

COVID-19 MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS AND PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

22 SEPTEMBER TO 5 OCTOBER 2020

Since April 2020, DTM Iraq has collected data and information relating to COVID-19 related movement restrictions and health measures being implemented across the country to curb the spread of the virus.

During this reporting period covering 22 September to 5 October 2020, DTM collected information relating to mobility restrictions both within Iraq as well as at Points of Entry (PoEs). These restrictions include limitations on mobility across governorates as well as on commercial and trade activity, curfews, government and residency office operating hours, and legal regulations. An overview of the statuses of PoEs can be found in Annex 1: 7 were reported as closed, 12 were partially open, and 11 were open for commercial traffic only.

Additionally, on 29 September, DTM collected information on health measures as well as additional details about movement restrictions at selected operating PoEs. These include Ibrahim Al-Khalil (Iraq-Turkey), Fishkhabour (Iraq-Syria), and Bashmagh (Iraq-Iran). Changes in health measures and movement restrictions from the previous round of data collection are detailed where appropriate.

An overview of the methodologies employed in the collection of information is available at the end of this report.

Note that this report combines information that, prior to the reporting period of 8-21 September, had been presented in two different types of COVID-19 products published by DTM. These include 1) Mobility Restrictions reports, and 2) Health Measures at Border Crossing Points reports, which are both available [here](#). Additionally, DTM has produced a range of products related to an ongoing COVID-19 Impact Assessment which are available [here](#).

Disclaimer: Information contained within this product is based upon the knowledge of authorities working at Points of Entry (PoEs), or direct observation or data collection by DTM staff. This information has not been verified or endorsed officially.

MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS DUE TO COVID-19

Between 22 September and 5 October 2020, the Government of Iraq (Gol) extended the nationwide lockdown measures to curb the spread of COVID-19. These measures include restrictions on commercial activity as well as civilian movements across the country. The approach of local authorities to the enforcement of these restrictions continue to vary across governorates.

Across Federal Iraq, in response to local epidemiological situations, authorities continue to impose different measures across governorates, to prevent further spread of the virus. On 24 September, the Gol lifted all curfews that were in place across the country; they had previously been active between 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. on a daily basis. Additionally, citizens remain permitted to travel between governorates, following the lifting of public health restrictions in August that had prohibited this type of movement.

Essential services are also permitted to move between governorates, so long as they adopt strict public health measures. Such measures are also required to be applied in shops and malls. Restaurants and cafes are permitted to offer take-away and delivery orders to customers, but are not allowed to welcome customers to dine in.

However, since 12 September, the federal Health and Safety Committee (the Committee) has permitted some restaurants and five-star hotels to re-open while observing strict public health measures in line with Health Ministry regulations. The Committee also approved the gradual re-opening of PoEs for commercial transit between Sundays and Thursdays, to assist in meeting the demands of local markets across Iraq. Those working in the market supply chains will be required to practice social distancing and regularly use hand sanitizer.

Furthermore, since 12 September, the Committee has agreed that concerned ministers or department directors are able to request 50 per cent of their staff to return to working in the office. In addition, the Committee has announced a number of measures in relation to elections, enabling the electoral commission to establish biometric registration cards, and exempting their staff and the transportation of election materials from existing curfews across the country.

In August, the KRG lifted the restrictions preventing movements between KRI governorates, as well as between KRI and Federal Iraq. This means that people can travel freely across governorate PoEs without applying for permission from the KRG. Unlike in Federal Iraq, no curfews are currently in place in KRG.

In terms of aviation, international airports in Baghdad, Basra and Erbil remain open for commercial flights following their re-opening by the Iraq Civil Aviation Authority (ICAA) in late July. These three airports are all open for domestic and international flights; however, they are running at lower capacity than prior to the pandemic. Flights for emergencies, medical evacuations, carrying cargo, and chartering also remained operational between 22 September and

5 October.

Additionally, the ICAA has established public health measures that all staff and passengers are required to follow at airports, to limit the spread of the virus. These measures include a requirement for all people to wear face masks and use hand sanitizer whilst moving through terminals, as well as practice social distancing (1-metre) from others. Additionally, travel authorities have advised those planning to depart from Iraq on international flights to present a negative COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) swab test conducted within 96 hours prior to flying.

