

# NO WAY HOME

## AN ASSESSMENT OF BARRIERS TO SUSTAINABLE RETURN AND REINTEGRATION IN LOCATIONS OF NO RETURN

*The Return Index Thematic Series provides analysis and insights on specific indicators, their distribution across conflict-affected areas of Iraq and how they impact upon return and reintegration.*

January – March 2022

## ACRONYMS

**ABC** Area-Based Coordination

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**AoD** Area of Displacement

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**DSTWG** Durable Solutions Technical Working Group

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**DTM** Displacement Tracking Matrix

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**IOM** International Organization for Migration

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**ISF** Iraqi Security Forces

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**ISIL** Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

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**PMF** Popular Mobilisation Forces

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**RART** Rapid Assessment and Response Teams

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**RWG** Returns Working Group

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**UXO** Unexploded Ordnance

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# INTRODUCTION

IOM DTM conducts regular assessments of over 4,500 locations in which internally displaced persons (IDPs) or returnees reside across Iraq. A location is defined as an area that corresponds with either a village, for rural areas, or a neighbourhood in urban areas (i.e. the fourth official administrative division). Data are collected through IOM’s Rapid Assessment and Response Teams (RARTs), who are deployed across the country. IOM’s RARTs collect data through interviews with key informants, using a large, well-established network of over 9,500 key informants that includes community leaders, mukhtars, local authorities and security forces.

Locations of no return are those that recorded displacement during or since the 2014-2017 conflict with Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) but have either not recorded any returns or have subsequently recorded that all returnees have re-displaced. Locations of no return commonly have no key informant and few or no inhabitants and are therefore difficult to identify and monitor. To address the paucity of information on the conditions in these locations, DTM began to identify locations of no return in January 2019. Since then, the assessment tool for locations

of no return has been refined and expanded to better meet the information needs of programme teams. The data in this report was collected between January and March 2022. The report presents information on:

- Access to locations of no return, for IOM RARTs, other agencies, and other individuals, including residents;
- The extent of displacement and number of families residing in these location prior to 2014, if known;
- The presence of security actors, including which actors influence returns;
- Whether returns are blocked for all or for some groups and individuals;
- The prevalent security concerns and extent of residential destruction in each location; and
- The reasons why returns have not occurred to date.

This report analyses the prevalence and distribution of these factors, to provide an evidence base for strategic programming in locations of no return.

# OVERVIEW

As of March 2022, IOM-DTM identified 284 locations of no return across seven governorates.

Figure 1: Locations of no return by district (March 2022)

