

# COVID-19 MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS AND PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

1 MARCH TO 31 MAY 2021

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 1 March to 28 February 2021, 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 31 PoEs can be found in Annex 1: 5 were reported as fully closed, 10 were partially open, 12 were open for commercial traffic only, and 4 were fully open.

Note that until February 2021 these reports were published on a monthly basis. However, this report covers the period between March and May 2021; from now on these reports will be published every three months. DTM collected data relating to health measures and mobility restrictions at five PoEs on 10 May 2021. 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 September 2020, 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 WITHIN IRAQ DUE TO COVID-19

Between 1 March and 31 May, the Government of Iraq (GOI) made a range of changes to public health measures to curb the spread of COVID-19. These measures include restrictions on commercial activity as well as civilian movements across the country and at borders. The approach of local authorities to the enforcement of these restrictions continues to vary across governorates.

Several changes took place to mobility restrictions and public health measures throughout March and May 2021. Following a rise in case numbers, from 29 March the Government of Iraq (GoI) introduced new measures including the mandatory use of masks in public spaces including government offices, and the closure of marketplaces and malls across Federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Cafes, restaurants and clubs have been permitted to provide services outdoors, while gatherings such as funerals were prohibited in confined spaces such as alleys and homes. In addition, travel between KRI and Federal Iraq governorates was prohibited between Thursdays and Saturdays. Those found to be violating these rules are subject to fines.

Following this, from 14 April to 14 May, the GoI's High Committee for National Health and Safety announced a range of restrictions during the period of Ramadan, between 12 April and 12 May, to prevent the virus from spreading further. These measures included a total lockdown on Fridays and Saturdays, as well as a partial curfew during the business week from 8:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. Additionally, members of the public wishing to enter major public administration offices were asked to present a negative test result taken within the previous week, or provide proof of having received a COVID-19 vaccine. During this time, the government also re-introduced restrictions in the education sector, with schools required to function online until further notice.

With regards to international travel, the previous ban on entrance to Iraq from countries severely affected by COVID-19 was rescinded on 4 March. Travellers entering Federal Iraq and KRI are required to provide a negative COVID-19 test taken within 72 hours prior to arriving, and must self isolate at home for 7 days. However, travellers who can demonstrate they have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are exempt from any testing and quarantine rules. Additionally, on 8 March 2021, the federal Ministry of Interior re-commenced allowing foreigners to enter the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) via all international border crossings. In order to enter KRI, all travellers including Iraqi citizens have been required to provide a negative COVID-19 test taken within 72 hours prior to arriving.

In terms of aviation, international airports in Baghdad, Basra, Erbil, Najaf and Sulaymaniyah remain open for commercial flights following their re-opening by the Iraq Civil Aviation Authority (ICAA) in the

second half of 2020, although they are running at lower capacity than prior to the pandemic. Furthermore, 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.

Additionally, since April, the United Nations (UN) has been implementing a COVID-19 vaccination campaign for personnel and their family members. This is in addition to the UN providing support to the roll-out of vaccines under the global COVAX programme, which is co-led by the World Health Organization, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), and the vaccine alliance Gavi.

As to legal regulations, between February 2020 and January 2021, the GoI suspended fees for migrants who overstay their visa. However, in February 2021, the GoI lifted this suspension, with all migrants who overstay their visa now required to pay IQD 500,000. 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.

