



UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSITY

Centre for Policy Research



UNIDIR

UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE
FOR DISARMAMENT RESEARCH

MEAC Findings Report 24

The Road Home from Al Hol Camp: Reflections on the Iraqi Experience

Authors: Dr. Jacqueline Parry and Yousif Khalid Khoshnaw, with Dr. Siobhan O'Neil,
Dr. Juan Armando Torres Munguía, and Melisande Genat

DECEMBER 2022

MANAGING EXITS
FROM ARMED CONFLICT

CONTENTS

Background	6
About MEAC	6
About this Series	6
About this Report	6
Introduction	7
Returning from Al Hol camp, Syria to Iraq	7
Understanding the Transition Experience	8
Methodology	10
Transition in Jeddah-1 Camp	13
Understanding ‘Rehabilitation’ in Jeddah-1 Camp	14
Behavioural Changes in Jeddah-1 Camp	17
Factors Influencing Behavioural Changes in Jeddah-1	19
Departing Jeddah-1 Camp	26
Transition in Areas of Return	30
Factors Affecting Reintegration	31
Defining ‘Successful’ Reintegration in the Jeddah-1 Context	41
Conclusions and Recommendations	44
Conclusions	44
Recommendations	47

KEY FINDINGS

- Most communities were satisfied with the existing return protocol for Jeddah-1 returnees** which involves a government security clearance, a period of time in Jeddah-1 camp, and ‘standard’ reintegration assistance. This was based on the profile of current Jeddah-1 residents and returnees which most communities did not perceive as a threat. However, if the profile of returnees from Al Hol changes and becomes more complex, community tolerance may change and communities may expect more intensive interventions.
- Areas that reject the return of any Jeddah-1 returnees require dedicated and immediate attention**, since Jeddah-1 residents who originate from these locations are unlikely to be able to return in the foreseeable future and will face protracted – or even indefinite – confinement in Jeddah-1 if they cannot identify a third location to relocate to. This issue may become even more

entrenched – and potentially more widespread – if the profile of Al Hol returnees becomes more complex with future returns.

- **The behaviour of many residents does change during their stay in Jeddah-1 camp**, even though targeted ‘rehabilitation’ activities designed to transform extremist behaviours or ideas are not provided. When people arrive to Jeddah-1 they are often overwhelmed by fear and anxiety; some display high rates of aggression, and a minority express ‘extremist’ beliefs. However, over time, people change their manner of dress; show greater empathy towards each other; socialize more; and display fewer psychological symptoms of stress.
- **Behavioural changes in Jeddah-1 are attributed mainly to environmental factors** rather than targeted ‘ideological’ rehabilitation. Positive influences on behaviour included the perception that Jeddah-1 is safe; access to services, access to credible information about the process, psychosocial support, and livelihood activities; increased control over the future; anticipation of a return to ‘normal’ life; and respectful treatment by authorities and service providers.
- **Some residents have markedly less control over their future and departure from Jeddah-1 which undermines transition outcomes (or ‘rehabilitation’) and puts them at high risk of protracted or indefinite confinement and poor reintegration outcomes.** This includes people who cannot renew their civil documentation; those who cannot return due to lack of approval or poor community acceptance; those with a close relative who is accused of committing crimes under ISIL; and those with poor access to information. Female headed households are disproportionately affected in all these categories.
- **Female headed households face higher barriers to both ‘rehabilitation’ and reintegration.** For example, female headed households spent longer in Jeddah-1 due to higher barriers to return; were less likely to return to their original neighbourhood;¹ were more frequently required to obtain a sponsor² and struggled more to secure a sponsor;³ were more likely to have a close relative detained, convicted, or sentenced due to accusations of ISIL-related crimes;⁴ and were more likely to face opposition to their return,⁵ threats from the community,⁶ and discrimination in the community.

¹ 92 per cent of male respondents had returned to their original neighbourhood, whereas only 75 per cent of female headed households had managed to do so.

² Of the respondents who had already returned from Jeddah-1 camp, 57 per cent of female heads of household and only 4 per cent of male respondents had to obtain a sponsor.

³ 14 per cent of female heads of household versus only 3 per cent of male respondents reported that they could not depart Jeddah-1 camp as they were unable to secure a sponsor.

⁴ One-third of female heads of household had a close relative detained, convicted, or sentenced due to accusations related to the war with ISIL (compared to 2 per cent of men).

⁵ Of those still in Jeddah-1 camp, almost 20 per cent of female heads of household reported opposition to their return from tribal leaders, relatives, neighbours, and local authorities, versus only 7 per cent of male respondents.

⁶ Female headed households were more likely to delay their return from Jeddah-1 camp because they faced threats from the community: 7 per cent of female heads of household versus only 1 per cent of male respondents in Jeddah-1 camp reported that they had not yet returned because they faced threats from the community. In addition, female headed households were also more likely to be threatened: in the past month, 14 per cent of female heads of household versus only 4 per cent of male respondents reported that they received threats. Asked why they were treated poorly or threatened, most women attributed it to perceptions related to the war and because they came from Al Hol or Jeddah-1 camp.

- **Female heads of household experience lower rates of community acceptance due in part to their perceived proximity to ISIL and weaker family support and social networks.** Female heads of household are often perceived as more closely affiliated to ISIL given that one-third have a close relative detained, convicted, or sentenced due to ISIL-related crimes, and they often receive weaker family support, meaning that many cannot rely on their family to encourage community acceptance, and also have much weaker and narrower social networks than men. A third contributing factor may be that a substantial number of female headed households do not return to their area of origin and may face stronger community rejection in an area of relocation.
- **People with weak social networks find it harder to meet the departure requirements and have greater difficulty reintegrating.** People who remained long-term in Jeddah-1 had significantly weaker social networks than those who had already managed to return. Social networks make a vital difference to both rehabilitation and reintegration: they are the primary way that returnees access accurate information about return conditions, connect with key stakeholders to facilitate the return process, and receive support to reintegrate. Female heads of household are disproportionately affected by weak social networks: they were less likely to be in contact with family members prior to return;⁷ experienced less family support compared to men;⁸ and unlike men, they could not rely on friends for support.⁹
- **Those who cannot find a sponsor are at high risk of protracted – if not indefinite – confinement in Jeddah-1 camp.** Moreover, the pressure to find a sponsor in order to leave puts female heads of household at high risk of forcible marriage and other forms of exploitation. The issue of sponsorship requires dedicated and immediate attention to identify better methods of support to secure a sponsor, or alternatives where this is possible, particularly as the complexity of the profiles of those individuals returning from Al Hol changes.
- **The inability to renew civil documentation significantly undermines both rehabilitation and reintegration.** It undermines virtually all transition outcomes, including access to education, access to livelihoods, socio-economic status, mental health, and social inclusion. It puts children and adults at risk of protracted confinement in Jeddah-1 camp, as well as future recruitment or influence by armed groups. Female headed households have higher rates of missing documentation (95 per cent have children with missing documentation) and are less likely to understand the process for renewal.
- **The socio-economic status of Jeddah-1 returnees was poor.** Almost no Jeddah-1 residents or returned Jeddah-1 residents had any savings and virtually all faced difficulty in meeting their

⁷ 91 per cent of male Jeddah-1 respondents were in touch with family members versus only 75 per cent of female heads of household amongst the sample of current Jeddah-1 residents.

⁸ 57 per cent of male Jeddah-1 respondents versus 47 per cent of female Jeddah-1 respondents stated that they could rely on family members for financial support, and 57 per cent of male Jeddah-1 respondents versus 51 per cent of female Jeddah-1 respondents stated that they could rely on family members to feel accepted.

⁹ 69 per cent of male Jeddah-1 respondents expected to rely on friends for financial support and to feel accepted, versus only 3 per cent of female Jeddah-1 respondents.

daily needs. Very few returnees had a reliable income. Two-thirds of all female heads of household and one-third of male respondents did not have access to their Public Distribution System (PDS) ration card.

- **From a community perspective, ‘successful’ reintegration of Jeddah-1 returnees revolves around community acceptance** (namely, the absence of revenge attacks or other community problems). This also means that the ‘ordinary’ reintegration needs of Jeddah-1 returnees cannot be addressed without first, or at least concurrently, addressing the needs of ISIL victims.
- **The period of ‘rehabilitation’ that takes place in Jeddah-1 is closely connected to the success of reintegration.** First, it gives residents the opportunity to strengthen their prospects for successful reintegration by renewing civil documentation, reconnecting with social networks, reaching out to key local stakeholders (such as mukhtars and tribal leaders), strengthening socio-economic prospects, and improving psychosocial health. Second, the time spent in Jeddah-1 encourages higher rates of community acceptance.

This Findings Report, and the research that supported it, were undertaken as part of UNU-CPR and UNIDIR’s Managing Exits from Armed Conflict (MEAC) project. MEAC is a multi-donor, multi-partner initiative to develop a unified, rigorous approach to examining how and why individuals exit armed conflict and evaluating the efficacy of interventions meant to support their transitions. While the Findings Report benefited from feedback from MEAC’s donors and institutional partners, it does not necessarily represent their official policies or positions.

ISBN: 978-92-808-6586-8 © United Nations University, December 2022.

All content (text, visualizations, graphics), except where otherwise specified or attributed, is published under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike IGO license (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO). Using, reposting, and citing this content is allowed without prior permission.

Citation: Jacqueline Parry and Yousif Khalid Khoshnaw, with Siobhan O’Neil, Juan Armando Torres Munguía, and Melisande Genat, "The Road Home from Al Hol camp: Reflections on the Iraqi experience," *MEAC Findings Report 24* (New York: United Nations University, 2022).

Background

About MEAC

How and why do individuals exit armed groups, and how do they do so sustainably, without falling back into conflict cycles? These questions are at the core of UNU-CPR and UNIDIR's Managing Exits from Armed Conflict (MEAC) initiative. MEAC is a multi-year, multi-partner collaboration that aims to develop a unified, rigorous approach to examining how and why individuals exit armed conflict and evaluating the efficacy of interventions meant to support their transition to civilian life. MEAC seeks to inform evidence-based programme design and implementation in real time to improve efficacy. At the strategic level, the cross-programme, cross-agency lessons that will emerge from the growing MEAC evidence base will support more effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. The MEAC project and accompanying case studies are supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Switzerland's Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA); the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO); the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs; the UN Development Programme (UNDP); and the International Organization for Migration (IOM); and is being run in partnership with the Secretariat of the Regional Strategy for Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience; UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO); UNICEF; and the World Bank.