Up until late September, all travelers were required to quarantine at home or in a hotel upon arrival to Iraq's international airports. However, these rules have changed, with all travelers now requested to carry with them a negative PCR test result taken within 48 hours prior to arriving at any of the country's operational international airports in Erbil, Baghdad or Basra. Travelers that do not present a negative test result upon arrival to Erbil must take a PCR test at the airport, and then quarantine at home for 48 hours; only those that receive positive test results will receive guidance regarding further isolation from the Ministry of Health. However, testing is not taking place at the airports in Baghdad and Basra; travelers that arrive to these airports without a negative PCR test result will not be permitted to enter. United Nations internal policy requires all staff to quarantine at home for 14 days upon arrival at any international airports, irrespective of PCR test results.

As to legal regulations, at the federal level, fees are not applied to visas that have expired after 21 February 2020. Migrants in Iraq whose visas have expired do not need permission from Iraqi authorities in order to leave the country. However, in some cases, communication must take place between the Ministry of Interior's Residency Department and the relevant embassy prior to migrants traveling. Additional permits are required for workers in essential services, such as health-care workers and suppliers of essential goods, showing that they have the right to move freely for work-related purposes.

In KRI, residency offices are now operating back at regular working hours, and individuals with temporary visas, residency cards and work permits that have expired during lockdown are not incurring any penalties. Given the high number of requests from migrants for document renewals, fee waivers have been granted for those who were not able to renew their documents within the first few days after residencies re-opened.

Rules surrounding the transport of goods across borders continue to differ across the country, with some authorities allowing any items to be imported or exported, while others only permit certain goods such as food or oil to be moved across. Consistent with previous months during COVID-19, some points of entry operate on certain business days only.

OVERVIEW OF STATUSES OF POINTS OF ENTRY (PoEs)

Information presented in this section was collected on 29 September 2020 at three PoEs: Ibrahim Al-Khalil (Iraq-Turkey), Fishkhabour (Iraq-Syria), and Bashmagh (Iraq-Iran). Refer to Map 1 for locations of monitored PoEs.

Operational status and movement restrictions

Ibrahim Al-Khalil was open for 24 hours for incoming and outgoing travelers in the week that data collection took place for this period – consistent with the previous three rounds. Also consistent with the previous rounds, for incoming movements, foreigners need permission from the Ministry of Interior prior to entering, and all Turkish travelers require official permission from the companies they work with in Iraq. In addition, all travelers residing in the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI) are still required to take a COVID-19 test at the PoE. As with previous rounds, Iraqis need to obtain permission from the Turkish Government or obtain a Turkish residence permit in order to exit; however, those visiting Turkey for educational, medical or business purposes are exempt from this rule and do not require permission before travelling. In the previous round, Iranian nationals were permitted to enter Iraq via this PoE, however in the week of this round they were prohibited from entering.

Fishkhabour was open between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. for incoming and outgoing travelers – but unlike the week of the previous round when it was open for one day only, it was open for three days in the week of data collection in this round (Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday). Consistent with the previous round, only Syrians are permitted to enter, however they must be travelling for urgent reasons such as to receive medical treatment, for special occasions such as weddings or funerals, or they must be en route to another country (i.e. in transit). In the last round, travelers were not permitted to leave, however in the week of this round Syrians were permitted to leave.

Bashmagh was open for 24 hours for outgoing travelers (consistent with the last two rounds) in the week that data collection took place. However, for the first time, in the week of data collection travelers were able to enter 24 hours a day, aligning with the new opening hours of the COVID-19 testing laboratory that is on-site; the laboratory had previously only been open between 8:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m. As with the previous rounds, Iranians entering Iraq and Iraqis entering Iran must obtain permission from the Iraqi Ministry of Interior prior to travelling; other nationalities are also permitted to enter Iran. In addition, the requirement remains for all incoming travelers to take a COVID-19 test at the PoE.

Public Health Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

As with the first three rounds, all three monitored PoEs have official public health SOPs on site, outlining measures that should be taken during the pandemic. Procedures covered in the documents at the three PoEs are consistent with the first three rounds, covering preventative measures for staff, health screening, and registration of travelers, as well as processes for

the notification of suspected cases and medical referrals for unwell travelers.