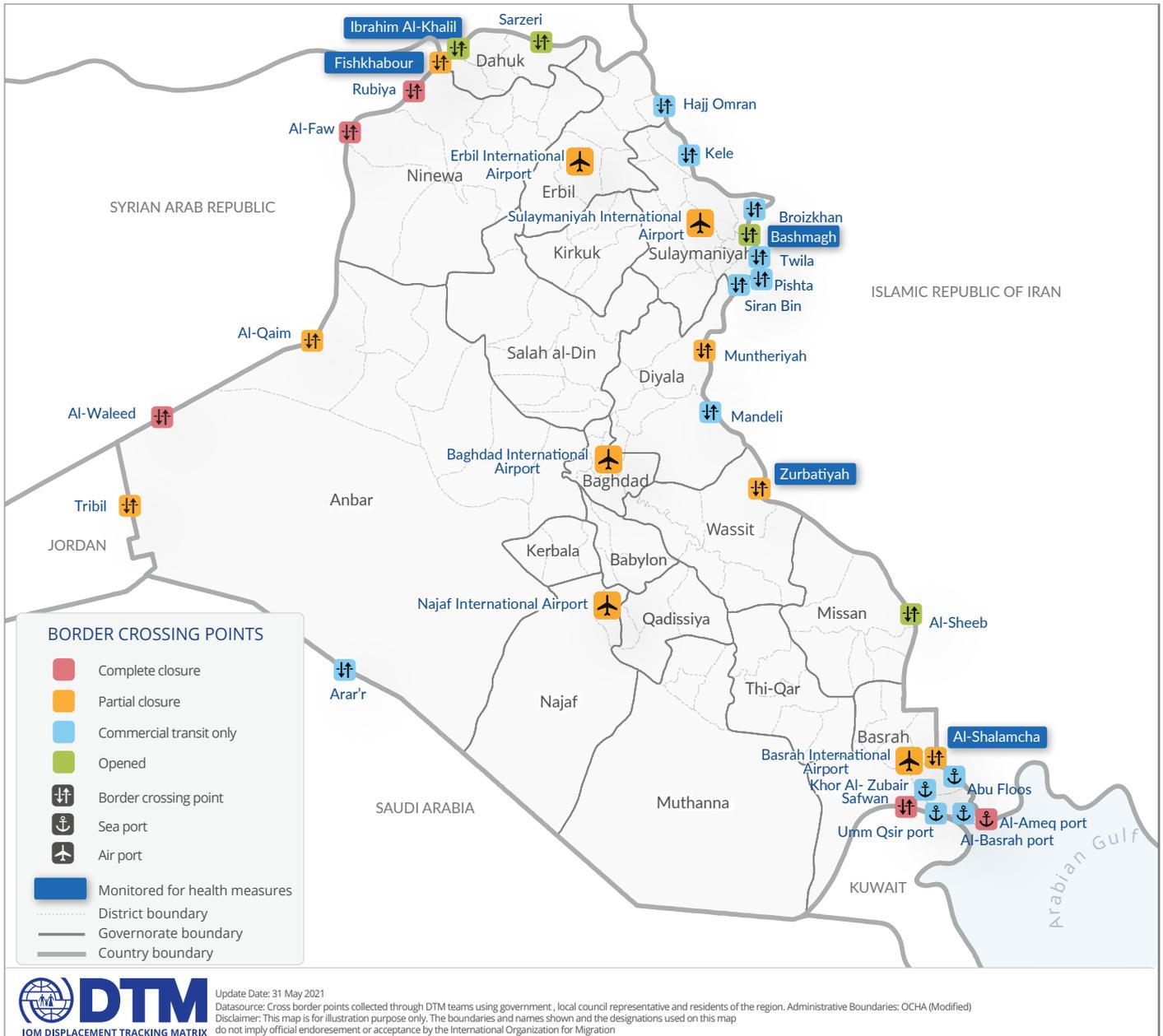
In KRI, residency offices are now operating again at regular working hours, and individuals with temporary visas, residency cards and work permits that have expired during lockdown are not incurring any penalties. Given the high number of requests from migrants for document renewals, fee waivers have 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)

The status of all PoEs across the country is displayed in Map 1. Changes to the status of some PoEs took place between February 2021 and May 2021. These include Hajj Omran, which is now open for commercial traffic only after previously being fully open

for all travellers to cross. Additionally, Al-Sheeb is now fully open after being previously closed in the last round. Finally, Zurbatiyah is now partially open, allowing travellers to cross in both directions; it previously disallowed outgoing travellers.

Map 1. Status of PoEs as at 31 May 2021



## MOVEMENT RESTRICTIONS AND HEALTH MEASURES AT POINTS OF ENTRY (PoEs)

Information presented in this section was collected on 10 May 2021 at five PoEs:

- Information was collected for the eleventh 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 eighth time at: Zurbatiyah (Iraq-Iran) and Al-Shalamcha (Iraq-Iran). Changes between this round and the previous rounds are reported on below.

Note that information presented in this section relates to the period between March and May 2021. Refer to Map 1 for locations of monitored PoEs.

### Operational status and movement restrictions

Between March and May 2021, nationals from the following countries were prohibited from entering Iraq via any PoE: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Finland, France, Denmark, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Spain, South Africa, United States of America, and Zambia. However, Iraqi nationals and travellers from other countries are permitted to return to Iraq so long as they follow the relevant testing and quarantine rules.

