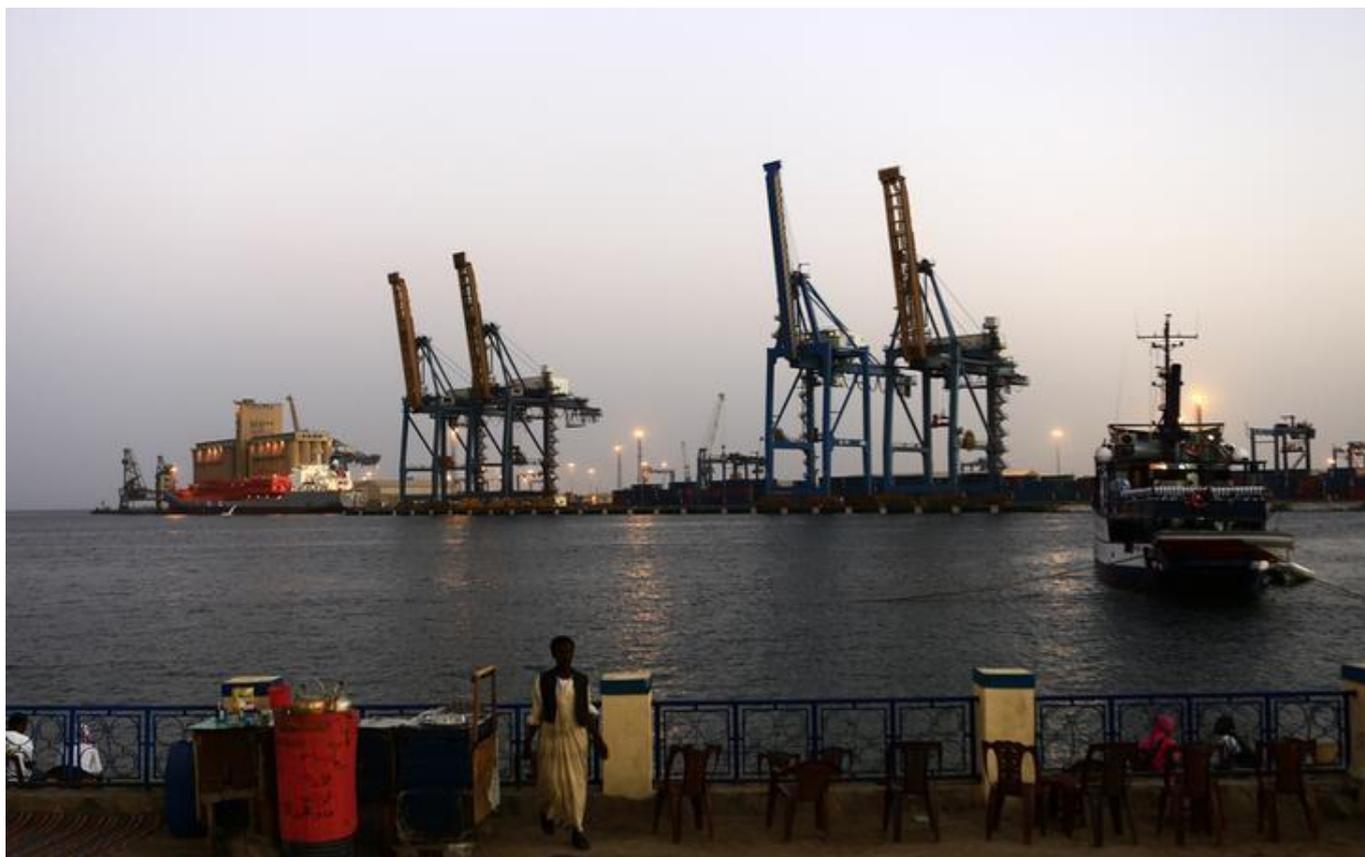
Security services were placed on high readiness in order to quell any escalation, and an investigative committee has been formed, he added.

The police statement said reinforcements had been sent to the area.

"The transitional sovereign council emphasizes the neutrality of the military and security services ... Anyone who is shown to be biased to either side because of affiliation or support will be dealt with decisively," Abuhaja said.

Two members of the sovereign council had visited Port Sudan on Thursday and met with tribal leaders in an attempt to bring an end to the fighting.

According to the power-sharing agreement, the sovereign council declares a state of emergency following a request from the cabinet, which is not yet in existence. The state of emergency must then be approved by the legislature within 15 days, according to the agreement, although the legislature is yet to be formed.



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Sudan flood death toll reaches 62: state media Bashir defense asks Sudan court for bail release

[3 Turkish soldiers killed in clash with Kurdish militants in Iraq](#)

Author:

Sun, 2019-08-25 22:15

ANKARA, ISTANBUL: Three Turkish soldiers were killed and seven were wounded in a clash with Kurdish militants in northern Iraq, the Turkish Defense Ministry said on Sunday.

The statement came after Turkey on Friday launched the third phase of an operation begun in May to root out fighters of the Kurdish Workers Party, or PKK (PKK), in the region. It did not specify the location of the clashes.

Turkey launched the “Claw” operation in May into mountainous northern Iraq against the PKK. The operation involved conducting a ground offensive and bombing campaign against the PKK in the region.

The offensive entered its third phase on Friday, in which troops aim to destroy PKK caves and shelters in the Sinat-Haftanin region. The conflict has claimed more than 40,000 lives since the PKK took up arms in 1984.

The PKK began an insurgency against Turkey in the country’s mainly Kurdish southeast in 1984, and the conflict has killed tens of thousands of people. Turkey, the US and the EU consider the group, based in the Qandil mountains of northern Iraq, a terror organization.

Daesh attack kills 6

Separately, Daesh militants have fired mortar rounds at a soccer field near a religious site, killing six civilians and wounding nine others, according to police in Iraq.

The attack occurred late on Saturday in the village of Daquq, in Iraq’s northern Kirkuk province, as people were exercising.

Police officials confirmed the attack, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

The area of the attack, southeast of the city of Kirkuk, is controlled by Iran-supported militias known as the Popular Mobilization Forces.

Daesh, which once ruled a self-styled proto-state sprawling across Iraq and Syria, no longer controls territory in either country but has continued to stage sporadic attacks.



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Three Turkish soldiers killed in clash with Kurdish militantsTwo fighters killed in drone attack: Iraq paramilitary force