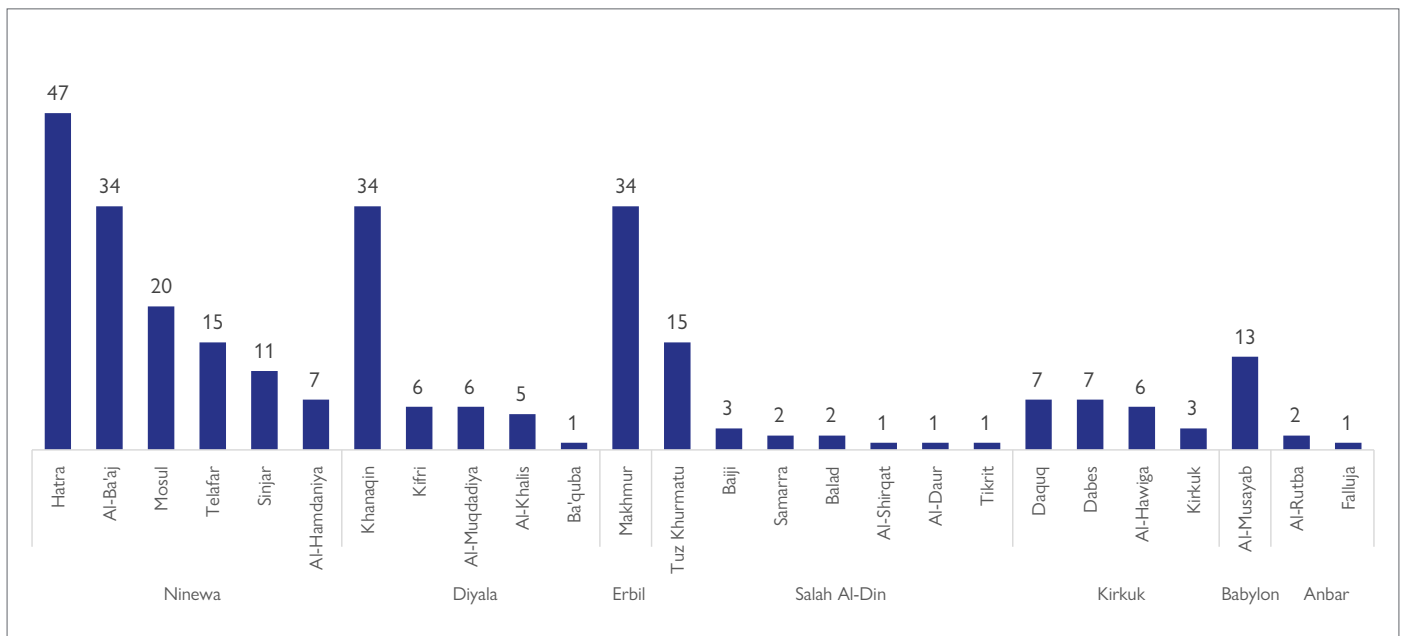


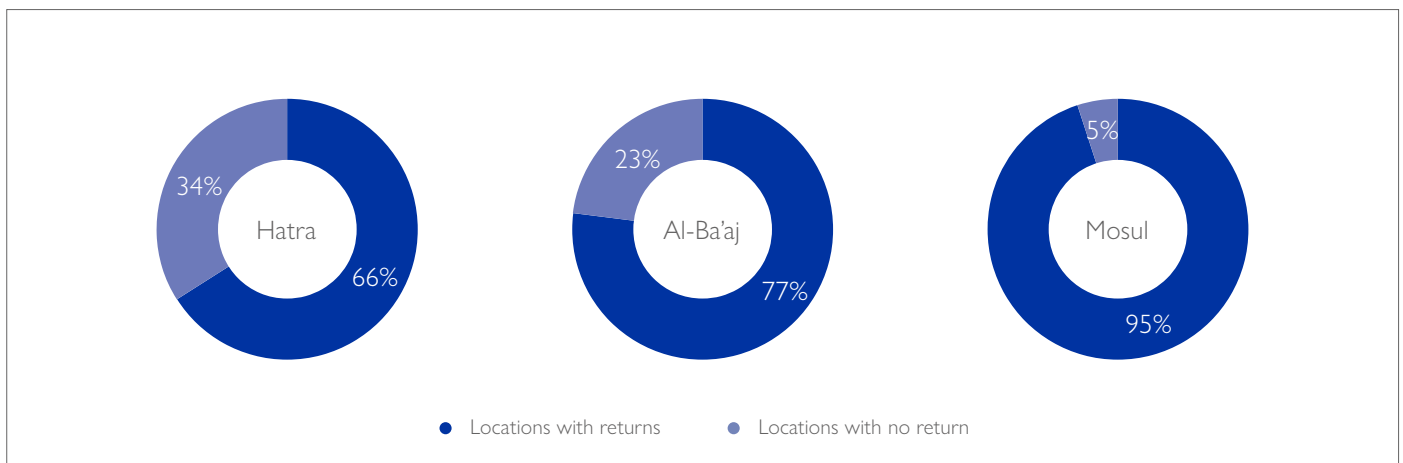
Figure 2: Locations of displacement, return and no return (March 2022)



Of the 284 locations of no return in Iraq, 134 are in Ninewa governorate. There are 47 locations of no return in Hatra district, which equates to 34 per cent of the assessed locations in that

district having no returns. In Al-Ba'aj there are 34 locations of no return (23% of locations in the district), and in Mosul there are 20 (5%).

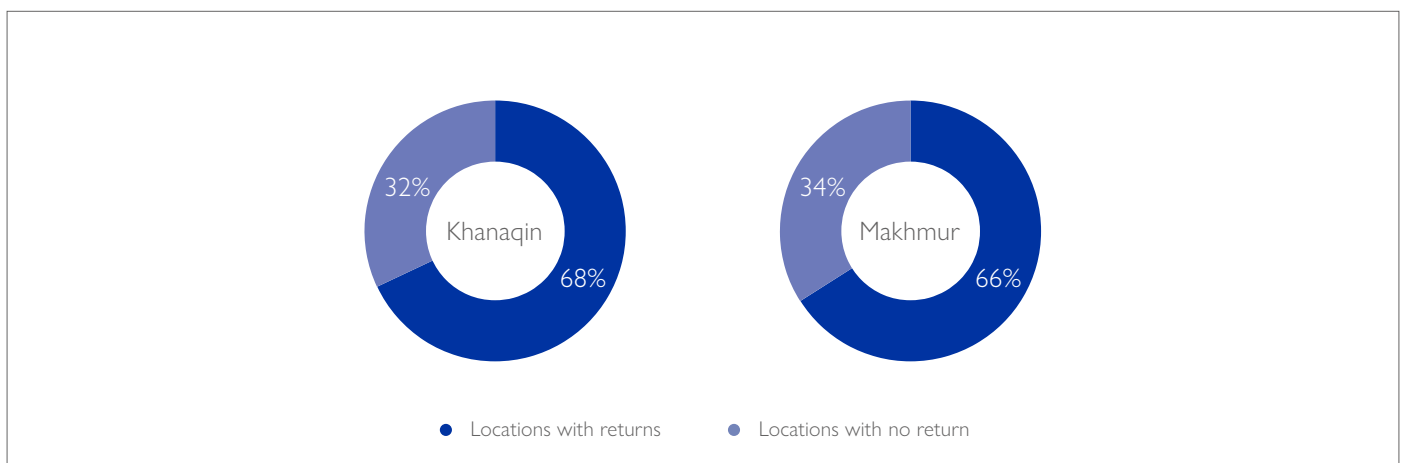
Figure 3: Percentage of locations of no return per district for key districts in Ninewa governorate