**Ibrahim Al-Khalil** was open for 24 hours every day for incoming and outgoing travellers in the month that data collection took place, consistent with the previous rounds. Additionally, Iranian nationals are permitted to enter after previously being disallowed. All incoming travellers are tested at this PoE, while outgoing travellers are not tested. Additionally, in response to the significant COVID-19 caseload in India, citizens from that country and those who have recently been there are not permitted to enter until further notice. However, Iraqi citizens are still able to return from India but must quarantine in a government-assigned quarantine facility until they receive a negative COVID-19 test result. Additionally, in January, a new rule was introduced at this PoE, requiring foreign nationals who have not obtained a pre-arrival visa to pay 100,000 Iraqi dinar for an entry visa. Nationals from Iran and Turkey, as well Iraqis returning home, are exempt from this rule.

**Fishkhabour** was open between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. for incoming and outgoing travellers – and as with the previous two rounds, it was open for three days in the week of this round (Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday). Consistent with the last round, only Iraqi and Syrian nationals, including those with dual citizenship, are permitted to enter Iraq via this PoE. Additionally, only Iraq nationals travelling for business purposes as well as Syrian nationals are permitted to enter Syria via this PoE. Only incoming travellers are required to take a COVID-19 test when crossing via this PoE. In addition, upon arrival to KRI via this PoE, all Syrian travellers are required to undergo a 14 day quarantine period at home; travellers with dual nationality who are in transit (en route to another country) are exempt from this rule.

**Bashmagh** was open from 7:00 a.m. until 12:00 am for incoming travellers and for 24 hours for outgoing travellers seven days per

week. Unlike the last round, Iraqi citizens are now permitted to travel to Iran for health, education or business purposes, while Iranian citizens may enter Iraq as long as they have a pre-arranged travel permit. The requirement remains in place for all incoming travellers over the age of 10 to take a COVID-19 test at this PoE. In addition, the same new rule that was introduced at Ibrahim Al-Khalil also commenced in Bashmagh in January, with travellers required to pay 100,000 dinar for an entry visa. Those who have a pre-organised visa as well as nationals of Iraq, Turkey and Iran are exempt from this rule.

**Zurbatiyah (Wassit Terminal)** was open for all days except for Fridays for incoming and outgoing travellers for reasons related to health or education, consistent with the last four rounds. A ban on Iraqi travellers entering Iraq which was imposed in February was lifted in April. In addition, only Iraqis are allowed to enter Iraq via this PoE. As with the last two round, outgoing travellers are 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. However, travellers who are under 10 years old are not required to carry a PCR test result.

**Al-Shalamcha** was open daily on Sundays to Thursdays from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. for incoming travellers, but was closed for outgoing travellers. In the previous rounds only Iraqi and Iranian citizens were permitted to cross to their origin country via this PoE. However, in this round, Iraqi travellers are permitted to enter Iran for health or education purposes, and Iranians may enter Iraq so long as they have travel permits.

No vehicles are able to cross at this PoE for trade purposes. While there are no testing facilities present, all travellers must also provide a negative test result taken within 72 hours prior to travelling.

### Public Health Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

As with the previous rounds, 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. Consistent with the last two rounds, SOPs at all monitored PoEs except Zurbatiyah (Wassit) include instructions for referring unwell travellers to medical facilities. Otherwise, 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, Fishkhabour and Zurbatiyah. Additionally, Fishkhabour, Ibrahim Al-Khalil (incoming gate), Al-Shalamcha and Zurbatiyah have in place a mechanism to reduce overcrowding (i.e. ropes, queues), while Basghmagh, and Ibrahim Al-Khalil (outgoing gate) do not have one in place.

Otherwise, consistent with the last rounds, staff at all PoEs except Fishkhabour have been trained on implementing the procedures

included in the SOPs. This training took place in February-March 2020 at Ibrahim Al-Khalil, Zurbatiyah and Bashmagh, while at Al-Shalamcha it was delivered in July 2020.

### Health staffing

The number of health staff present at the monitored PoEs are generally consistent with the last three rounds, as follows: Ibrahim Al-Khalil (52 at the incoming gate, and 6 at the outgoing gate), Bashmagh (11), Fishkhabour (4 up from 3 in the previous round), Al-Shalamcha (4), and Zurbatiyah (4).