As with the last round, the SOPs at Ibrahim Al-Khalil's incoming gate detail health measures for when managing migration flows – and the SOPs at this PoE's outgoing gate still do not include this information. Otherwise, Fishkhabour's SOPs no longer include this type of guidance (it was included in the last round), while Bashmagh's SOPs have never featured it. Ibrahim Al-Khalil's incoming gate remains the only PoE that is actively implementing a mechanism to reduce overcrowding – including the use of additional caravans that have recently been brought to the crossing. Also consistent with the last round, training on the facilitation of procedures is conducted for staff at Ibrahim Al-Khalil and Bashmagh, but not for those working at Fishkhabour.

Health staffing

After increases in the number of health staff between the first and second round at Bashmagh and Ibrahim Al-Khalil, in this round these PoEs had the same number of staff as the previous round: Bashmagh has 11, while Ibrahim Al-Khalil has 36 – including 30 at the incoming gate and six at the outgoing gate. After no medical staff were recorded as present at Fishkhabour since the first round (when four were recorded), three medical staff were present there in this round.

Infection prevention and control

Infection prevention and control measures are unchanged from the previous two rounds: Ibrahim Al-Khalil and Fishkhabour crossings were recorded as having a functional handwashing station containing chlorinated water or soap, while Bashmagh crossing still does not have one. Also consistent with the last round, supplies of surgical masks were observed at each of the crossings; they are made available to travelers suspected as having contracted COVID-19 as well as their travel companions. Otherwise, as with the previous rounds, most or all workers at the three crossings were recorded as using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to minimize transmission of the virus, including disposable gloves and surgical masks.

Health screening

Health screening measures findings from this round are consistent with the last round. Thermometers are still present at Fishkhabour, Bashmagh and Ibrahim Al-Khalil (outgoing), but not at Ibrahim Al-Khalil (incoming). Incoming travelers are required to take a COVID-19 test upon arrival at each of the three PoEs. However, travelers in transit are not required to take a test at the PoEs; all of these travelers are escorted by security forces to the international airports, where they are required to take a test prior to flying out of the country.

Additionally, after entering Iraq via Ibrahim Al-Khalil, travelers planning to stay in KRI are required to quarantine at home for 14 days – consistent with the previous two rounds. In addition,

Syrian travelers entering KRI via Fishkhabour are required to quarantine in a hotel for 48 hours – except those with dual nationality who are in transit, for whom there is no quarantine requirement. As with the last round, all travelers entering via Bashmagh must quarantine at home for 48 hours. There is still no rule in place requiring truck drivers to quarantine after carrying goods across any of the three PoEs.

Furthermore, as with the last round, none of the crossings have an isolation space for further evaluation of suspected cases amongst travelers. Moreover, in the last round, travelers crossing at Bashmagh and Ibrahim Al-Khalil (incoming) were required to submit a health declaration form upon arrival; however, this requirement only now applies to those entering via Ibrahim Al-Khalil. This requirement is not in place at Fishkhabour.

Risk communication

No changes to risk communication were observed in this round compared with previous rounds. The presence of COVID-19 information products containing advice on symptoms and prevention strategies are still present Ibrahim Al-Khalil and Fishkhabour crossings, while there is still none of these information products present at Bashmagh. Consistent with previous rounds, enumerators at all three PoEs recorded that staff do not provide this information directly to travelers.

Registration

Processes for the registration of travelers are consistent with the previous two rounds at the three PoEs. While the names and contact details of all incoming and outgoing travelers are recorded at Fishkhabour, Bashmagh, and Ibrahim Al-Khalil's incoming gate, only these details of Iraqi citizens are recorded at Ibrahim Al-Khalil's outgoing gate. All three PoEs used an electronic traveler registration system, while all locations except Ibrahim Al-Khalil's outgoing gate use an additional paper-based logbook.

Notification and referral system

No changes were recorded in this round to the notification/referral systems that are in place at the three PoEs. An ambulance was observed at each of the three monitored PoEs, and staff at Fishkhabour and Bashmagh notify the nearest health facilities when travelers are suspected to have contracted COVID-19, while in this scenario at Ibrahim Al-Khalil's incoming gate staff directly notify the Iraqi Department of Health. As with the previous round, travelers arriving to KRI through Bashmagh are referred to the hospital in Penjwen, and those arriving through Ibrahim Al-Khalil and Fishkhabour are referred to hospitals in Azadi, Kavin, or Lalav. Burn units within some hospitals are now being used to provide treatments for patients that have contracted COVID-19.