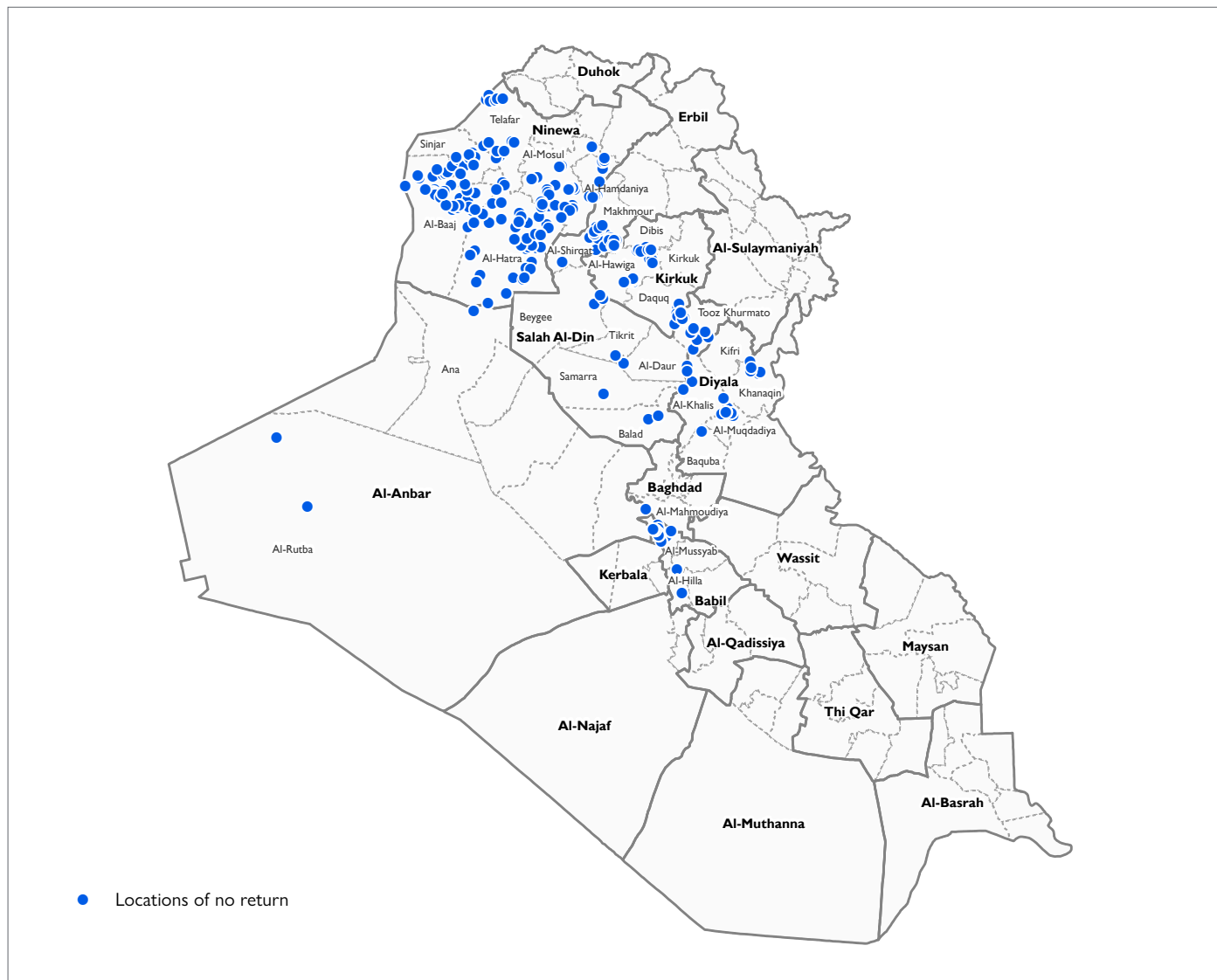
Diyala governorate has 52 locations of no return, with the highest concentration being in Khanaqin district (34, 32% of all

locations). Similarly, Mahkmur district in Erbil governorate also has 34 locations of no return (34%).

Figure 4: Percentage of locations of no return per district for key districts in other governorates



Map 1: Locations of no return (March 2022)



Subdistricts that have many locations of no return include Markaz Hatra (35, 49% of all locations in the subdistrict), Markaz Al-Ba’aj (31, 28%) and Altal (12, 18%) in Ninewa governorate (Table 1).