About this Series

The MEAC findings report series seeks to put evidence about conflict transitions and related programming into the hands of policymakers and practitioners in real time. The reports present short overviews of findings (or emerging findings) across a wide range of thematic areas and include analyses on their political or practical implications for the UN and its partners.

About this Report

This report is based on a survey of 223 residents in Jeddah-1 camp conducted between June 2022 and September 2022; a survey of 60 former Jeddah-1 residents; and key informants in Jeddah-1 and areas of return. The report presents data about the experience of return and reintegration for those coming from Al Hol, including an examination of how communities and returnees understand the concepts of rehabilitation and reintegration and how these concepts compare to international approaches. This data may be useful to UN and NGO partners working with Al Hol returnees, as well as efforts to support reintegration, community reconciliation, and broader peacebuilding efforts in Iraq – and possibly beyond. The report ends with an examination of key policy and programmatic implications of these findings.

Introduction

Returning from Al Hol camp, Syria to Iraq

Since the military defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), governments around the world have struggled with how to respond to their citizens who lived under ISIL rule. At the centre of this dilemma is Al Hol camp. Located in north-east Syria, the Al Hol camp was initially intended to provide temporary accommodation and humanitarian services to civilians displaced by the war. As ISIL lost its final strongholds across Iraq and Syria, however, Al Hol experienced an influx of people coming from towns such as Baghouz and Raqqa that had been under ISIL occupation for many years, raising suspicions that many of these new arrivals followed, or at least were influenced by, ISIL's ideology. The arrival of this new population coincided with a change in the function and nature of the Al Hol camp: security in the camp plummeted, living conditions deteriorated, and residents were no longer able to freely come and go, subject to stringent security regulations. Conditions became so poor that the UN warned that confinement in the camp may amount to cruel or inhuman treatment, given the lack of security and absence of basic services such as healthcare and education.¹⁰ The UN also cautioned that children in Al Hol risk becoming stateless since they are unable to access birth certificates or other civil documentation.¹¹ The UN has urged member states to repatriate their nationals from Al Hol.¹² To date, while progress has been slow, some countries have incrementally started to do so.¹³ As of March 2022, around 64,000 people still remain in Al Hol camp,¹⁴ of whom over 90 per cent are women and children, and many of whom are foreign, hailing from over 50 different countries.¹⁵

Iraqis make up the highest proportion of Al Hol's foreign nationals and originally numbered at 31,000 people (8,500 households). Those who wish to return to Iraq can register with the Iraqi Government for repatriation, subject to passing an initial security clearance that affirms they are not listed as wanted for terrorism offences on any of the key government databases. Since May 2021, the Government has repatriated 3,749 Iraqis (920 households). Upon leaving Al Hol, returnees are taken to Jeddah-1 camp, located in Iraq's Nineveh province, where they spend at least several months making further arrangements to facilitate their departure and return to the community (e.g., completing a provincial security clearance or identifying a sponsor, discussed later in this report). The Government of Iraq designated Jeddah-1 as a 'Rehabilitation Centre,' suggesting that some form of targeted programming aimed at disengaging individuals from ISIL takes place there; however,

¹⁰ United Nations Human Rights Council, "[Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic](#)," United Nations, 13 August 2021, A/HRC/48/70, para. 116.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ According to published figures, Germany has repatriated 91 of its citizens; France 86; the United States 26; Kazakhstan more than 700; Russia and Kosovo more than 200 each; and Australia 8. See: Ben Doherty, "[Australia to launch rescue mission for women and children trapped in Syrian detention camps](#)," *The Guardian*, 1 October 2022.

¹⁴ International Centre for Counter-Terrorism and IOM Iraq, *Roundtables on Prosecution, Reintegration, and Rehabilitation* (2022).

¹⁵ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Syria: Humanitarian Response in Al Hol Camp," Situation Report No. 5 (5 July 2019).

to date, no formal rehabilitation programming has taken place due in part to a lack of resources.¹⁶ That said, a range of services are provided in Jeddah-1 camp, including education, mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS), cash-for-work opportunities, and social activities, but these are provided as part of the humanitarian response and are not designed specifically to promote disengagement from ISIL (even if these activities could potentially advance similar goals).

After Al Hol returnees leave Jeddah-1, they typically return to their place of origin, although a substantial minority move to a third location. While to date there is little data available on the reintegration transitions of Al Hol returnees, the experience of Iraqi families with perceived ISIL affiliation displaced within Iraq offers some insight. Prior studies found that Iraqi families with perceived affiliation to ISIL who were displaced in Iraq can find their return to their communities blocked by security actors.¹⁷ Many can also experience community rejection and stigmatization,¹⁸ and are at high risk of revenge attacks and violence when they return to their place of origin.¹⁹ Reintegration is made even more challenging by the fact that the communities to which they return are often fragile, under-developed, and may feel marginalized by the Iraqi state. Research conducted by the MEAC project in partnership with UNDP across four locations in Iraq brought greater nuance to these broad findings by identifying the type of profiles most likely to face stigmatization and community rejection – namely, those with clear markers of proximity to ISIL.²⁰ This suggests that Al Hol returnees are likely to face similar difficulties reintegrating into the community since spending time in Al Hol is associated with the stigma of ISIL proximity (whether this perception of proximity is accurate or not).

Understanding this journey – from Al Hol to Jeddah-1 camp and to areas of return – is important because it will enable the Government of Iraq, the UN, and local communities to better support Al Hol returnees successfully transition from an identity associated with conflict (as a family with perceived ISIL affiliation) to a ‘civilian’ identity, a process that is essential for Iraq’s future peace and development. The observations and findings presented in this report, while specific to the return of Iraqis, may also highlight some of the potential challenges and sources of resilience that those returning to other countries may encounter along their reintegration trajectories.

Understanding the Transition Experience

There are different ways of understanding the transition that people go through when they return from Al Hol to Jeddah-1 camp and onto their – or other – communities. At the national and international level, the framing that the Government of Iraq and the UN use has been shaped by the

¹⁶ International Centre for Counter-Terrorism and IOM Iraq, *Roundtables on Prosecution, Reintegration, and Rehabilitation* (2022).

¹⁷ Blocked returns are commonly enforced by security actors on the ground, usually because displaced families do not possess the required documentation (usually a security clearance) to leave an area of displacement or re-enter their area of origin. See IOM Iraq, *Protracted displacement in Iraq: Revisiting categories of return barriers* (Baghdad: IOM, 2021).

¹⁸ IOM Iraq, *Tribal Justice Mechanisms and Durable Solutions for Families with a Perceived Affiliation to ISIS* (Baghdad: IOM, 2020).

¹⁹ See Human Rights Watch, “[Iraq: Looting, Destruction by Forces Fighting ISIS](#),” 16 February 2017.

²⁰ Dr. Jacqueline Parry and Yousif Khalid Khoshnaw, with Dr. Siobhan O’Neil and Dr. Juan Armando Torres Munguía, “Supporting the Reintegration of Families with Perceived ISIL Affiliation in Iraq,” forthcoming.

*Global Framework for United Nations Support on Syria / Iraq Third Country National Returnees.*²¹ The Global Framework aims to provide integrated ‘all-of-UN’ technical and financial support to address the humanitarian and protection needs of returnees from Al Hol, while also responding to accountability and security concerns. It envisages a three-pronged approach: prosecution of accused ISIL suspects; rehabilitation of those perceived to have been influenced by ISIL; and support to reintegrate into communities of origin.²² This approach reflects a belief that there is a need for targeted rehabilitation activities that address the ‘ideological component’ of the transition from Al Hol to Iraq, a view taken by most Iraqi authorities.²³ It also establishes a series of ‘steps’ that make up the transition from Al Hol camp – namely, prosecution of those accused of ISIL crimes, ‘rehabilitation’ that takes place mainly in Jeddah-1 camp, and ‘reintegration’ that takes place once people return to their area of origin. The framing provided by the Global Framework does not necessarily align with local understandings of what the Al Hol returnee population needs, which requirements Al Hol returnees should meet, and what type of support they should receive before they are allowed to return home. As discussed later in this report, local understandings often emphasize psychological rather than ideological rehabilitation and focus on reintegration support that meets their physical and psychological needs, such as livelihoods, housing, MHPSS, and social activities. The juxtaposition of local perceptions with the Global Framework requires further interrogation if the Framework is to be effective at facilitating safe and sustainable returns.

The MEAC initiative – and the present study in Iraq – operate from a different point of departure compared to the Global Framework, grounded in the lived experience of an individual transitioning from a life oriented towards armed conflict to a civilian existence. In order to understand how people change throughout the transition process, the MEAC initiative identifies certain core outcomes as compatible with successful and sustained transitions away from conflict. These outcomes reflect scholarly research and insights, as well as core values and goals that the UN tries to promote in its programming (e.g., affiliation with an armed group, identification with the group, and social networks made up of active group affiliates). In the context of Al Hol returnees, these outcomes of interest help us to understand an individual's progress away from conflict association. Its approach is holistic and covers all the same outcomes of interest – albeit not necessarily articulated in the same way – as those that are often discussed for ‘rehabilitation’ and reintegration efforts. While programmatic support may be viewed as a series of sequential interventions, MEAC recognizes that transitions out

²¹ In September 2021, the Government of Iraq together with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) jointly launched [the Global Framework for United Nations Support on Syria / Iraq Third Country National Returnees \(Global Framework\)](#).

²² This is in line with the strategies outlined in Security Council resolutions 2178 (2014) and 2396 (2017). UN Security Council Resolution 2396 (2017) calls upon UN Member States to assess and investigate individuals whom they have reasonable grounds to suspect are terrorists, to develop and implement comprehensive risk assessments for those individuals, and to take appropriate action, including by considering appropriate prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration measures – see operative para. 29. This means that States are obligated to provide rehabilitation and reintegration to persons with a low-level or fleeting association with ISIL and they may also facilitate such programmes through impartial international and local agencies. ISIL has been listed as a terrorist organization by the UN Security Council since its adoption of Resolution 2253 (2015). Given the international legal obligation to bring people defined as terrorists to justice, this means that there are constraints on whom may lawfully participate in rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. This study does not deal with persons charged under counter-terrorism legislation or held in prison or other security facilities. See, UN Security Council, “[Resolution 2178](#)”, United Nations, 24 September 2014, S/RES/2178; UN Security Council, “[Resolution 2396](#).” United Nations, 21 December 2017, S/RES/2396.

