



25 January 2014 - More than 65,000 people had fled the conflict in the cities of Fallujah and Ramadi in central Iraq's Anbar province over the past week, [according](#) to the UN refugee agency (UNHCR), bringing the total number of people uprooted since fighting began at the end of 2013 to over 140,000.

The displacement figures are the largest the country has witnessed since the sectarian violence of 2006-2008 and are a result of deadly clashes between Iraqi troops and Al-Qaeda-linked fighters.

1.13 million people are already internally displaced in Iraq.

“Most of the recently displaced remain outside Fallujah city, accommodated by relatives or staying in schools, mosques and hospitals where resources are running low. Host families are having difficulties sustaining the burden of caring for the displaced,” UNHCR spokesman Adrian Edwards told reporters in Geneva.

He added that UNHCR and its humanitarian aid partners had managed to distribute tarpaulins, blankets, sleeping mats, food, and hygiene supplies. Yesterday, the agency delivered 2,400 core relief kits. The Ministry of Displacement and Migration and the Iraqi parliament have also sent aid.

“Many of the displaced, nonetheless, are still in desperate need of food, medical care, and other aid. As the insecurity has spread, many families who fled several weeks ago have been displaced again,” said Mr. Edwards.

Meanwhile, other areas of Iraq – including Baghdad, Erbil, Kerbala, Salah-al-Din and Ninewa – have witnessed the arrival of thousands of displaced people. People are reportedly without money for food and lack suitable clothing for the rainy conditions. Children are not in school and sanitary conditions, particularly for women, are inadequate.

In the early 1980s, Iraq was regarded by many as the most developed state in the Arab world. The Iran-Iraq war and the Gulf War, as well as subsequent years of sanctions, took a heavy toll on developmental indicators, yet Iraq continued to have strong state institutions - even if they were used to maintain Hussein's power.

The US invasion and subsequent civil conflict [changed this](#), as violence and de-Baathification drove away the human resources needed to run effective institutions.

Iraq is now the only country in the Middle East where living standards have not improved compared to 25 years ago, according to the World Bank. In areas such as secondary school enrolment and child immunization, Iraq now ranks lower than some of the poorest countries in the world.

UNRIC's Library backgrounder on Iraq: http://unric.org/html/english/library/backgrounders/iraq_eng.pdf