IOM IRAQ

COVID-19 MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS AND PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

20 OCTOBER TO 2 NOVEMBER 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 20 October to 2 November 2020, DTM collected information on mobility restrictions 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 30 PoEs can be found in Annex 1: seven were reported as fully closed, 11 were partially open, 10 were open for commercial traffic only, and two were fully open.

Additionally, on 27 October, 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, Al-Shalamcha, and Zurbatiyah (all three 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 which, prior to the reporting period of 8–21 September, had been presented in two different types of COVID-19 products published by DTM. These publications are: 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 of DTM staff. This information has not been verified or endorsed officially.

MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS DUE TO COVID-19

Between 20 October and 2 November 2020, the Government of Iraq (GoI) 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 continues 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. In late September, the GoI 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 daily. Additionally, citizens remain permitted to travel between governorates, following the lifting of public health restrictions in August.

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 allowed to offer take-away and delivery orders to customers, but are not allowed to welcome customers to dine in.

However, since mid-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 are required to practice social distancing and regularly use hand sanitizer.

Furthermore, since mid-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.

Additionally, in August, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) lifted the restrictions preventing movements between Kurdistan Region of Iraq (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 20 October and 2 November.

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). 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 travellers were required to quarantine at home or in a hotel upon arrival to Iraq's international airports. However, these rules have changed, with all travellers 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. Travellers 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 who receive positive 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; travellers who arrive to these airports without a negative PCR test result are not allowed to enter.

United Nations (UN) internal protocols relating to staff travel were revised in early November. Critical staff returning to their duty stations are required to provide a negative PCR test taken within 72 hours prior to arriving, and then undergo a 14 day quarantine in their accommodation. New rules have also been introduced for domestic travel. UN staff travelling from Baghdad to KRI on UN flights must present a negative PCR test upon arrival, but they will not be required to quarantine if they have been in Iraq for at least 14 days. However, UN staff travelling from KRI to Baghdad who intend to stay in the UN compound must undergo a four day quarantine period upon arrival. On the day following this quarantine period, staff must take a PCR test, and upon obtaining a negative result they will be permitted to leave the compound. In instances where tests come back positive, staff are required to self-isolate while accessing necessary healthcare, and they must also cooperate on contact tracing with the relevant health units to minimize further transmission of the virus.

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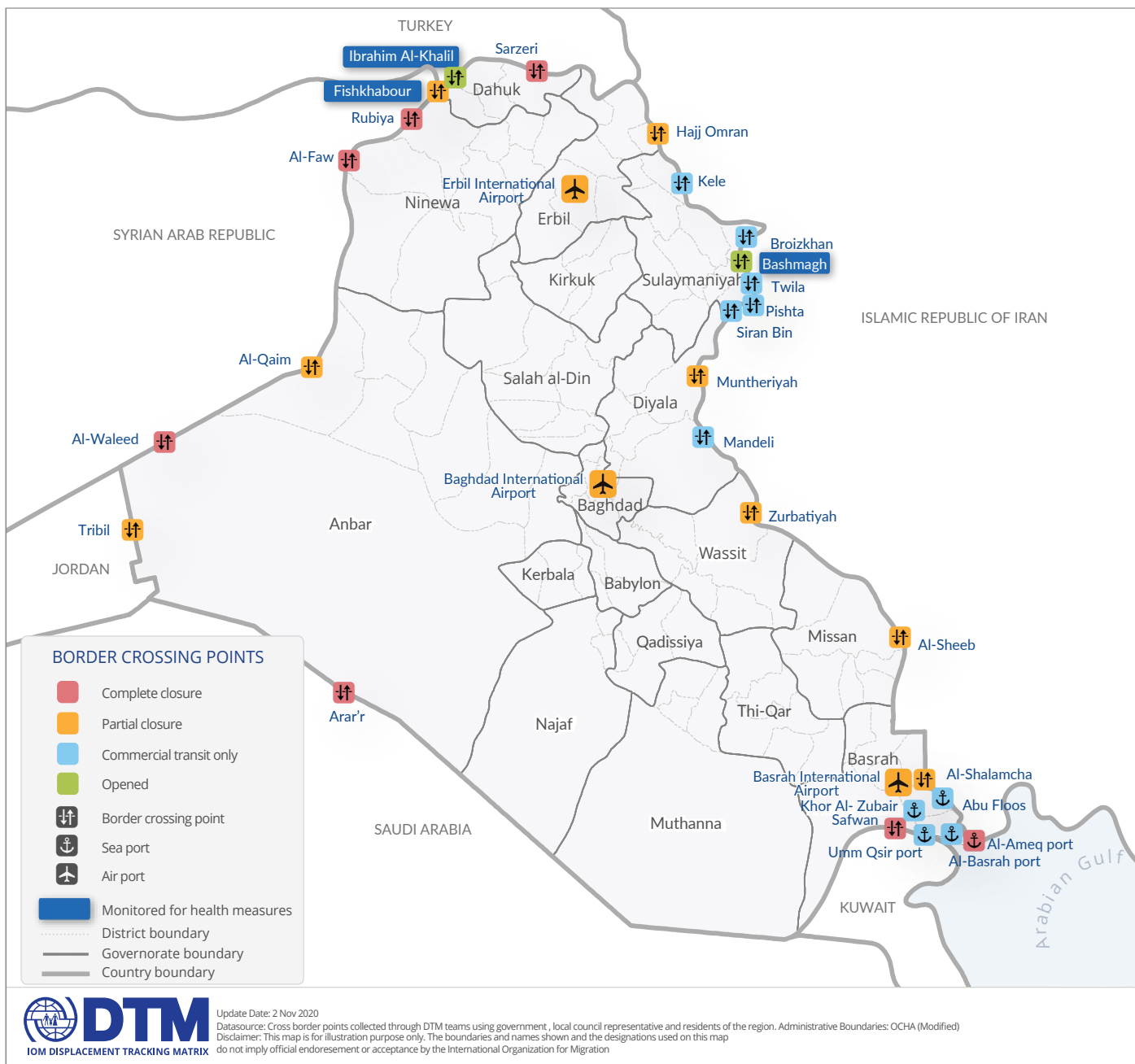
Rules surrounding the transport of goods across borders continue to differ across the country, with some authorities allowing any items to be imported or exported, while others only permit certain goods such as food or oil to be moved across. Consistent with previous months during COVID-19, some points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