Elsewhere, Qaraj in Makhmur district, Erbil governorate has 29 locations of no return (46%), and As-Saadia in Khanaqin district, Diyala governorate contains 25 locations (57%).

Table 1: Subdistricts by number of locations of no return

GOVERNORATE	DISTRICT	SUB-DISTRICT	NO. LOCATIONS OF NO RETURN	PERCENTAGE OF LOCATIONS OF NO RETURN
Ninewa	Hatra	Markaz Hatra	35	49%
Ninewa	Al-Ba’aj	Markaz Al-Ba’aj	31	28%
Erbil	Makhmur	Qaraj	29	46%
Diyala	Khanaqin	As-Saadia	25	57%
Ninewa	Hatra	Altal	12	18%

## Access

IOM RARTs are unable to access 189 of locations of no return (67%). In these cases, data is collected from local authorities or security forces in neighbouring areas where access is allowed, or from key informants displaced from the area of no return.

IOM RARTs are able to access 90 locations of no return (32%). Five locations in Al-Musayab, Babylon governorate are sometimes accessible to IOM RARTs, dependent on approval from security forces. Locations inaccessible to IOM RARTs are particularly prevalent in Hatra (41), Khanaqin (32), and Makhmur (23), as a result of the volatile security situation in those areas. Twenty-eight locations could be accessed by IOM RARTs but were not accessible to residents, primarily in Markaz Al-Ba’aj (13) and Markaz Al-Hamdaniya (6). There were also 53 locations which were not accessible to RARTs but were accessible to residents.

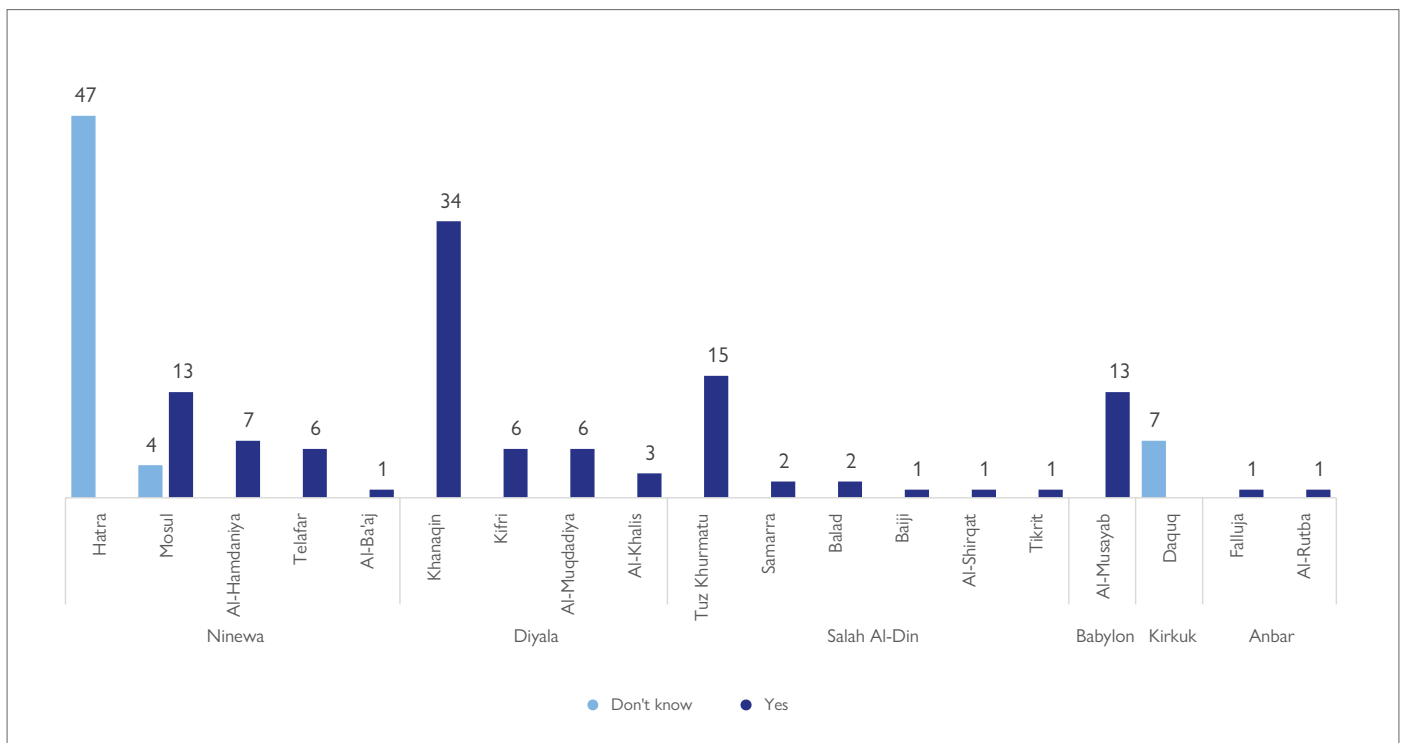
According to IOM RART teams, other agencies were reportedly able to access 80 locations of no return (28%). All of these locations, except for one located in Alshura, Mosul district are also accessible to IOM.