### 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 remains 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. Consistent with the last round, most or all workers at all PoEs were recorded as using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to minimize transmission of the virus, including disposable gloves and surgical masks.

### Health screening

In terms of health screening measures, thermometers are only present at Al-Shalamcha, Zurbatiyah and Ibrahim Al-Khalil (outgoing), but not at Ibrahim Al-Khalil (incoming), Fishkhabour or Bashmagh. In this round the capacity of PoEs for testing travellers for the virus varied. At Bashmagh, Zurbatiyah, Ibrahim Al-Khalil (outgoing) and Fishkhabour, all incoming travellers are tested. However, at Ibrahim Al-Khalil (outgoing), Al-Shalamcha and Zurbatiyah no tests take place. No outgoing travellers at any of the five monitored PoEs are required to take a test when leaving Iraq.

Rules surrounding the quarantine also vary across the monitored PoEs. At Al-Shalamcha and Zurbatiyah, all travellers must quarantine at home for a period of two weeks upon arrival, with the same rule applying to those crossing at Fishkhabour - with the only exceptions to this rule Syrians with dual citizenship and Iraqis. Otherwise, at Ibrahim Al-Khalil, only travellers who have recently been in India are required to quarantine at home for two weeks, while all other travellers are not subject to this rule.

Furthermore, as with the previous rounds, none of the crossings

have an isolation space for further evaluation of suspected cases amongst travellers. Prior to December 2020, travellers at some 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 quarantine considered sufficient public health measures.

### 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 and Fishkhabour the only exception. However, enumerators recorded at all PoEs that staff do not provide this information directly to travellers; it is available on information products only.

### Registration

Concerning registration, the names and contact details of all travellers are recorded at all five monitored PoEs. Most PoEs use a digital Border Management Information System (BMIS) for registration. However, only immigration officials have access to these them; health officials are unable to access them. The only PoE without a BMIS to assist with traveller registration is present is Fishkhabour.

### Notification and referral system

Processes for notifications and referrals at the five monitored PoEs are mostly unchanged from the previous round. An ambulance was observed at each of the PoEs. Additionally, in cases where travellers are suspected of having contracted COVID-19, staff at most PoEs refer them to the nearest health facility for further screening. Zurbatiyah is the only PoE that does not have a referral system in place. Those arriving to Iraq through Ibrahim Al-Khalil and Fishkhabour are referred to hospitals in Lalaf or Zakho, while those arriving via Fishkhabour are referred to a hospital in Lalaf. Otherwise, travellers arriving through Al-Shalamcha are referred to hospitals in Al-Faiha, Al-Gomhori or Al-Mourani, and those arriving via Bashmagh are referred to the hospital in Penjwen. Burn units within some hospitals in Dahuk, where migrants arriving via Ibrahim Al-Khalil and Fishkhabour are referred to, are now being used to provide treatment for patients that have contracted COVID-19.

## ANNEX. STATUSES OF IRAQ POINTS OF ENTRY (PoEs) AS AT 31 MAY 2021

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
Anbar	Ara'r	Saudi Arabia	Commercial transit only	Incoming and outgoing
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	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Diyala	Baladruz/Mandeli	Iran	Commercial transit only	Incoming
Diyala	Muntheriyah	Iran	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Dahuk	Sarzeri	Turkey	Fully open	Incoming and outgoing
Dahuk	Ibrahim Al-Khalil	Turkey	Fully open	Incoming and outgoing
Dahuk	Fishkhabour	Syria	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Erbil	Hajj Omran	Iran	Fully open	Incoming and outgoing
Erbil	Erbil International Airport	Airport	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Missan	Al-Sheeb	Iran	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Najaf	Najaf International Airport	Airport	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
Sulaymaniyah	Sulaymaniyah International Airport	Airport	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing
Wassit	Zurbatiyah	Iran	Partial closure	Incoming and outgoing

Information that has been updated since the last reporting period (February 2021) is highlighted in yellow

# 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 PoE 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](#).

## MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS AND HEALTH MEASURES AT POINTS OF ENTRY (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 22 February 2021 through face-to-face interviews with key informants (government and health employees) as well as direct observation at five PoEs: Ibrahim Al-Khalil, bordering Turkey; Fishkhabour, bordering the Syrian Arab Republic; and Bashmagh, Zurbatiyah, and Al-Shalamcha, bordering the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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