²³ International Centre for Counter-Terrorism and IOM Iraq, [Roundtables on Prosecution, Reintegration, and Rehabilitation](#) (2022).

of armed groups – or shedding the perception of affiliation with them – is a process full of fits and starts that is not linear. While from a programmatic view, the international community may see rehabilitation as a prerequisite for reintegration, the type of behavioural changes often discussed as a ‘rehabilitation’ outcome can continue to take place even after someone has returned to their place of origin. Recognizing that the absence of conflict orientation is key to rehabilitation and reintegration success, it may not be sufficient. Leaving or shifting away from an ideological affinity for an armed group only to align oneself with a criminal group would not mark a successful transition. Therefore, in addition to the core outcomes around conflict orientation, MEAC collects metrics of economic well-being; social well-being; psychosocial well-being; civic recognition and engagement; and security/service access, which may both signal and further progress.

This study aims to understand the return trajectories of Iraqis from Al Hol: how much progress Iraqis who are returning have made, and the challenges and sources of resilience that influence their progress. In addition, the report tries to understand this transition progress in light of the UN, the Government of Iraq and local community expectations around rehabilitation and reintegration. The primary policy objective of this report is to identify ways the UN, its partners, and other humanitarian and early recovery actors can better design, implement and/or evaluate programming aimed at supporting complex transitions out of conflict.

Methodology

This study utilized a mixed method approach, including a desk review of academic, policy, and operational materials; qualitative interviews conducted with key stakeholders in Jeddah-1 camp and areas of return; a survey with current and former residents of Jeddah-1; and social media analysis of public sentiment on returnees.

Desk Research

The findings of the study draw on analysis of academic articles, policy literature, and operational documents that relate to rehabilitation and reintegration interventions. In addition, the study incorporates an analysis of relevant media and social media posts about Jeddah-1 and the return process in Arabic and Kurdish. The desk review helped to contextualize, triangulate, and make sense of the quantitative and qualitative data and was particularly helpful in understanding reintegration outcomes as they relate to community perceptions and acceptance.

Key Informant Interviews in Jeddah-1

A total of 29 key informant interviews were conducted with key stakeholders in the Jeddah-1 camp in June 2022. Key stakeholders were identified with the support of IOM (in its camp management role). Interviews utilized a semi-structured format tailored to each stakeholder’s profile that enabled the comparison of key questions while also drawing out the unique knowledge and experience of

each stakeholder. Of the 29 interviews, 10 were conducted with women (all women were interviewed by a female researcher). The categories of key informants included:

Category	Role in Jeddah-1 Camp	#
Government authority	Ministry of Migration and Displacement, ultimately responsible for management of Jeddah-1 and the return (or relocation) process.	1
Camp management	IOM, responsible for the daily functioning of Jeddah-1 camp, under the overall management of the Ministry of Migration and Displacement.	2
Service providers	Responsible for providing (humanitarian) services in Jeddah-1 camp, including water and sanitation, food, MHPSS, and legal assistance.	8
Section leaders	Appointed by the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, and responsible for reporting on the needs or concerns of their assigned block of residents. This includes 4 male and 3 female interviewees.	7
Prominent camp figure ²⁴	Refers to Jeddah-1 residents who voluntarily take on responsibility for liaising or advocating with the Government or camp managers on behalf of other residents in relation to the return process. This is not a formal position and included 5 male and 6 female interviewees.	11

Focus Group Discussions with Jeddah-1 Residents

Ten focus group discussions were conducted with Jeddah-1 residents. Men and boys and women and girls were invited to separate groups based on their age and gender (and with a facilitator from the same gender). Slightly different criteria were used to identify male and female participants: for men, time spent in Jeddah-1 camp was the key factor, whereas for women the key factor was whether they were the head of household (meaning their husband or father was not present in Jeddah-1 camp) in order to understand the specific experiences of female headed households. Participants in each group originated from different provinces. The provinces with the greatest representation were Anbar (27 participants), Salah al Din (8), Nineveh (3), and Baghdad (1), roughly mirroring the camp population.

Gender	Age	Time in J-1	# Participants ²⁵
Male	15 – 17 years	Less than 12 months	5
Male	18 – 29 years	Less than 12 months	4
Male	18 – 29 years	Less than 12 months	5
Male	30+ years	More than 12 months	6
Male	30+ years	Less than 12 months	5

²⁴ A prominent camp figure refers to a Jeddah-1 resident who has a visible role in the camp and voluntarily takes on roles such as liaising or advocating with the government or camp management on behalf of other residents or conducting advocacy on behalf of residents in relation to the return process (such as leading discussions with tribal leaders from areas of return). This is not a formal position and individually were subjectively identified by IOM based on their experience with camp management in Jeddah-1 camp.

²⁵ Due to preventive health measures taken during the COVID-19 pandemic, focus group discussions were capped at six participants.

Gender	Age	Household status	# Participants
Female	15 – 17 years	[not used]	5
Female	30+ years	Female headed	6
Female	18 – 29 years	Female headed	5
Female	30+ years	Male headed	5
Female	18 – 29 years	Male headed	4

Survey with Jeddah-1 Residents

A survey was completed with 223 Jeddah-1 residents in August 2022. This included 95 male and 128 female respondents (including 57 female heads of household). The sample included 40 children (20 boys and 20 girls). Surveys were carried out face-to-face with enumerators of the same gender. Respondents were Arab (90 per cent) and Turkmen (10 per cent).²⁶

Province	Gender	# Participants	Total #
Anbar	Female	40	55
	Male	15	
Salah al-Din	Female	37	69
	Male	32	
Nineveh	Female	45	92
	Male	47	
Other ²⁷	Female	6	7
	Male	1	

Phone Surveys with Jeddah-1 Returnees

In September 2022, phone surveys were completed with 60 former Jeddah-1 residents who had returned to their area of origin or another location. All were of Arab ethnicity. The sample included 35 female respondents, of which 28 were the head of household and three were minors, as well as 25 adult male respondents.

²⁶ There was also one Kurdish respondent.

²⁷ Others included three women from Baghdad, one man from Diyala, one woman from Qadasiyya, and two women born outside Iraq.

Province	Gender	# Participants	Total #
Anbar	Female	16	34
	Male	18	
Salah al-Din	Female	7	10
	Male	3	
Nineveh	Female	7	11
	Male	4	
Other ²⁸	Female	5	5

Interviews with Mukhtars and Tribal Leaders in Areas of Jeddah-1 Return

A total of 19 interviews were carried out with key stakeholders in areas where Jeddah-1 residents have returned or are likely to return. This included 11 mukhtars, three tribal sheikhs, and a small number of other key political and security actors.

Transition in Jeddah-1 Camp

The perception that Iraqis in Al Hol are influenced by ISIL's ideology has created an expectation amongst government and community actors that they complete some form of rehabilitation before returning. What this means exactly is unclear and is the subject of this chapter. It is important to note at the outset that the Iraqi population in Al Hol is extremely diverse and includes not only those who lived in ISIL territory – some of whom may have been coerced to do so or may have stayed under duress – but also those who fled the group's arrival. Moreover, those who lived in ISIL territory had extremely diverse wartime experiences: while some may have supported ISIL or even committed violent crimes, many were victims themselves or stayed under occupation for non-ideological reasons.²⁹ While life under ISIL was horrible for many, life in Al Hol was extremely difficult and often traumatizing. The focus on this population's return is often on their time living under ISIL, but little attention is paid to the impact of living in Al Hol and the specific needs that come from those experiences. It is important to bear in mind that the transition process will differ for each individual, and that any 'rehabilitation' programming must be tailored to each person's experience, including experiences in Al Hol and after. This chapter aims to understand how Jeddah-1 residents and key

²⁸ One from Sulaymaniyah, one from Kirkuk, and three from Erbil.

²⁹ People remained throughout ISIL's occupation for diverse reasons: economic/livelihoods, social networks, family structures, lack of information, threat perceptions, ideology, and – particularly in the early days – a perception that the quality of governance under ISIL would be better than that provided by the Iraqi state. See, Mara Revkin, "[Competitive Governance and Displacement Decisions Under Rebel Rule: Evidence from the Islamic State in Iraq](#)," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 65, No. 1 (September, 2021).

stakeholders understand the concept of rehabilitation and how current practices in Jeddah-1 camp contribute to the transition outcomes outlined earlier.

Understanding ‘Rehabilitation’ in Jeddah-1 Camp

Profile of Jeddah-1 Residents

Who are the people residing in Jeddah-1 camp? This section starts with a snapshot of current residents, recognizing that the camp population is not static: early arrivals are expected to have less controversial profiles compared to those who have spent longer in Al Hol, based on the assumption that people with more complex security profiles will struggle to get the security clearance that permits their return. While it is unclear whether this assumption is accurate, this report starts by analysing the profiles of existing residents and later sketches what a change in these profiles may mean for policymakers.

Almost everyone who participated in the study left Iraq between 2014 and 2017. Roughly one-third departed during ISIL’s early days (or upon its arrival), and half left due to the military campaign.³⁰ Three-quarters of respondents lived in ISIL-occupied territory in both Iraq and Syria,³¹ while a minority (9 per cent) stated that they did not live in ISIL-occupied territory in either Syria or Iraq.³² Roughly ten per cent of children attended school under ISIL occupation (with a higher rate for female headed households).³³ Since they returned via the government-facilitated process, all residents in Jeddah-1 camp have completed an initial security screening carried out by the Government of Iraq in Al Hol, meaning that they are not listed on key government databases for ISIL affiliation or accused of any crimes.³⁴ Almost all respondents (95 per cent) intend to return to their area of origin, and most wanted to return as soon as possible. The most common provinces of origin were Nineveh (53 per cent), Anbar (31 per cent), and Salah al-Din (15 per cent). The decision to return to Iraq was typically motivated by the poor security situation in Al Hol (cited by 86 per cent of Jeddah-1 survey respondents); poor living conditions in Al Hol (65 per cent); and the desire and ability to access civil documentation (29 per cent) and better livelihoods in Iraq (26 per cent).³⁵

³⁰ There is a small amount of overlap between these groups, with people in some areas (e.g., Baaj) noting that they left shortly after ISIL’s arrival which coincided with the military campaign.

³¹ 96 per cent of male respondents and 64 per cent of female respondents lived in ISIL-occupied territory in Syria.

³² 20 persons, of which 18 were women.

³³ Female headed households were more likely to report that their children attended school during the time that ISIL was in control (meaning that they were exposed to ISIL ideology). 12 per cent of female headed households versus only 1 per cent of male respondents reported that their children attended school during ISIL occupation.

³⁴ However, as discussed later, they may be included on provincial databases or on less formal lists held by local armed actors.

³⁵ Differences between female and male respondents were minimal.