There were 136 locations of no return which were not accessible to either IOM RARTs or residents.

## Extent of Displacement

The extent of displacement – the estimated population displaced from a location following the conflict with ISIL – was not known in 181 locations. In the remaining 103 locations, a total of 5,857 families were estimated to be displaced.

Figure 5: Locations of no return with blocked returns by district



The pre-2014 population was not known for over half of all locations of no return (154). Across the remaining locations of no return, the total pre-2014 population is estimated to be 2,109 families. Given the paucity of information on these areas, it is common to have no data on either the extent of displacement or the pre-2014 population, which was the case for 108 locations.

## Blocked returns

Returns are blocked in 113 locations. In 60 of these locations, all previous residents are prevented from returning, most commonly in Tuz Khurmatu, in Salah al-Din governorate (15), Al-Musayab in Babylon (13) and Mosul in Ninewa (10) (Figure 5).

In 49 locations in Diyala governorate some tribal or ethno-religious groups are prevented from returning. This situation is most common in Khanaqin district, specifically in As-Saadia (25), and Markaz Khanaqin (9), with an additional six locations in Al-Muqaddiya district where this issue was recorded.

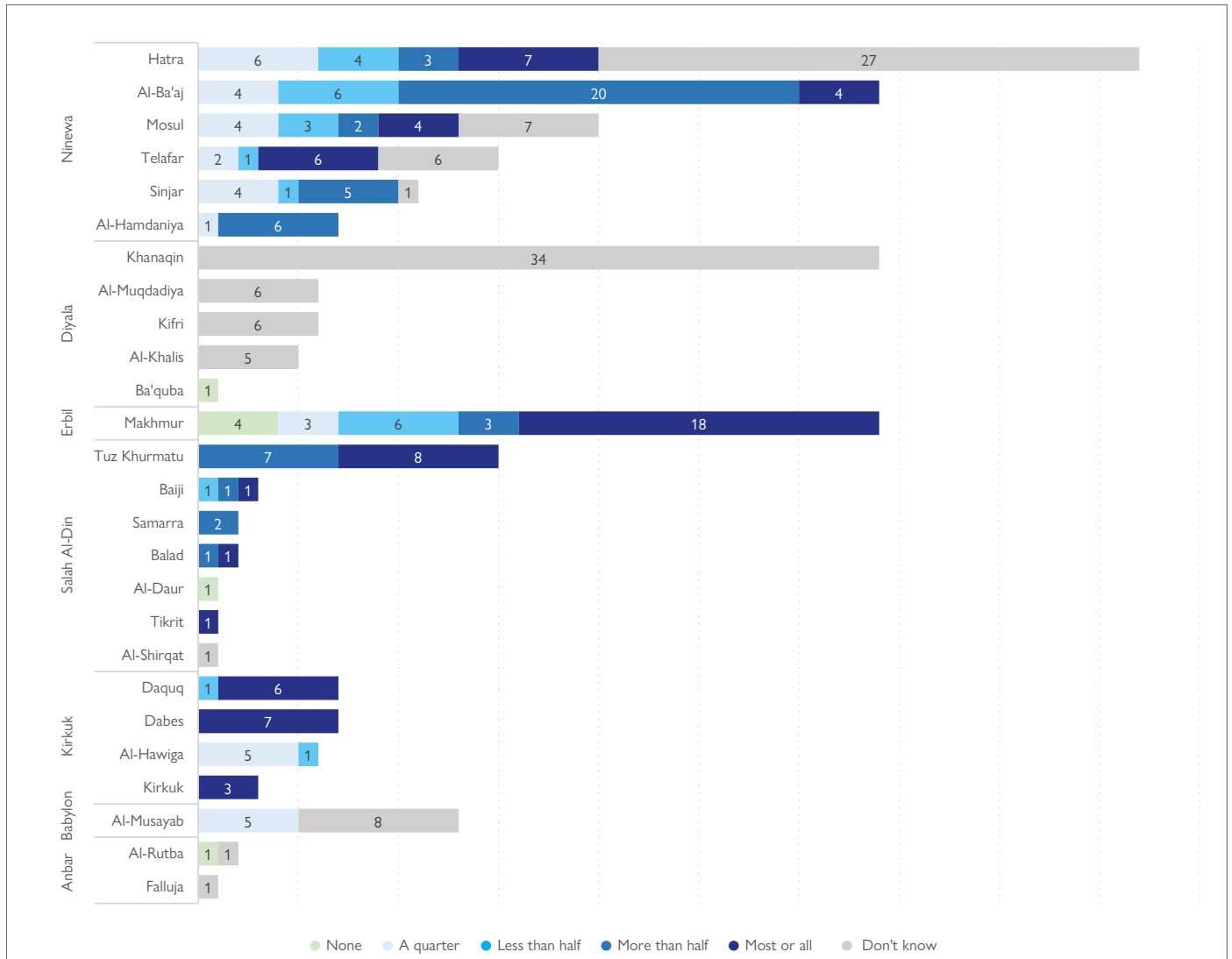
There were comparatively few reports of locations in which some individuals, specifically those with alleged affiliation to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), were prevented from returning (4), split between Al-Ba’aj (1) and Mosul (3) in Ninewa. However, this issue may be more common than is reported due to the paucity of information from locations of no return and the likelihood of such restrictions in locations that have returnees living in them.