OVERVIEW OF STATUSES OF POINTS OF ENTRY (PoEs)

Map 1 displays the statuses of all PoEs that were partially closed to migrants or open for commercial transit only across Iraq between 20 October and 2 November 2020. The only changes to operational status were recorded at Ibrahim Al-Khalil and Bashmagh, which are now the only PoEs that are currently fully open; in the last reporting period these PoEs were only partially open for travellers that had obtained official permission from the GoI's Ministry of Interior.

Map 1. Status of PoEs as at 2 November 2020

Border Crossing Points legend:
- Complete closure
- Partial closure
- Commercial transit only
- Opened
- Border crossing point
- Sea port
- Air port
- Monitored for health measures
- District boundary
- Governorate boundary
- Country boundary

Update Date: 2 Nov 2020
Datasource: Cross border points collected through DTM teams using government , local council representative and residents of the region. Administrative Boundaries: OCHA (Modified)
Disclaimer: This map is for illustration purpose only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endoresement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration

OVERVIEW OF STATUSES OF POINTS OF ENTRY (PoEs)

Information presented in this section was collected on 27 October 2020 at five PoEs:

- Information was collected for the fifth time at: Ibrahim Al-Khalil (Iraq-Turkey), Fishkhabour (Iraq-Syria), and Bashmagh (Iraq-Iran). Changes between this round and the previous rounds are reported on below.

- Information was collected for the second time at: Zurbatiyah (Iraq-Iran) and Al-Shalamcha (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 travellers in the week that data collection took place for this period – consistent with the previous rounds. In this round, all movement restrictions that had previously been in place at this PoE were lifted; these restrictions had required all incoming travellers to obtain permission from the Ministry of Interior prior to crossing. Additionally, Iranian nationals are now permitted to enter after previously being disallowed. Consistent with the last round, all incoming travellers are required to take a COVID-19 test at the PoE.

Fishkhabour was open between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. for incoming and outgoing travellers – and as with the week of the previous two rounds, it was open for three days in the week of this round (Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday). Additionally, 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). Syrian and Iraqi nationals are only permitted to leave if they are travelling to Syria for business purposes. As with the last round, all incoming travellers are required to take a COVID-19 test upon arrival to this PoE.

Bashmagh was open for 24 hours for incoming and outgoing travellers in the week that data collection took place, consistent with the last four rounds. With regards to incoming movements, Iranian nationals can now enter Iraq, and they no longer require permission from the Ministry of Interior prior to travelling. Otherwise, Iraqi nationals are now required to obtain a visa from the Iranian consulate in Baghdad prior to entering Iran via this PoE; the previous rule requiring government permission in order to travel is no longer in place. In addition, the requirement remains in place for all incoming travellers to take a COVID-19 test at this PoE.

Zurbatiyah (Wassit Terminal) was open for 24 hours for incoming and outgoing travellers in the week that data collection took place. This PoE is open for incoming and outgoing travellers of any nationality to cross. Additionally, a new rule was introduced in the week of this round, with outgoing travellers now required to sign a pledge committing to not return to Iraq via this PoE. No COVID-19 testing facilities are in place at this PoE; however, in order to cross, all travellers must carry with them a negative PCR test result taken within 72 hours prior to arriving.

Al-Shalamcha was open for 24 hours for selected incoming and outgoing travellers in the week that data collection took place. As with the previous round, only Iraqi nationals are permitted to enter via this PoE. Additionally, Iraqi nationals must obtain permission from the Iranian Government prior to entering Iran through this PoE. As with Zurbatiyah, no COVID-19 testing facilities are in place at Al-Shalamcha; however, in order to cross, all travellers must carry with them a negative PCR test result taken within 72 hours prior to arriving.