Almost half the female Jeddah-1 residents interviewed in this study were female heads of household,³⁶ a fact that is vital to understanding the dynamics of rehabilitation and reintegration.³⁷ This included women who were widows,³⁸ divorced,³⁹ separated,⁴⁰ and – the majority, at 51 per cent – married but not living with their spouse.⁴¹ This rate is particularly high when compared to married men, of whom only 3 per cent were not living with their spouse.⁴² Women explained the separation occurred because their spouse was missing,⁴³ imprisoned,⁴⁴ in another governorate,⁴⁵ or in another camp.⁴⁶ Across almost every indicator the experience of men and women differed, and female headed households faced unique challenges related to both their rehabilitation and reintegration. This study draws attention to these differences throughout the report to emphasize that a gendered approach to rehabilitation and reintegration is vital.

Perceptions of Rehabilitation in Jeddah-1

Based on the profile of current Jeddah-1 residents, a common view across key informants and survey respondents was that ideological rehabilitation was irrelevant, and that positive transition outcomes depended more upon other types of support in the post-return period. Jeddah-1 residents, service providers in Jeddah-1 camp, and mukhtars and tribal leaders in areas of return referred mostly to Jeddah-1 residents as ‘ordinary people’ and emphasized that in their experience, those who had returned from Al Hol were not ISIL adherents and did not want to return to the group.

Jeddah-1 residents emphasized that it was impossible for ISIL affiliates to enter Iraq via the government-led process due to the stringent security clearance requirements, and that if ‘real’ ISIL supporters – and those who had committed crimes for the group – wanted to return they would have to smuggle themselves back in to Iraq to bypass the security clearance process. The consensus was also that even if some people amongst Jeddah-1 residents did originally support ISIL’s ideology, they were no longer a threat since most “joined for economic and not ideological reasons”; many had “suffered a lot after years in camps” and did not want to repeat or prolong that experience; and that people are “tired and broken” and “just want to forget.” Local government officials, mukhtars, and tribal leaders in most areas of return shared this view. Many argued that the “killers” – those who had committed crimes under ISIL – were blocked from returning by the Iraqi government. This was a key factor in how and why they understood the need for ideological rehabilitation – and also for community acceptance of Al Hol returnees.

³⁶ Of the Jeddah-1 camp respondents, 128 were female, of which 57 (or 45 per cent) were the head of household. This is slightly less than representative: according to the Jeddah-1 camp population data for July 2022, approximately 60 per cent of households are female headed.

³⁷ 60 of 128 respondents or 47 per cent. Similarly, within the sample of former Jeddah-1 residents who have already returned to their areas of origin and are discussed in chapter 4, half the female respondents were the head of household (17 of 35 female respondents).

³⁸ 22 women or 36 per cent of female Jeddah-1 respondents.

³⁹ Three women or 5 per cent of female Jeddah-1 respondents.

⁴⁰ Three women or 5 per cent of female Jeddah-1 respondents.

⁴¹ 29 women or 51 per cent of female Jeddah-1 respondents.

⁴² Of the two married men who reported to be separated from their wives, one reported his wife was in another camp (likely Al Hol) and another reported that his wife was in another province.

⁴³ 10 women.

⁴⁴ Eight women.

⁴⁵ Eight women.

⁴⁶ Five women.

However, not all communities accepted the return of Al Hol returnees. In some locations, key local stakeholders categorically rejected the return of any Iraqis from Al Hol, regardless of their profile or the completion of security clearance. In one area of Haditha, for example, a tribal leader explained that: “The community does not accept the return of [Iraqis from Al Hol] because the feeling is they are ISIL, even the women and children...the community does not believe they would make good residents.”⁴⁷

A similar stance was expressed by a security actor in western Nineveh, who explained that: “we do not support their return. No tribal leader west of Nineveh supports their return, they are terrorists. Many organizations ask for coexistence but do not talk about our victims. First, we need to rehabilitate the area and compensate victims so we can ask the community to accept [the Al Hol returnees].”⁴⁸

These areas of ‘no return’ deserve dedicated attention, since Jeddah-1 residents who originate from these locations are unlikely to be able to return in the foreseeable future. This may force families into protracted – or even indefinite – confinement in Jeddah-1 if the community stance does not change and the family cannot identify a third location to relocate to. This issue may become even more entrenched – and potentially more widespread – if the profile of Al Hol returnees changes and people with more controversial security profiles are granted permission to return – such as immediate family members of those accused of serious crimes.

Contravening the system put in place by the Government of Iraq, some Al Hol residents manage to smuggle themselves back to Iraq and return directly to their place of origin, avoiding the steps associated with the official return process. In a separate study, one-quarter of respondents stated that the community is less comfortable with these returnees who come directly from Al Hol⁴⁹ and bypass Jeddah-1 camp.⁵⁰ Time spent in Jeddah-1 camp appears to play a key role in encouraging community acceptance regardless of the programming actually provided in the camp. Even if, in practice, there is no formal programming, there is the perception among communities that camp residents receive ‘psychological rehabilitation.’⁵¹ Additionally, communities value the security screening that all Jeddah-1 residents must complete.⁵²

While they did not believe that current Al Hol returnees were ISIL affiliates, most Jeddah-1 residents believed that at least some former Al Hol residents would benefit from some of the services thought of as ‘rehabilitation activities’ in order to counter extremist beliefs and ensure they do not pose a threat to communities on return.⁵³ Interestingly, there was little focus on activities that dealt with beliefs – only 10 per cent of respondents, for example, felt that religious lectures would be helpful as a form of rehabilitation. The most common ‘rehabilitation’ activities recommended by Jeddah-1

⁴⁷ MEAC, *Interview #18 with tribal leader in Haditha* (Haditha, September 2022).

⁴⁸ MEAC, *Interview #8 with security actor in western Nineveh* (Nineveh, September 2022).

⁴⁹ There are no official numbers for this population, but informal estimates suggest that there are least several hundred people who have smuggled themselves back into Iraq. See, Daraj, “[Syria: Smuggling Out of the Hell of Al-Hol](#),” 26 May 2021; Kirkuknow, “[ISIS women and children smuggle out of Syrian camp and attempt to move to Sinjar](#),” 14 January 2020.

⁵⁰ See: Dr. Jacqueline Parry and Yousif Khalid Khoshnaw, with Dr. Siobhan O’Neil and Dr. Juan Armando Torres Munguía, “Supporting the Reintegration of Families with Perceived ISIL Affiliation in Iraq,” MEAC Iraq, forthcoming.

⁵¹ 70 per cent of respondents.

⁵² 90 per cent of respondents.

⁵³ 84 per cent of male respondents and 61 per cent of female respondents.

residents were those typically included in holistic reintegration interventions: MHPSS (85 per cent), livelihoods (70 per cent), educational courses (63 per cent), skills training (50 per cent), and social activities (20 per cent). As this list demonstrates, there was still little emphasis on activities linked to changing ideology; rather, most emphasized that support often used to help people reintegrate should be the focus of their rehabilitation.

Time spent in Jeddah-1 camp was generally understood by residents and service providers as a period of transition when families could complete the administrative requirements for return (including security clearance, civil documentation, sponsorship, and disavowal) and 'adapt' to being in Iraq again after years in Al Hol camp, and ISIL occupation prior to that. Many spoke of how the harsh conditions in Al Hol and the security threats had been traumatic for residents and in addition to victimization and deprivation, many had lost their basic social skills after years of hiding in their tents and being distrustful of everyone around them. This is why interviewees emphasized the need for MHPSS interventions that would help people "forget what happened to them,"⁵⁴ sport or education courses so people could "re-learn how to socialize," and help preparing for life in their area of return, through literacy classes, livelihoods, cash-for-work, or skills training. The next section of the report discusses the type of behavioural changes that took place in Jeddah-1 camp, and how these behavioural changes can strengthen our understanding of how to support the returns of Iraqis coming back from Al Hol in the future.

Behavioural Changes in Jeddah-1 Camp

Although Jeddah-1 camp does not provide rehabilitation activities that are designed to transform extremist behaviours or ideas, the study demonstrated that the behaviour of many residents does in fact change while residing at the camp. This section maps these changes, as described by service providers, community leaders, and Jeddah-1 residents themselves, and the factors that may be responsible for them.

Half of all Jeddah-1 survey respondents stated that people who arrived very recently to Jeddah-1 from Al Hol behaved differently from those who arrived six months ago. This observation was echoed by service providers who interacted with Jeddah-1 residents on a daily basis. One service provider explained that: "We see a considerable change in the habits of new returnees from Al Hol. For example, new returnees say they carry weapons for self-protection, like a sharp tool or rock, because they think that they might be at risk in the camp,⁵⁵ but then after a while of living here, they stop carrying these items. Also, new returnees say they never slept at night in Al Hol because they were afraid of being attacked, but after being here a while they feel safe and can sleep. I've also seen many cases of newcomers with psychological disorders like completely isolating themselves, or pulling their hair out, but they recovered after some time [in Jeddah-1 camp]."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Multiple respondents emphasized the need for structured and ongoing mental health services, rather than one-off or short-term activities.

⁵⁵ This observation was made by other service providers as well as Jeddah-1 residents themselves.

⁵⁶ MEAC, *Interview #4, with service provider in Jeddah-1 camp* (Jeddah-1, May 2022).

The feeling gathered across interviews and focus groups is that the Al Hol environment significantly impacted people's behaviour. After being at Jeddah-1 for a while, residents began to feel safe and respected, and that feeling allowed them to shift the way they handled themselves in the camp. This was visible not only when it came to protection, but also to interaction. Another service provider observed the way physical behaviours might be interpreted to mirror extremist beliefs, although these beliefs were heavily influenced by the environment:⁵⁷ "Women who just arrived [from Al Hol] do not interact with NGO employees at first and they wear [full face] veils. Also, they do not talk to men. But later on, we see that they become willing to interact with NGO employees who provide services in the camp, and they even use makeup. Also, when men first arrive, they have their hairstyle cut like ISIL fighters we saw on TV, then after a while we see them, their hair was cut differently so they no longer use the ISIL style of haircut."⁵⁸

Similar changes in behaviour were noted by Jeddah-1 residents. The most common observations were that when people first arrived, they were overwhelmed by fear and anxiety and some showed high rates of aggression.⁵⁹ However, over time, people's "psychological condition improved" as they "relaxed" and "felt more comfortable." This led them to "socialize more than before"⁶⁰ and become "peaceful and respectful."⁶¹ It also prompted people to "change their clothing style and to cooperate with the security forces in Jeddah-1 camp, because they feel more comfortable."⁶²

A small number of respondents observed that new arrivals displayed 'hard-line' or 'extremist' ideas when they first arrived.⁶³ They typically linked these ideas with the environment in Al Hol and noted that after a period of time in Jeddah-1 camp, these ideas (and associated behaviours) changed. For example, one Jeddah-1 resident observed that: "Some people will not mix with others in the beginning, and they show a lack of understanding towards others and their extremist ideas are very severe, but then their situation changes and they begin to socialize with other people and live peacefully with them."⁶⁴

Another noted that: "When we were in Al Hol, some people believed in the claims that ISIL made, but when we came back [to Iraq] we saw that life changed, it was as if we had been born again, and we are now cooperating with each other."⁶⁵

This observation is a reminder that armed groups such as ISIL are often able to create buy-in for their beliefs when life events such as hardships and maltreatment are understood through the

⁵⁷ Several service providers observed that male residents do not reveal anything about their ideological beliefs or express publicly their frustrations towards authorities, because they were afraid of being accused of being ISIL affiliates by government authorities in the camp (likely based on their experience with camp security forces in Al Hol). Female residents, on the other hand, were more likely to express ideological beliefs or frustrations openly and towards camp authorities.