## Residential Destruction

For accessible locations, data on residential destruction are collected via direct observation. In inaccessible locations, key informants, including security forces, from neighbouring areas of return provide estimations. The assessment of housing destruction is therefore partial and particularly limited in Diyala governorate, as well as in Hatra district in Ninewa governorate and Al-Musayab in Babylon governorate (103 locations) (Figure 6).

In 66 locations, most or all houses are destroyed, with destruction being particularly prevalent in Makhmur (18), Tuz Khurmatu (8), Hatra (7) and Dabes (7) districts. There are 20 locations in Al-Ba'aj where more than half of the houses are destroyed, and seven in Tuz Khurmatu. Notably, none or few of the houses are destroyed in seven locations in Makhmur, as well as Hatra (6), Al-Hawiga (5) and Al-Musayab.

Figure 6: Residential Destruction in Locations of No Return



## Security

Security concerns were reported in 230 locations of no return, most notably in Hatra (44), Khanaqin (34) and Makhmur (31). Specifically:

- Attacks by ISIL were the most prevalent concern, in 195 locations, most commonly in Hatra (44), Khanaqin (34) and Makhmur (29).
- Checkpoints controlled by armed groups were also identified as a security concern in 40 locations, most commonly in Al-Musayab, Babylon governorate and Dabes and Daquq in Kirkuk governorate.

- Unexploded ordnance and mines are a key security concern in Makhmur district.

### Number of security actors

There are 40 locations in Diyala governorate where five security actors are present, the majority of these locations are in As-Saadia and Markaz Khanaqin in Khanaqin district (34). In all of these locations, security actors prevent returns.

There are 31 locations in Al-Ba'aj and Telafar where four security actors are present, where Iraqi security forces (ISF) are the actor

with control over returns. There are also 12 locations in Al-Khalis, Baquba and Al-Muqdadia districts, in Diyala governorate, that also have four security actors.

In most locations of no return, one or two security actors were present (148). However, in 47 locations in Ninewa governorate, located in Hatra, Al-Ba'aj and Mosul districts, no security actors were reportedly present.

### Reasons for no returns

Key informants were asked to provide a qualitative description of the reasons for no return in each location. These responses were then thematically coded for analysis, with each location having up to three reasons.

