

Iraq: UN refugee agency steps up humanitarian support for families returning to Mosul

11 August 2017 – The United Nations refugee agency has been stepping up its assistance for people, including thousands of returnees, in the Iraqi city of Mosul, which had until recently been the scene of a fierce battle for control between terrorist fighters and the Government forces.

‘Our field assessments show that the returning population of Mosul needs assistance of every kind, but the shelter needs are the most pressing, particularly in the western part of the city,’ said Andrej Mahecic, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), at the press regular briefing in Geneva.

‘Many neighbourhoods in the west have been extensively damaged or totally destroyed during months of fighting,’ he added.

Mosul was liberated from control by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) terrorist organization in July.

UN partners say that of the 54 residential districts in west Mosul, 15 suffered destruction or heavy damage, another 23 areas are moderately damaged, while further 16 neighbourhoods sustained light damage.

Mr. Mahecic said that mines, unexploded ordnance and related devices pose massive risks for the city’s residents, especially children, welcoming the ongoing mine clearing efforts by the authorities and the UN Mine Action Service.

Returning families also face challenges in accessing basic services and utilities – accessing water, electricity or fuel in parts of Mosul can be difficult and very expensive, he added.

So far, according to government figures, some 79,000 people returned to battered west Mosul – one out of every ten people who were forced to flee from this part of the city. Also, the government says, more than 165,000 people have now returned to the considerably less damaged east Mosul, where day-to-day life is gradually resuming.

However, managers in the camps for internally displaced persons in east Mosul estimate that at least 200 families have moved back to the camps after finding living conditions difficult in Mosul.

Reasons cited for their return include lack of shelter; high rental prices; a lack of livelihood opportunities and limited basic services such as electricity and water.

Since the end of the military campaign to retake the city, UNHCR has

distributed shelter kits to more than 3,200 families in east and west Mosul while also providing cash assistance to some of the most vulnerable displaced Iraqi families.

Large numbers of IDPs and returnees are also missing key civil documents. UNHCR and partners are providing legal assistance and supporting local authorities to reissue civil and identity documents to displaced families in the camps, including birth and marriage certificates.

Given the scale of the destruction in Mosul, particularly in the western sector, humanitarian needs will remain high, the spokesperson said.