⁵⁸ Respondent clarified that he means their hair is long, and they like to have long hair at the back. MEAC, *Interview #4, with service provider in Jeddah-1 camp* (Jeddah-1, May 2022).

⁵⁹ MEAC, *interview #177, survey with Jeddah-1 resident* (Jeddah-1, June 2022).

⁶⁰ MEAC, *interview #95, survey with Jeddah-1 resident* (Jeddah-1, June 2022).

⁶¹ MEAC, *interview #122 and #127, survey with Jeddah-1 resident* (Jeddah-1, June 2022).

⁶² MEAC, *interview #161, survey with Jeddah-1 resident* (Jeddah-1, June 2022).

⁶³ MEAC, *interview #9, survey with Jeddah-1 resident* (Jeddah-1, June 2022).

⁶⁴ MEAC, *interview #117, survey with Jeddah-1 resident* (Jeddah-1, June 2022).

⁶⁵ MEAC, *interview #82, survey with Jeddah-1 resident* (Jeddah-1, June 2022).

group's worldview. When that worldview no longer helps explain reality it has less power over people and is more easily discarded.

The change in environment appears to have had a significant impact on the psychological well-being of residents. Several camp residents reflected that they felt an immediate improvement in psychosocial well-being after arriving to Jeddah-1, explaining that “the feeling of fear and anxiety became less than before,”⁶⁶ or, in the words of another woman, that: “My condition is better, and my mood is better even though I only arrived two months ago. My family visited me, reassured me, and helped me a lot. Also, the families who came with me [from Al Hol] improved their behaviour and now they show empathy [to others].”⁶⁷

For many Jeddah-1 residents, the fact that Jeddah-1 residents now interacted socially, accepted each other, and cooperated with each other was a significant shift and improvement, since social relationships in Al Hol were marked by fear that caused people to turn inwards and distrust each other.

Factors Influencing Behavioural Changes in Jeddah-1

This section examines the factors that contributed to the behavioural changes of residents while in Jeddah-1. Many of these factors were driven by the environmental shift between Al Hol and Jeddah-1 and appear to have had a significant impact on people's well-being. Positive influences included perceptions of safety; access to services; access to psychosocial support and livelihood activities in Jeddah-1; a greater sense of control over the future; better access to information; and improved treatment by authorities and service providers. The section also considers factors that undermined positive behavioural change, including protracted confinement in Jeddah-1.

Perceptions of Safety

The experience of living in Al Hol had a profound effect on Jeddah-1 residents. Most respondents attributed the behavioural changes in Jeddah-1 to, above all else, the change in environment, and foremost, to the change in the perception of safety. Fear and anxiety appeared to be constant factors of life in Al Hol: almost all respondents (96 per cent) considered that they were “not safe at all” there and believed all family members were equally at risk in the camp. Most pointed to the Syrian Democratic Forces, the host community, and foreign or Syrian residents in Al Hol as contributing to their lack of security. Only 9 per cent of female respondents and 2 per cent of male respondents that other Iraqis made Al Hol unsafe for their families. Prominent fears among male respondents included the potential for arrest and detention (95 per cent) and violence (60 per cent). Women and girls shared these fears but were also more likely than men and boys to fear revenge attacks (77 per cent), false accusations (66 per cent), and harassment (59 per cent).⁶⁸

⁶⁶MEAC, *interview #47, survey with Jeddah-1 resident* (Jeddah-1, June 2022).

⁶⁷MEAC, *interview #132, survey with Jeddah-1 resident* (Jeddah-1, June 2022).

⁶⁸ There was negligible difference between female headed households and women in male headed households.

By contrast, almost all respondents considered all members of their family ‘completely safe’ in Jeddah-1 camp.⁶⁹ The relationship with authorities was generally positive (discussed in detail below) and residents did not fear violence from each other. Survey respondents repeatedly compared the safety in both camps and the impact it had on their mental state. One noted that: “Those who recently arrived [to Jeddah-1 camp] are only thinking of fear, killing and arrest, because in Al Hol they constantly thought that they would be imprisoned and arrested.”⁷⁰

Yet over time, there was consensus that this feeling disappeared, with another resident explaining that: “It has only been two months since I have been here, but from the first moment I felt a change in my psyche, my morale, and my thinking. The whole time we were there [in A Hol], we lived in a charged and terrified atmosphere.”⁷¹

While safety was of the utmost concern while living in Al Hol camp,⁷² lack of food, poor shelter conditions, lack of services, absence of livelihoods, restrictions on freedom of movement, poor medical care, and lack of educational opportunities also affected large numbers of residents. Despite shortcomings in service provision in Jeddah-1 camp (discussed in the following section), respondents agreed there was a marked improvement compared to Al Hol and this made a significant contribution to their mental well-being.

Activities in Jeddah-1 Camp

Activities offered in Jeddah-1 were also acknowledged by some camp residents as contributing to positive behaviour change. Interest in activities was relatively high, with half of all female respondents and one-third of male respondents participating.⁷³ The most popular activities – and those most frequently attributed to positive behavioural change – related to mental health and livelihood activities (including cash-for-work, skills training, and educational courses). Only very few people attended the religious lectures on offer.⁷⁴

Although the environment in Jeddah-1 was safer and there was more support than in Al Hol, challenges remain. Among survey respondents, financial stress and the need for livelihood support came up repeatedly. Only 5 per cent of Jeddah-1 residents had access to regular income in the form of a salary, income from renting their house or land, or a government salary,⁷⁵ while the majority instead depended upon financial support from NGOs,⁷⁶ charity,⁷⁷ and daily labour.⁷⁸ Almost all reported that their current economic situation is worse compared to pre-2014, and many residents were in debt to the Jeddah-1 supermarket. Due to this financial stress, those who had access to

⁶⁹ 99 per cent of both female and male respondents.

⁷⁰ MEAC, *interview #36, survey with Jeddah-1 resident* (Jeddah-1, June 2022).

⁷¹ MEAC, *interview #152, survey with Jeddah-1 resident* (Jeddah-1, June 2022).

⁷² 90 per cent of female respondents and 80 per cent of male respondents ranked ‘safety of my family’ as their top concern about the situation of living in Al Hol.

⁷³ 52 per cent of female respondents and 37 per cent of male respondents participated in some form of activity in Jeddah-1.

⁷⁴ 3 per cent of female respondents and 4 per cent of male respondents have attended religious lectures. However, almost all had heard of the religious lectures.

⁷⁵ Female respondents reported slightly higher rates of access to a regular salary than male respondents.

⁷⁶ 74 per cent of male respondents and 37 per cent of female respondents.

⁷⁷ 37 per cent of male respondents and 29 per cent of female respondents.

⁷⁸ 16 per cent of male respondents and 33 per cent of female respondents.

livelihood support noted that it improved their overall well-being. For example, one resident noted that the well-being of women, specifically, improved because of “a [positive] change in their financial situation due to the availability of work for women inside the camp.”⁷⁹

Access to MHPSS services was also noted by multiple respondents as important for their improved psychosocial well-being. In addition to the violence in Al Hol and ongoing uncertainty around their reintegration in Iraq, most Jeddah-1 residents were exposed to a high level of violence during the war. Most respondents (80 per cent) felt they were ‘frequently’ in danger of being hurt or killed;⁸⁰ one-third reported that a close relative was killed during the war; and 80 per cent reported that their property or belongings were destroyed or confiscated. Numerous residents observed an improved psychological state amongst those who attended MHPSS sessions, and some attendees themselves noted the difference in their own well-being, with one reflecting that: “I attended self-help sessions, and that changed my mood, morale, and thinking.”⁸¹ Many respondents advocated for more specialized MHPSS services to be made available (in addition to the basic psychosocial services currently on offer) due to the high level of psychological distress amongst residents.⁸²

Anxiety does appear to improve after a period of time in Jeddah-1 camp. Virtually all residents reported that they felt ‘less stressed’ when they first arrived at Jeddah-1 compared to Al Hol.⁸³ Anxiety then appeared to further reduce over time: 30 per cent of new arrivals reported that they felt anxiety ‘most times,’ while only 20 per cent of long-term residents had such frequent anxiety. While this is a positive indication, it also requires further research to understand if psychosocial well-being declines over time as people remain confined in Jeddah-1 camp and are unable to find a durable resettlement solution.

Control Over the Future and Access to Information

Another factor that appeared to influence behavioural change in Jeddah-1 was the growing sense of control people felt over their lives. This was closely linked to access to information and the ability to make arrangements to depart Jeddah-1. Residents and service providers spoke of the ‘optimism’ people felt at the prospect of returning to their ‘normal life,’ with one female resident explaining that:

⁷⁹ MEAC, *Interview #133, survey with Jeddah-1 resident* (Jeddah-1, June 2022).

⁸⁰ There was no significant difference between male and female respondents. The party responsible for putting them in danger was overwhelmingly ISIL, followed by coalition forces, the Iraqi army, and the Popular Mobilization Forces.

⁸¹ MEAC, *interview #152, survey with Jeddah-1 resident* (Jeddah-1, June 2022).

⁸² Mental health indicators related to trauma (such as intrusive thoughts and avoidant behaviour) remained consistent across new and old arrivals. Specifically: 46 per cent of long-term Jeddah-1 residents (defined as those who arrived between January 2021 and February 2022 and had therefore spent at least six months in the camp) and 43 per cent of recent arrivals (defined as those who arrived in June or July 2022 and had therefore spent less than three months in the camp) answered ‘most times’ to the question: “In your life now, how often do thoughts about the bad things that happened to you keep bothering you?”