Public Health Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

As with the previous round, all five monitored PoEs have official public health SOPs on site, outlining measures that should be taken during the pandemic. All five PoEs contain guidance on preventative measures for staff, registration of travellers, as well as processes for the notification of suspected cases and medical referrals for unwell travellers. However, only SOPs at Fishkhabour, Bashmagh and Ibrahim Al-Khalil contain information concerning the health screening of travellers, while guidance for managing migration flows is only featured in the SOPs at Ibrahim Al-Khalil and Zurbatiyah. Additionally, while Ibrahim Al-Khalil (incoming gate), Al-Shalamcha and Zurbatiyah have in place a mechanism to reduce overcrowding (i.e. ropes, queues), Basghmagh, Fishkhabour, and Ibrahim Al-Khalil (outgoing gate) do not have one in place. Otherwise, staff at all PoEs except Fishkhabour have been trained on implementing the procedures included in the SOPs.

Health staffing

The number of health staff present at the monitored PoEs are unchanged from the last round, as follows: Ibrahim Al-Khalil (49 at the incoming gate, and six at the outgoing gate), Bashmagh (11), Fishkhabour (three), Al-Shalamcha (four), and Zurbatiyah (four).

Infection prevention and control

In terms of infection prevention and control, as with the previous rounds, Ibrahim Al-Khalil, Fishkhabour, Al-Shalamcha and Zurbatiyah all have on site a functional handwashing station with soap and water or chlorinated water; Bashmagh is the only PoE that does not contain one.

Moreover, as with previous rounds, supplies of surgical masks were observed at all five monitored PoEs; they are made available to travellers suspected as having contracted COVID-19 as well as their travel companions. Otherwise, as with the previous rounds, most or all workers at most PoEs were recorded as using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to minimize transmission of the virus, including disposable gloves and surgical masks. Zurbatiyah was the only PoE where only a small number of staff were recorded as using PPE.

Health screening

In terms of health screening measures, thermometers are only present at Fishkhabour, Ibrahim Al-Khalil (outgoing), and Zurbatiyah. As with the last round, all travellers entering Iraq via Ibrahim Al-Khalil (incoming), Fishkhabour and Bashmagh must take a COVID-19 test upon arrival. However, there are no testing facilities at Zurbatiyah and Al-Shalamcha; travellers entering at these PoEs must carry with them negative PCR test results in order to enter. Travellers in transit are not required to take a test at the PoEs; all of these travellers are escorted by security forces to the international airports, where they are required to take a test prior to flying out of the country.

As with the previous rounds, rules vary across the monitored PoEs. After entering Iraq via Ibrahim Al-Khalil, travellers are required to quarantine at home for 14 days. In addition, travellers entering Iraq via Fishkhabour are still 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. Also, all travellers entering via Bashmagh must quarantine at home for 48 hours, and those entering via Zurbatiyah and Al-Shalamcha must quarantine at home for 14 days.

Furthermore, as with the previous rounds, none of the crossings have an isolation space for further evaluation of suspected cases amongst travellers. Otherwise, in previous rounds, travellers crossing at most PoEs were required to submit a health declaration form upon arrival. However, this requirement is no longer in place at any of the monitored PoEs, with on-site COVID-19 testing or rules requiring travellers to submit negative PCR test results considered sufficient as a health screening measure.

Risk communication

In terms of risk communication, COVID-19 information products containing advice on symptoms, prevention strategies and accessing healthcare are present at most monitored PoEs, with Bashmagh the only exception. However, enumerators at all five PoEs recorded that staff do not provide this information directly to travellers.

Registration

Concerning registration, the names and contact details of all incoming and outgoing travellers are recorded at Fishkhabour, Bashmagh, Al-Shalamcha, Zurbatiyah and Ibrahim Al-Khalil's incoming gate – however only these details are recorded of Iraqi citizens at Ibrahim Al-Khalil's outgoing gate. As with the last round, the PoEs at Ibrahim Al-Khalil (incoming and outgoing gates), Fishkhabour, Bashmagh, and Al-Shalamcha all use an electronic traveler registration system, while Zurbatiyah relies on a paper-based logbook system only.

Notification and referral system

Processes for notifications and referrals at the five monitored PoEs are unchanged from the previous round. An ambulance was observed at each of the three monitored PoEs. Additionally, in cases where travellers are suspected of having contracted COVID-19, staff at all five PoEs notify the nearest health facilities. At all PoEs, following the notifications taking place, unwell travellers are referred to the nearest health facilities for further health screening. Those arriving to Iraq through Ibrahim Al-Khalil and Fishkhabour are referred to hospitals in Azadi, Kavin, or Lalav, while those arriving at Al-Shalamcha are sent to hospitals in Al-Sadr, Al-Jumhouri, or Al-Fayhaa. Furthermore, travellers arriving via Bashmagh and Zurbatiyah are sent to hospitals in Penjwen and Al-Zahraa, respectively. 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): 20 OCTOBER TO 2 NOVEMBER 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-Shalamja	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	Fully open	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	Fully open	Incoming and outgoing
Sulaymaniyah	Pshta	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Wassit	Zurbatiyah	Iran	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing

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

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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 27 October 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.