

# THEMATIC DURABLE SOLUTIONS MEETING REPORT

## RASHAD RETURN CHALLENGES



October 2023



**Date:** October 31, 2023

**Targeted Community/Area:** Rashad sub-district in Kirkuk district Kirkuk Governorate. 29 villages out of 96 villages witnessed complete displacement.

**Purpose:** Connect community and officials to discuss challenges and future plans, and to connect sub-district local authority with Kirkuk governorate office for better coordination

Name of Attendees:

UN Agencies	
Alan Al-Jaf	RWG/DSTWG
Zaid Agha	RWG/DSTWG
Noor Saeed	RWG/DSTWG
Dania Babir	RWG/DSTWG
Mohammed Faiq	Head office Kirkuk archenoVa
Shivan Salih	IRC
Najat Mohammed	DSO
Government Representatives	
Ali Hamadi	Head of DS in Kirkuk governorate
Mohammed Ibrahim	Mayor of Riyadh sub-district
Mwafaq Noori	Mayor of Rashad sub-district
Nshtiman Fatah	Representative of DS in Kirkuk Governorate
Abdulsalam Ibrahim	Commander of Rashad police station
Dler Mohammed	Communication and Media officer in Kirkuk Governorate office
Munther Ahmad	Director of NGO affairs in Kirkuk Governorate office
Ghanm Sultan	Liaison Assistant for NGO affairs in Kirkuk Governorate office
Abdulkareem Salih	Head of public affairs for the united Arab tribes in Kirkuk
Hassan Noori	MOMD Kirkuk
Community Representatives	
Zain Ibrahim	Mukhtar Representative Riyadh

## OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Ali Hammadi explained the importance of NGOs and their ability to provide timely and targeted assistance, addressing the immediate needs of IDPs. NGOs often bridge gaps in services that may be challenging for governments to fulfil alone, offering essential aid such as shelter, livelihoods, and other necessities. Furthermore, NGOs contribute to the long-term well-being of IDPs by implementing sustainable development projects, facilitating community integration, and advocating for the rights of the displaced. He further explained the importance of such thematic meetings being crucial to connect the governorates with the subdistricts to coordinate and understand the gaps further. Lastly, he mentioned that Rashad sub-district has not been included in any humanitarian assistance thus far.

## BACKGROUND

Rashad is a subdistrict located in the southwest of Kirkuk Governorate. It is one of the areas that fell under the control of ISIL in 2014. The population prior to the displacement was approximately 17,190 individuals and according to the latest update the population currently stands at 31,780. IDPs started returning to Rashad in 2018, however, according to DTM there are still 200 families displaced. The majority of the IDPs fled from Rashad to Kirkuk City and Salah al-Din, and returns have been ongoing since 2018. However, some of the villages are still occupied by Iraqi Forces (ISF) and have not witnessed any returns. 7 villages are outside of the security frontline in front of Hamrin Mountain, meaning the families are therefore unable to return due to the ongoing presence of ISIL. Nevertheless, some IDPs attempted to return to those 7 villages but faced security concerns due to ISIL members approaching them for food and money which ultimately led to re-displacement.



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## METHODOLOGY

The RWG/DSTWG organized a thematic meeting which brought together the local Mukhtar, local authorities responsible for various services, and representatives of the governor’s office. A few international organizations participated in the meeting to advance durable solutions and to better understand return trends with the potential for planning their response. Community representatives and local authorities shared information about Rashad, outlined the challenges faced by IDPs and the current government response.



## CURRENT SITUATION IN RASHAD VILLAGES

There are 96 villages in Rashad in total, while 7 of these villages are areas of no return due to being outside of the security frontline and are still occupied by ISIL. These 7 villages are: Jafar village, Mabadd village, Abu Rukba village, Awashra village, Salihia village, Sa'idi Kookz village, and Maksar Al Jamal village.

The population prior to the displacement was approximately 17,190 individuals, and according to the latest update the population currently stands at 31,780 individuals. Despite the return process beginning in 2018 for the IDPs, there are currently 14,000 households still in displacement and only 4,000 households are currently residing in Rashad. The villages witnessing returns are as follows: Rabitha Sami Alasi, Al Tal'ia, Sabakh Al Jadida, Mizan, Sufle, Yarhgon Kabir, Yarhgon Saghir, Al Himalia, Al Malha, Al Satih, Al Fashka, Thaba'a Kraghol, Thaba'a Sufli, Tal Al Kamar, Al Fakhira, Al Thahria, Abu Shahma, Dagmat Kabira, Dagmat Saghira, Dagmat Mahmoudia, Tal Khadija, Sa'aidi Fandi, Tar Al Ahmar, Ali Al Daham, Ahmad Al Utia, Al Sa'idia, Al Marbat, Hassan Shahatha, Ghazan Sada Alia, Rahadia Murbat, Karha Rashadia, Khashoka, Al Rafi'a, Tal Al Rafi', Al Kuba, Al Jadida, Al Haml, Al Salmani, Al Awadia, Al Mahdia, Rabitha SImani, Al Hamrania, Al Mansia.