In addition, 54 per cent of long-term Jeddah-1 residents (defined as those who arrived between January 2021 and February 2022 and had therefore spent at least six months in the camp) and 55 per cent of recent arrivals (defined as those who arrived in June or July 2022 and had therefore spent less than three months in the camp) answered ‘most times’ to the question: “In your life now, how often do you stay away from things that remind you of the bad things that happened?”

⁸³ 99 per cent of male respondents and 97 per cent of female respondents reported that they were less stressed in Jeddah-1 compared to Al Hol.

“It's been about two months since I've been here, I feel much better, I'm much happier and I'm very optimistic because I intend to return soon to my normal life.”⁸⁴

Residents consistently reported that information provided by the Syrian Kurdish authorities in Al Hol about returning to Iraq was frequently inaccurate, whereas they had relatively high trust in the Government of Iraq's management and communication of the return process. Access to information enabled residents to take steps for their departure (such as identifying a sponsor or ensuring the availability of housing) and this made them ‘more optimistic than before.’⁸⁵ Some residents, however, have markedly less control over the return process. This is important to recognize as it is likely to have a significant impact on their psychological well-being and broader transition outcomes; or, termed differently, on their rehabilitation, since it undermines the control they have over their own future. It also puts them at high risk of protracted confinement in Jeddah-1 camp. The following factors undermined people's sense of control over the future:

- **The inability to renew civil documentation.** This was the top source of stress for Jeddah-1 residents and a significant barrier to return (discussed in detail in an upcoming section). Female heads of household were more likely to report that people in their household were missing documentation,⁸⁶ and more likely to report greater difficulty in renewing civil documentation.⁸⁷
- **Inability to return due to lack of approval and/or poor community acceptance.** If Jeddah-1 residents cannot obtain approval to return or relocate to another area, or if the conditions for return are unsafe due to poor community acceptance, Jeddah-1 residents cannot depart. This affects female headed households at much higher rates than male respondents (for reasons discussed later in the report). Female headed households were less likely to intend to return to their area of origin;⁸⁸ more likely to become stuck in Jeddah-1 because they were waiting for a sponsor (required for those with more complex security profiles);⁸⁹ and more likely to spend longer in Jeddah-1.⁹⁰
- **ISIL affiliation of a close relative.** Families with a relative accused of a serious crime or other significant association with ISIL are more likely to face community stigmatization and rejection, which creates higher barriers to return and community acceptance (discussed in an upcoming section) as well as higher uncertainty around return arrangements. This affected female headed households more often than male respondents: one-third of female

⁸⁴ MEAC, *interview #157, survey with Jeddah-1 resident* (Jeddah-1, June 2022).

⁸⁵ MEAC, *interview #64, survey with Jeddah-1 resident* (Jeddah-1, June 2022).

⁸⁶ 67 per cent of female headed households and 47 per cent of male respondents in Jeddah-1 camp reported that someone in their family was missing documentation. In one-quarter of the female headed households, it was the head of household that was missing documentation (versus only 16 per cent of male respondents).

⁸⁷ 47 per cent of female headed households versus 34 per cent of male respondents stated that they faced difficulties in renewing civil documentation in Jeddah-1 camp.

⁸⁸ 97 per cent of male respondents and 92 per cent of female respondents reported that they would return to their area of origin. Those who were not intending to return stated that they would either return to another location or remain in Jeddah-1.

⁸⁹ 9 per cent of female headed households versus 3 per cent of male respondents stated they did not intend to return to their area of origin.

⁹⁰ 18 per cent of female headed households had been in Jeddah-1 since 2021, versus 8 per cent of male respondents and 11 per cent of women in male headed households.

heads of household had a close relative detained, convicted, or sentenced due to accusations related to the war with ISIL (compared to 2 per cent of men).⁹¹

- **Poor access to information.** Female heads of household consistently had less access to information compared to men. They were less likely to know when relatives who remained in Al Hol would return to Jeddah-1,⁹² a critical factor influencing when they themselves might depart the camp.⁹³ They were also more likely than men to have insufficient information about missing or detained relatives,⁹⁴ and were generally less aware of the process to renew civil documentation.⁹⁵

While anyone who falls into one or more of the above categories has significantly less control over their own return arrangements and future, female headed households were disproportionately affected. This likely undermines rehabilitation progress while in Jeddah-1 camp.

Treatment by Authorities

Positive treatment by authorities in Jeddah-1 appeared to contribute to positive behavioural change amongst camp residents. During focus group discussions with Jeddah-1 residents, both men and boys and women and girls repeatedly noted that “here [in Jeddah-1] we feel respected and our dignity is protected,” which was a key factor both in convincing people to return and supporting them in their transition. As one resident explained: “The authorities [in Al Hol] were hostile and did not treat us in a friendly manner, but here in Jeddah-1 camp the authorities are more welcoming, and our relationship with them and with each other is good.”⁹⁶

Equally, disrespectful behaviour is likely to undermine positive behavioural change and transition outcomes. While Jeddah-1 residents were extremely hesitant to speak poorly of camp authorities, several women noted that when the delegation visited Al Hol, some members acted aggressively and disrespectfully towards them, trying to forcibly remove their (full-face) veils and yelling at them.⁹⁷

Service Provision in Jeddah-1 Camp

While conditions in Jeddah-1 camp compared favourably to those in Al Hol, there remain shortcomings. A survey with residents identified the most common concerns as a lack of livelihoods, fewer services than needed, poor shelter conditions, lack of freedom of movement, lack of food, and

⁹¹ 30 per cent of female headed households (versus 2 per cent of male respondents and 10 per cent of women in male headed households) had a close relative convicted, detained, or sentenced due to accusations related to the war with ISIL. Amongst these female headed households, 16 per cent reported that a close relative was detained, 12 per cent confirmed that a close relative was convicted, and 2 per cent declared that a close relative was sentenced.

⁹² 39 per cent of female headed households versus only 12 per cent of male respondents said they didn't know when family members would return from Al Hol to Jeddah-1.

⁹³ Female headed households were more likely to report that they had not yet returned to their area of origin because they were waiting for relatives to join them from Al Hol (30 per cent of female headed households versus 9 per cent of male respondents).

⁹⁴ 30 per cent of female headed households stated that they had insufficient information about the status of their missing or detained relatives, versus only 3 per cent of men.

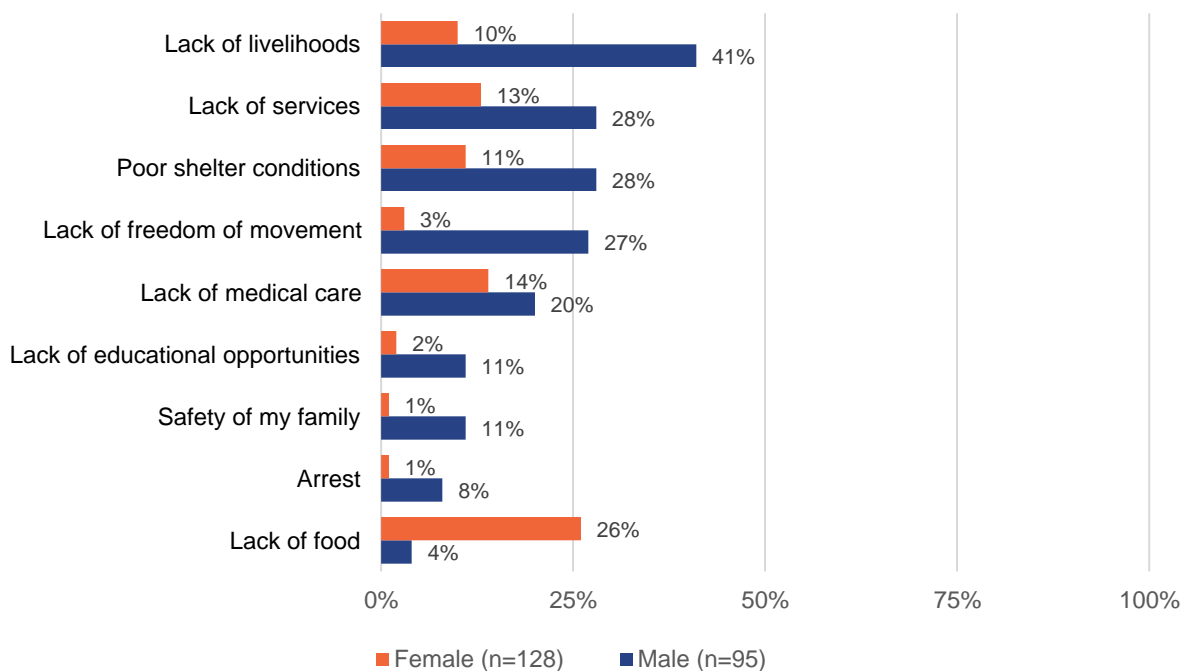
⁹⁵ 37 per cent of female headed households were unclear on the process of obtaining civil documentation, versus 11 per cent of men.

⁹⁶ MEAC, *Interview #97, survey with Jeddah-1 resident* (Jeddah-1, June 2022).

⁹⁷ MEAC, *Focus group discussion with women in Jeddah-1 camp* (Jeddah-1, July 2022).

lack of medical care. Service providers and residents offer further insight into these categories, highlighting specific gaps in nutrition for young children; a lack of female medical staff and specialized health services for women, which disincentivized female residents from accessing care; and an absence of services for persons with disabilities. In addition, they advocated for specialized MHPSS services (beyond the psychosocial support currently offered); legal assistance (to renew documentation); literacy classes for women; and opportunities to develop skills for livelihoods. Particularly for those in protracted confinement, gaps in services are likely to undermine their transition as the inability to meet basic needs affects their well-being and may generate new grievances and frustrations.

Figure 1 – “What concerns, if any, do you have about the situation of living in Jeddah-1?”