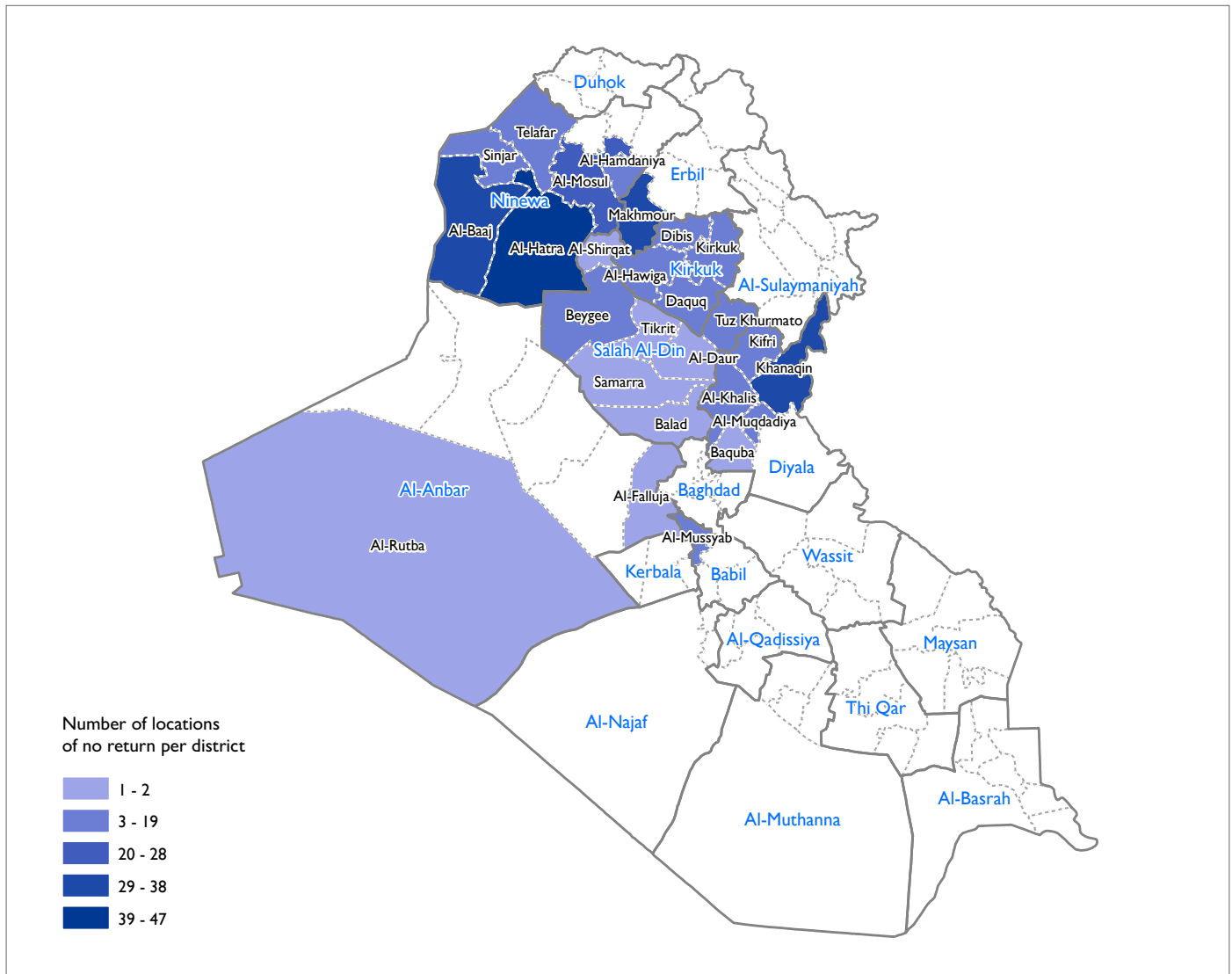
Residential destruction was identified as the most prevalent barrier to returns in 130 locations. This reason was most commonly reported in Hatra (25), Khanaqin (25), Al-Ba'aj (23) and Makhmur (16).

Overall, 128 locations identified the poor security situation as a reason for not returning. This was most prevalent in Makhmur (26), Hatra (20), and Tuz Khurmatu (15).

In 109 locations, the lack of services was cited as a reason for no returns. This reason was prevalent across Ninewa (55), most notably in Hatra (23) and Al-Ba'aj (13). Similarly, all locations of no return in Kirkuk governorate (23) and all locations in Gwyer, Makhmur district, Erbil governorate (5) cited a lack of services as a reason for no return.

In 42 locations, returns blocked by security forces was given as a reason for not returning. Security actors preventing return was reported in 12 locations across Al-Hamdaniya and Telafar in Ninewa. Security actors preventing return were also identified in a further 23 areas, predominantly in Al-Musayab, Babylon governorate (13), and Baiji in Salah al-Din (3).

Map 2: Number of locations of no return per district





There were 20 locations in Hatra (15) and Al-Ba'aj (5) where drought conditions were cited as a reason for no return, alongside residential destruction caused by the conflict with ISIL.

Unexploded ordnance prevents returns in 18 locations, most notably in Al-Riyad in Al-Hawiga district and Markaz Daquq in Daquq district, but also in Mosul, Al-Ba'aj and Al-Muqadadiya.

Tribal and ethno-religious tensions were identified in 16 locations. This reason for not returning was cited for seven locations in Al-Amerli in Tuz Khurmatu district, Salah al-Din governorate where the families displaced from these locations reside in Tuz Khurmatu urban centre. In Ninewa, there are three locations that cited ethno-religious tensions in Qerawan in Sinjar district, three in Markaz Al-Ba'aj in Al-Ba'aj district and two in Ayadiya in Telfar distict. The same is also true of one location in Markaz Al-Muqadadiya, in Muqadadiya district, Diyala governorate.

There were 12 locations in which families' affiliation with ISIL was identified as a barrier to returns, notably in Qaraj, Makhmur