ANNEX. STATUSES OF IRAQ POINTS OF ENTRY (PoEs): 22 SEPTEMBER TO 5 OCTOBER 2020

GOVERNORATE	NAME OF THE POINTS OF ENTRY	BORDERING COUNTRY	OPERATIONAL STATUS	TYPE OF MOVEMENT ALLOWED
Anbar	Trebil	Jordan	Partial closure	Incoming
Anbar	Al-Qa'em	Syria	Partial closure	Incoming
Baghdad	Baghdad International Airport	Airport	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Basra	Abu Floos	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Basra	Khor Al Zubair	Seaport	Commercial transit only	Incoming and outgoing
Basra	Umm Qasr	Seaport	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Basra	Al-Basra	Seaport	Commercial transit only	Outgoing
Basra	Al-Shalamcha	Iran	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Basra	Basra International Airport	Airport	Partially open	Incoming and outgoing
Diyala	Baladruz/Mandeli	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Diyala	Muntheriyah	Iran	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Dahuk	Ibrahim Khalil	Turkey	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Dahuk	Fishkhabour ¹	Syria	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Erbil	Hajj Omran	Iran	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Erbil	Erbil International Airport	Airport	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Missan	Al-Sheeb	Iran	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Sulaymaniyah	Kele	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Sulaymaniyah	Broizkhan	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming and outgoing
Sulaymaniyah	Twila	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Sulaymaniyah	Siran Bin	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Sulaymaniyah	Bashmagh	Iran	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Sulaymaniyah	Pshta	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Wassit	Zurbatiyah	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming

Information that has been updated since the last reporting period is highlighted in yellow

¹ The operational status of Fishkhabour has changed on several occasions between July and September. It being opened for incoming and outgoing movements between 4 June and 30 July enabled the movements of a significant number of Syrian nationals across the border (around 5,232 KRI to Syria, and 225 from Syria to KRI).

METHODOLOGY

MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS WITHIN IRAQ DUE TO COVID-19

Since March 2020, DTM Iraq has been supporting the DTM Global Team in this data collection exercise aimed at better understanding how COVID-19 affects global mobility. This assessment has involved 171 IOM Country Missions worldwide with the objective to provide information on the capacity of current PoEs to mitigate and/or respond adequately and in a targeted manner to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

This data collection exercise has been led by DTM HQ and coordinated with other IOM departments, and relevant data has been collected and updated at the country level on an ongoing basis using a web application.

In Iraq, data has been collected through the IOM DTM field team, composed of over 100 staff members deployed across Iraq (20% of enumerators are women) and supplemented with IOM Migration Management Unit (MMU) information. Where PoEs operate, IOM's field staff collect data in person through interviews with Key Informants (KIs). In instances where PoEs are closed to population movement, the teams collect the data by phone using a large, well-established network that includes local authorities, security forces and customs employees. The KIs' responses aim to represent the situation at the monitoring points, and are not based on their opinions, unless phrased otherwise. Whenever possible, triangulation of findings was conducted with more than one KI per monitoring point.

To systematically capture the status of each location, the following operational statuses for PoEs are defined as follows:

- Partial closure (indicating that only a reduced number of individuals can use the border crossing point to exit and enter the country, territory or area, due to limited hours of operation or partial closure for specific nationalities)
- Closed (for both entry and exit)
- Open for entry and exit
- Open for commercial traffic only
- Other
- Unknown

For further information on the methodology, definitions and explanation please refer to the to the [Methodology Framework](#).

MOVEMENT RESTRICTIONS AND HEALTH MEASURES AT POEs

DTM Iraq collects data at PoEs with neighboring countries to better understand movement restrictions and public health measures being implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data featured within this report was collected on 15 September 2020 through face-to-face interviews with key informants (government and health employees) as well as direct observation at three PoEs: Ibrahim Al-Khalil, bordering Turkey, Fishkhabour, bordering the Syrian Arab Republic and Bashmagh, bordering the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Disclaimer

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