In the central area of the Rashad subdistrict, 65 out of 300 families have returned, leaving a significant number of non-returnees for the larger sub district estimated at 2,500 households as reported by local authorities. In practice, many households commute between their area of displacement and area of origin to conduct farming activities as they are unable to live in their homes in their area of origin as their homes are mud houses and have suffered wear and tear or complete damage. The scarcity of livelihood opportunities, particularly in agriculture where many residents are employed, exacerbates the reluctance to return. The occupation of Hassan Danub village as a military base further complicates the situation. Authorities face various challenges which make it unfeasible to provide services in certain areas, which is exemplified by a drastic reduction in households returning to Rashad.

A distinctive form of displacement is evident, with people relocating within the village seeking proximity to water sources due to the limited water availability. Farmers also encounter difficulties with the electricity availability, as the Iraqi Military forces have requested from the Directorate of Electricity to only provide electricity at night for the use of the thermal cameras in order to ensure safety. Although returning families have received IQD 1.5 million from the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) as return grants, compensation grants are still pending. 250 homes have faced destruction in the areas of return and 250 in the areas of no return.

## RETURN PROCESS

The return process for those who intend to return follows a standard process, starting with obtaining a letter from the Mukhtar, then the Police Station, and finally the Intelligence. In Kirkuk, the procedure aligns with the national standard except for cases involving perceived ISIL-affiliated families, which undergo a distinct security clearance process. The government collaborates with Mukhtars and Sheikhs to secure approval for the security clearance of these families, enabling safe return. Notably, some security actors have requested families to provide thermal cameras to be able to provide more security to more areas and detect ISIL movements, with households in certain villages having purchased these cameras at a cost of IQD 27 million. It is to be noted that purchasing thermal cameras or other goods for the security actors is not a condition of return or common practice, rather the families purchase them as donations to security actors.

## IDENTIFIED KEY CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

**Water:** The severe water shortage is a critical challenge. Access to water is important to households who mostly rely on farming and agriculture (food security and livelihoods) and also needed as a basic necessity for drinking and cleaning. The villages rely on all the options, namely water, stations, river and boreholes.

**Housing:** The majority of houses in Rashad are mud houses which bore the brunt of destruction during the military operations. A total of 250 houses are damaged in the areas of Rashad. 2,500 households have applied for compensation grants and 750 households have received their compensation grants.

**Health:** Health services, currently confined to the center of the sub-district, present a significant challenge for outlying areas. The concentration of services raises accessibility issues, necessitating strategies to decentralize healthcare provision to better serve the entire displaced population. A health center is available in the center of Rashad, with its proximity from the villages varying between 2 km to 10 km.

**Schools:** Occupation of schools by military forces compounds the education crisis, resulting in a lack of accessible schools for displaced children. There are 42 schools in Rashad and only 31 schools are open as a result of government constraints in opening schools due to military occupation. Coordination with the Education Ministry to establish criteria for teacher support based on student numbers becomes crucial, as it requires a minimum of 20 students.

**Electricity:** The limited availability of electricity, restricted to nighttime, poses challenges for daily activities and exacerbates security concerns during curfew hours. Addressing the electricity deficit requires a comprehensive approach, considering the varied needs and routines of the displaced population. Currently there are 15-18 hours of electricity available and the cost ranges from IQD 10,000-15,000.

**Roads:** While the road infrastructure is generally in good condition, consisting mostly of newly paved routes, making use of this asset could contribute to the overall well-being of the displaced community. Strategic planning by the government to maximize the utility of roads for transportation and logistics can enhance the efficiency of aid delivery and accessibility. There is a main one-sided road which will become two-sided road, and this will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of agricultural movements.

**Agriculture:** Highlighting the historical significance of Rashad supporting the Kirkuk governorate with livestock emphasizes the potential for revitalizing agriculture as a sustainable solution. Implementing support programs for agriculture and livestock could not only address immediate challenges, but also lay the foundation for long-term resilience within the displaced population. The main source of farming is seasonal farming, and the two main challenges farmers face is limited fertilizers and the lack of boreholes for water.

**Security:** The security situation in Rashad district remains precarious, marked by a combination of internal conflicts and external threats. Localized disputes over resources and tribal conflicts contribute to a volatile environment. Additionally, the presence of ISIL groups is continuous in 7 villages outside of the security frontlines. Collaborative initiatives involving local communities, government authorities, and international stakeholders are imperative to establish a sustainable and secure environment in Rashad. Nevertheless, most of the villages are safe and liberated.



## RECOMMENDATIONS/NEXT STEPS

These action points collectively represent a comprehensive approach to addressing housing, financial support, and skill development in Rashad following displacement.

### 1. Livestock and Agriculture Program:

- Advocate for the implementation of a comprehensive support program focusing on livestock and agriculture.

### 2. NGO Involvement in Water Boreholes:

- Call for NGOs' involvement in digging water boreholes as a proactive measure for disaster risk reduction.
- Mitigate potential future displacement by addressing water scarcity.

### 3. Collaboration with Ministry of Planning:

- Emphasize collaboration with the Ministry of Planning (MoP) in Iraq by exploring the feasibility of constructing a compound with low-cost houses and flexible payment plans.
- The proposed plan will include a 0% interest rate to make housing accessible for the displaced population.

### 4. Engagement with Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs:

- Engage with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA).
- Share policies related to small loans (IQD 20 to 50 million) to support farmers in Rashad subdistrict.
- Propose a 15-year repayment period for these loans.
- Suggest a 5-day training program to empower individuals in the community with the necessary skills and knowledge.





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