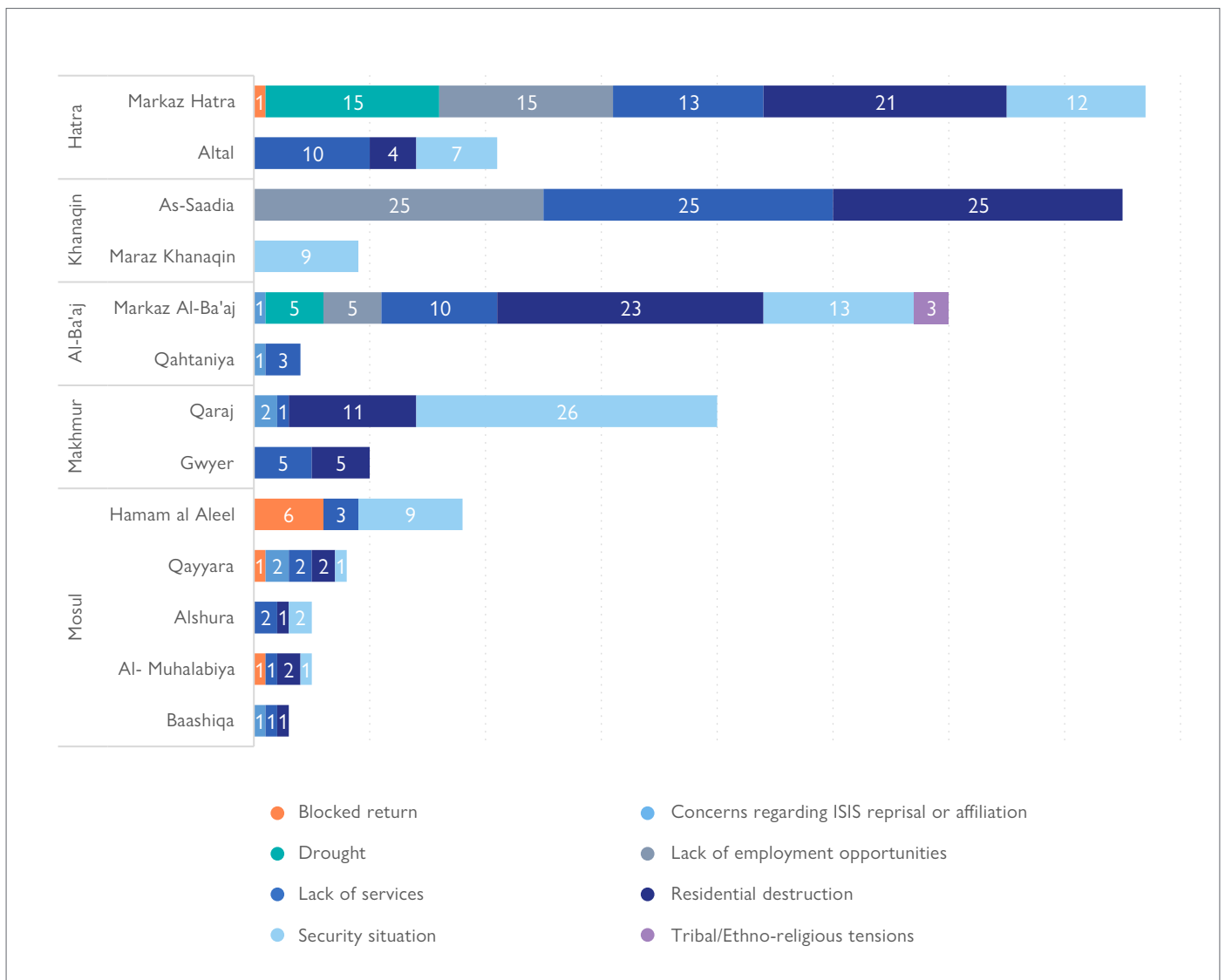
district (2), Qayyara, Mosul district and Markaz Baiji in Baiji district.

In eight locations, the absence of returns was attributed, in part, to the living situation being better for displaced families in the area of displacement (AoD). Of these locations, six are located in Sinjar with families purportedly residing in Sheikhan, Kabarto 1 and 2, and Mamilian IDP camps.

No clearance to return was identified as a barrier to return for four locations. Three are located in Al A'dheem in Al-Khalis, with most families purportedly displaced elsewhere in the subdistrict. One location is in Al-Muhalabiya in Mosul district.

The prevalence of reasons for no return highlights key barriers impacting returns in the five districts with the highest number of locations of no return (Figure 7). For example, returns blocked by security forces are prevalent in Mosul, while drought impacts twenty locations of no return in Hatra and Al-Ba'aj districts. It is important to note that for each location, there are multiple reasons for no return recorded.

Figure 7: Prevalence of reasons for no return in key districts




## CONCLUSION

This analysis has revealed that multiple strategic interventions may be required in certain areas, with returns likely prevented by an intersection of factors such as insecurity, residential destruction and lack of services. The report informs targeted interventions in key areas of concern, where the prevalence and concentration of locations of no return that face similar barriers may enable an efficient and effective programmatic response.


Quarterly data collection on displacement and returns conducted by IOM DTM will continue to identify locations of no return

and refine the assessment tools used in these locations. The utility of the quarterly assessment of locations of no return will be improved in successive rounds of data collection and reporting, which will incorporate information on the actors and interventions in locations of no return, gathered by the Durable Solutions Technical Work Group and the Returns Working Group, to provide a more comprehensive and granular picture of the barriers to return.

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