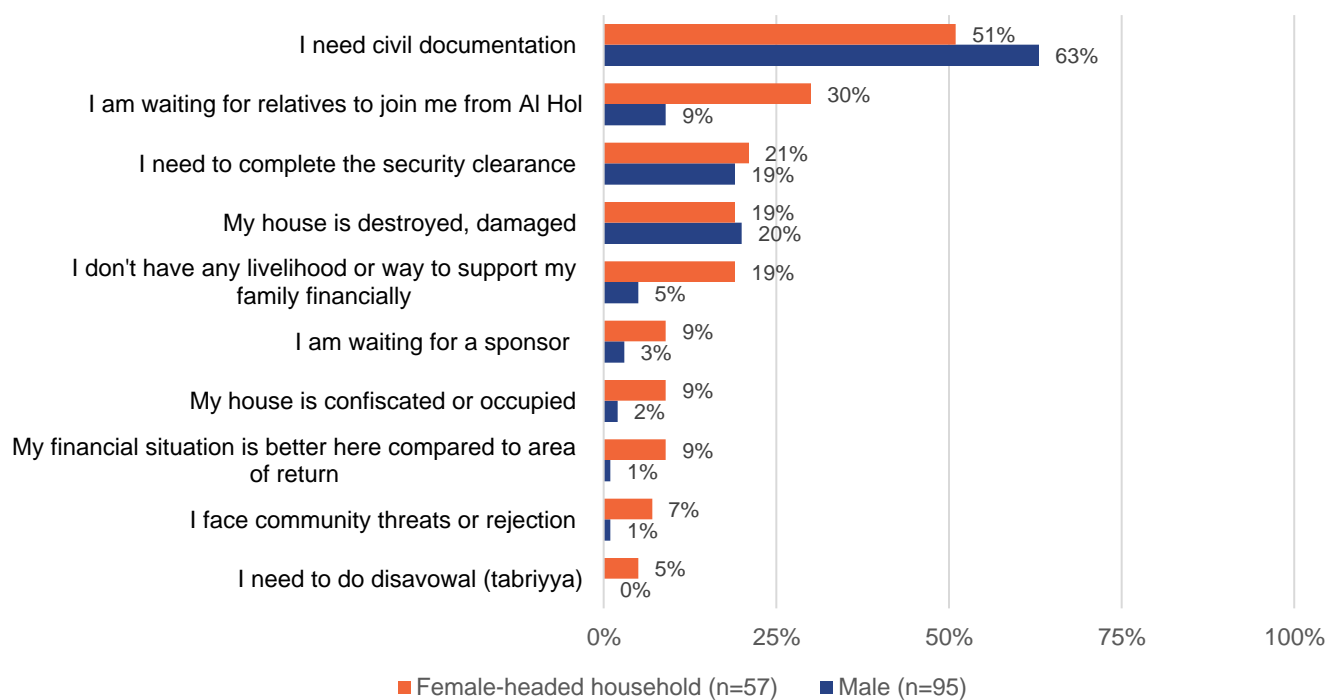
Protracted Confinement in Jeddah-1 Camp

Iraqis returning from Al Hol expect Jeddah-1 camp to transition their return, allowing them to make arrangements to return home or relocate to another area. Based on information received from the Government of Iraq delegation during registration and screening in Al Hol, most returnees expect to spend three to six months in Jeddah-1. This estimation proved accurate for some. Many camp residents, however, find themselves spending much longer in the camp: a survey of 213 residents carried out in July 2022 found that one-quarter had resided in Jeddah-1 for at least six months, and of these, one-third had spent at least 11 months in Jeddah-1 (equating to 8 per cent of the overall survey sample).⁹⁸ Half of those who arrived at least 11 months ago were female heads of household. As the number of Iraqis returning from Al Hol grows and the complexity of returnee profiles increases, it is likely that this number (and the percentage of the camp population) will grow.

⁹⁸ 17 persons.

Protracted confinement in Jeddah-1 camp is a serious threat to positive transition outcomes. Long-term residents emphasized that they never expected to spend a year (or longer) in the camp and spoke of their fear of indefinite detention, noting repeatedly that “there is no solution” for people who cannot return to their area of origin or another location. Asked why they had not departed Jeddah-1 camp, long-term residents pointed to a lack of civil documentation, housing, or livelihoods or not meeting the various requirements necessary to facilitate their return. Some described choosing to wait for relatives from Al Hol. As the chart below shows, many of these barriers were higher for female heads of household. Moreover, as noted above, female headed households are more likely to spend longer in Jeddah-1.⁹⁹

Figure 2 – “What is the reason why you have not returned yet?”



Lack of civil documentation was the most common reason residents gave for their failure to depart Jeddah-1 camp, reported by two-thirds of survey respondents.¹⁰⁰ More female heads of household than male respondents (67 per cent compared to 47 per cent) had at least one member of their family missing documentation, most commonly children. While the issue of civil documentation is addressed at length in the following section, it is important to note the significant impact this issue has on protracted confinement in Jeddah-1, the mental well-being of residents, and their ability to plan for a ‘normal’ future, all of which undermine transition outcomes. Documentation is key to return: 91 per cent of male respondents and 53 per cent of female heads of household said they were not willing to depart Jeddah-1 without it.¹⁰¹ This is concerning, because it suggests that female heads of

⁹⁹ 18 per cent of female headed households had been in Jeddah-1 since 2021, versus 8 per cent of male respondents and 11 per cent of women in male headed households.

¹⁰⁰ 51 per cent of female headed households and 63 per cent of male headed households.

¹⁰¹ One-third of female heads of household answered ‘I don’t know.’

household do not fully understand the repercussions of departing Jeddah-1 without civil documentation (discussed in Chapter 4), which is likely to undermine their reintegration prospects. Moreover, only 32 per cent of female heads of households (and 80 per cent of men) felt that they would be able to obtain the missing documentation while in Jeddah-1.¹⁰² Female heads of household had much weaker knowledge of how to renew civil documentation, with 37 per cent stating they did not know how to renew documentation (versus 11 per cent of men).

The long processing time for registration and return from Al Hol is the second top cause of protracted confinement. Not only does it cause prolonged family separation, it also generates significant uncertainty for separated families who often delay returning to their area of origin until the whole family is reunited. Female headed households are particularly affected: 30 per cent of female heads of household reported that they had not departed Jeddah-1 camp because they were waiting for relatives to join them from Al Hol (versus 9 per cent of men). Female heads of household were also less likely than male respondents to know when relatives who remained in Al Hol would return to Jeddah-1.¹⁰³

Conclusion

Many existing practices in Jeddah-1 camp contribute to positive behavioural changes and support positive transition outcomes. These include that Jeddah-1 is generally perceived as safe by residents; that residents have adequate access to services, although important gaps in services remain; that access to psychosocial support and livelihood activities is available; that residents have improved control over their future and access to accurate information; and that treatment by authorities is generally respectful. For the current profile of residents, the study suggests that focusing on these factors is likely to contribute to positive transition outcomes – or rehabilitation – and also support Jeddah-1 residents prepare for a positive reintegration experience.

Departing Jeddah-1 Camp

The amount of time a family (or an individual) spends in Jeddah-1 camp is not determined by the conclusion of a 'rehabilitation' program, but rather by the amount of time it takes to secure approval to move to another area. Jeddah-1 residents are free to choose where they wish to move, subject to the approval of local authorities, but the current rule is if they cannot obtain approval then they cannot leave. While most residents do manage to ultimately secure approval to depart, a substantial portion of residents face a lengthy process that is leading to protracted – and potentially indefinite – confinement. Most of those who secure approval choose to return to their place of origin; however, again, a substantial percentage of people choose (or are forced, due to lack of permission from their 'home' authorities) to move to a third location. This section presents the factors influencing the approval process, how this affects decision-making, and how different people are affected.

¹⁰² Roughly one in five people knew someone who departed Jeddah-1 without documentation and was then unable to renew their documents in their place of origin.

¹⁰³ 39 per cent of female headed households versus only 12 per cent of male respondents said they didn't know when family members would return from Al Hol to Jeddah-1.

A continuing trend is that barriers to departing Jeddah-1 are strongly influenced by gender. Female headed households are more likely to spend longer in Jeddah-1 for reasons discussed in this section.¹⁰⁴ They are also less likely to return ‘home’: of the 60 respondents in this study who had already departed Jeddah-1, 92 per cent of male respondents had returned to their original neighbourhood, whereas only 75 per cent of female headed households had managed to do so.¹⁰⁵ In addition, female headed households were more likely to intend to relocate.¹⁰⁶ The next sections offer an explanation for why these disparities exist and how the transition process in Jeddah-1 can be better tailored to gender needs.

Departure Approval Process

The process of obtaining approval to depart Jeddah-1 and either return ‘home’ or relocate elsewhere is managed at the local level and varies according to the destination. The same general steps, however, are followed. The security intelligence (*istakhbarat* in federally administered Iraq or the *Asayeesh* in the Kurdish Region of Iraq) in the target destination receives a list of Jeddah-1 residents, which it shares with the relevant mayor. A security clearance is processed at the provincial level by the Operations Command; at the same time, the mayor coordinates with tribal leaders and mukhtars who know each family to ask if they have any information precluding the family’s return (such as accusations of crimes committed under ISIL). In many areas, the relevant mukhtar is asked to issue a letter confirming “*that the family is ‘clean’*” and that there are no objections to their return.¹⁰⁷ In most places, the tribal leaders and mukhtars also inform the relatives of the Jeddah-1 returnees as well as victim families in the community of the planned return, and in many cases hold small meetings to discuss community concerns and “solve problems before they happen.”¹⁰⁸

The degree to which community members (including victim’s families) can influence the approval process varies by location. In one area of west Nineveh, a senior local government actor stated that victims “have no voice in this process,”¹⁰⁹ since it is up to the government to grant the security clearance; whereas in other areas, mukhtars suggested that victim’s families hold significant influence over decisions to commence returns, and can also influence whether individual permissions are granted. Some communities continue to reject the return of any Jeddah-1 residents, regardless of profile.¹¹⁰ In other communities – the majority in this study – Jeddah-1 residents, with the exception of “killers,” or those who have “personal issues with someone in the community,” were permitted to return. This meant that anyone with an immediate family member who was accused of killing someone in the community would be denied return permissions. The degree of community

¹⁰⁴ 18 per cent of female headed households had been in Jeddah-1 since 2021, versus 8 per cent of male respondents and 11 per cent of women in male headed households, indicating a higher rate of protracted confinement.

¹⁰⁵ Meaning the neighbourhood they were living in before departing Iraq and ending up in Al Hol. In addition, of those currently living in Jeddah-1 camp, 97 per cent of male respondents and 89 per cent of female headed households in the Jeddah-1 sample reported that they intended to return to their area of origin. Those who were not intending to return stated that they would either return to another location or remain in Jeddah-1.

¹⁰⁶ 96 per cent of male returnees versus 89 per cent of female returnees stated that they intended to stay in that location long-term.

¹⁰⁷ MEAC, *Interview #7 with mukhtar in west Nineveh* (Nineveh, September 2022); MEAC, *Interview #15 with mukhtar in Tal Afar* (Tal Afar, September 2022); MEAC, *Interview #12 with mukhtar in Fallujah* (Fallujah, September 2022).

¹⁰⁸ MEAC, *Interview #16 with tribal leader in Anbar* (Anbar, September 2022).

¹⁰⁹ MEAC, *Interview #17 with political actor in west Nineveh* (Nineveh, September 2022).

¹¹⁰ MEAC, *Interview #18 with tribal leader in Anbar* (Anbar, September 2022).

acceptance also influences the approval demands. In some communities, high rates of community acceptance meant that sponsorship was no longer required or was only required for people whose family members were accused of committing crimes. Similarly, authorities in some locations required returnees to disavow accused relatives, whereas other locations were less strict.

Tribal leaders and mukhtars played a vital role in encouraging community acceptance and facilitating return approvals. Jeddah-1 residents generally came to know about the community position from their mukhtar or tribal leader, either during a visit to Jeddah-1 camp, through bilateral communication, or with the support of family members in the target destination. Mukhtars and tribal leaders are “close to the people” which enables them to meet with members of the community and encourage tolerance for returns.¹¹¹ As one mukhtar explained: “Mukhtars and tribal leaders are the linkages between the mayor and security actors [on the one hand] and the people [on the other]. We meet with everyone in the community and talk about coexistence, and also about helping needy people [such as Jeddah-1 returnees].”¹¹²

Sponsorship

Sponsorship is a common requirement of the return process – particularly if someone wishes to move to a third location, in which case it is virtually always required. It is a formal process whereby a community member with good standing commits to ‘sponsor’ the returning family and vouch for their behaviour.¹¹³ Sponsorship was required more of female heads of household than other returnee profiles: of the respondents who had already returned from Jeddah-1 camp, 57 per cent of female heads of household and only 4 per cent of male returnees had to obtain a sponsor. Not only was sponsorship imposed more frequently on female heads of household, it was also more difficult for them to secure a sponsor. In Jeddah-1, more female heads of household compared to male respondents (14 per cent versus 3 per cent) reported that they could not depart the camp as they were unable to secure a sponsor.

People who do not have strong family ties or well-connected relatives find it very difficult to find a sponsor, and this disproportionately affects female headed households. Typically, a sponsor is a relative.¹¹⁴ Sometimes, mukhtars and tribal leaders agree to sponsor their constituents, but even in these cases, there is often a family tie. An additional barrier to securing a sponsor is community attitudes towards sponsorship. While in some areas, communities accept the idea of sponsorship provided there are no ‘personal issues’ or serious accusations against the family,¹¹⁵ in other areas, sponsors are seen as “supporting killers,” and this leads to far fewer (sometimes zero) mukhtars and tribal leaders sponsoring Jeddah-1 residents.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ MEAC, *Interview #7 with mukhtar in west Nineveh* (Nineveh, September 2022).

¹¹² MEAC, *Interview #16 with mukhtar in Anbar* (Anbar, September 2022).

¹¹³ For more information on sponsorship generally, see: IOM Iraq, *Tribal Justice Mechanisms and Durable Solutions for Families with a Perceived Affiliation to ISIS* (Baghdad: IOM, 2020).

¹¹⁴ In the present study, the majority of Jeddah-1 residents who had a sponsor reported that he was a relative (70 per cent of both male and female respondents).

¹¹⁵ MEAC, *Interview #5 with mukhtar in Anbar* (Anbar, September 2022).

¹¹⁶ MEAC, *Interview #19 with religious figure in Anbar* (Anbar, September 2022).

Female returnees report far weaker social networks than men. While still in Al Hol, women were less likely to be in contact with family members who lived in Iraq,¹¹⁷ and less likely to have someone encourage them to return to Iraq.¹¹⁸ Female respondents reported experiencing less family support compared to male respondents once they arrived in Jeddah-1,¹¹⁹ and unlike men and boys they could not rely on friends for support.¹²⁰ These weaker social networks put women and girls at a disadvantage when it comes to completing approval requirements such as finding a sponsor. Of those who had already returned, 36 per cent of female heads of household and 27 per cent of male returnees did not rely on anyone to fulfil the approval requirements.¹²¹ Male returnees were far more likely to have relied on a tribal leader to help them fulfil the approval requirements,¹²² and could also turn directly to their tribal leader as a sponsor,¹²³ whereas this direct connection was not available to female returnees, who had relied on their family in the area of return to identify and connect them to a sponsor.¹²⁴ This reflects gender norms that restrict women in some areas from engaging directly with male local authorities or community leaders, even in peacetime, and may also be linked to a comparative strength in tribal identity between men and boys, and women and girls: almost all male respondents reported that they had a tribal affiliation, versus only two-thirds of female respondents.¹²⁵

One reason for the comparatively low rate of community acceptance is that female heads of household are perceived as more closely affiliated to ISIL, presumably linked to the fact that one-third of female heads of household had a close relative detained, convicted, or sentenced due to accusations related to the war with ISIL (compared to 2 per cent of men).¹²⁶ Of those still in Jeddah-1 camp, almost 20 per cent of female heads of household reported opposition to their return from tribal leaders, relatives, neighbours, and local authorities, versus only 7 per cent of male respondents.¹²⁷ Female heads of household were also more likely to delay their return from Jeddah-

¹¹⁷ 91 per cent of male Jeddah-1 respondents were in touch with family members versus only 75 per cent of female headed households amongst the sample of current Jeddah-1 residents.

¹¹⁸ 44 per cent of female headed households amongst the sample of current Jeddah-1 residents reported that “nobody encouraged me to return,” versus only 7 per cent of male Jeddah-1 respondents.

¹¹⁹ 57 per cent of male Jeddah-1 respondents versus 47 per cent of female Jeddah-1 respondents stated that they could rely on family members for financial support, and 57 per cent of male Jeddah-1 respondents versus 51 per cent of female Jeddah-1 respondents stated that they could rely on family members to feel accepted.

¹²⁰ 69 per cent of male Jeddah-1 respondents expected to rely on friends for financial support and to feel accepted, versus only 3 per cent of female Jeddah-1 respondents.

¹²¹ Of those who are still in Jeddah-1, 53 per cent of female headed households and 57 per cent of male respondents did not rely on anyone to fulfil the approval requirements.

¹²² 68 per cent of male returnees and only 14 per cent of women reported that they relied on a tribal leader to fulfil the return requirements. Women were more likely to rely on a family member (40 per cent, versus 4 per cent of male returnees) or a mukhtar (29 per cent, versus 8 per cent of male returnees).

¹²³ One-quarter of male respondents in Jeddah-1 reported that their sponsor was their family’s tribal leader, versus 0 women.

¹²⁴ 36 per cent of returned female headed households reported that their family in the area of return connected them to their sponsor, versus only 4 per cent of male returnees.

¹²⁵ 93 per cent of male respondents reported that they had a tribal affiliation, whereas only 64 per cent of female respondents reported that either they or their husband had a tribal affiliation.

¹²⁶ 30 per cent of female heads of household (versus 2 per cent of male respondents and 10 per cent of women in male respondents) had a close relative convicted, detained, or sentenced due to accusations related to the war with ISIL. Of these female heads of household, 16 per cent reported that a close relative was detained, 12 per cent confirmed that a close relative was convicted, and 2 per cent said that a close relative was sentenced.

¹²⁷ Respondents could choose multiple actors opposed to their return. Female heads of household in Jeddah-1 specified the following breakdown: tribal leaders (12 per cent), relatives (5 per cent), neighbours (4 per cent), and local authorities (2 per cent).

1 camp because they faced threats from the community.¹²⁸ Disavowal was also required more frequently of female heads of household: of those who had already departed Jeddah-1 camp, 25 per cent of female heads of household versus 15 per cent of male returnees were required to disavow an accused relative in order to return.

Those who cannot find a sponsor are at high risk of protracted – if not indefinite – confinement in Jeddah-1 camp. Moreover, the pressure to find a sponsor in order to leave puts female heads of household at high risk of forcible marriage and other forms of exploitation, since they may be forced to rely on a sponsor who is unknown to them or who takes advantage of their vulnerability. One example that arose during fieldwork for this study concerned a female head of household with young children whose sponsor did not show up on departure day. She was visibly distraught when a security officer present at Jeddah-1 camp appeared and offered to sponsor her and her children. The family departed with him later that day. While there is no evidence of poor subsequent treatment, the potential for exploitation in these vulnerable moments is clear, and there is no indication that there was any follow-up to monitor the situation.

Conclusion: Navigating the Departure Process

The process and context described above help explain why some people manage to return and others do not, and why the length of time spent in Jeddah-1 camp varies considerably. Current barriers to the departure process raise a troubling policy question. What will happen to people (usually female headed households) if their own community rejects their return and they do not have strong enough ties to other communities to relocate? Addressing this question is vital since failing to do so will leave many families in protracted confinement and undermine transition outcomes as well as future prospects for peace.

Transition in Areas of Return

Departing Jeddah-1 camp marks the start of a second vital phase of the transition process: reintegration. This chapter examines the factors that influence the successful and unsuccessful reintegration of former Jeddah-1 residents. The data in this chapter is based on a survey conducted with 60 former Jeddah-1 residents who have returned to their area of origin or relocated to a third area. The profile of these returnees is very similar to those of current Jeddah-1 residents (with any significant differences flagged throughout). Half the female respondents in this cohort were the head of household (a total of 17 out of 35 female respondents) and included women who were widowed, divorced, separated, or married but living apart from their husbands (who were imprisoned, missing, or whereabouts unknown). The section begins with an overview of factors that affect reintegration,

¹²⁸ 7 per cent of female heads of household versus only 1 per cent of male respondents in Jeddah-1 camp reported that they had not yet returned because they faced threats from the community.

and then considers what ‘successful’ reintegration means in this context and how it might be achieved.

Factors Affecting Reintegration

Access to Civil Documentation

The key issue impacting reintegration progress, according to Jeddah-1 returnees, current Jeddah-1 residents, and key stakeholders, was access to civil documentation. The impact of being denied civil documentation is severe: children cannot attend government schools, and those without documentation cannot legally marry, travel through checkpoints, access daily work beyond their own village, or obtain a formal job. They also remain at risk of arrest if they move around. Without civil documentation, making a full and sustained transition to civilian life is therefore impossible. Without civil documentation, people are forced to exist on the margins of society, unable to fulfil their potential and forced to exist in a way that undermines dignity and self-esteem. As such, a lack of civil documentation affects multiple transition outcomes – access to livelihoods, socio-economic status, mental health, and social inclusion, to name a few – and puts children and adults at risk of future recruitment or influence by armed groups. The absence of civil documentation is an issue that affects both those who are currently in Jeddah-1 camp – preventing them from returning in a timely manner and generating high levels of anxiety – as well as those who have already departed Jeddah-1 and returned ‘home’ or to a third location.

Within the returnee population of former Jeddah-1 residents, 75 per cent of female heads of household and 30 per cent of male respondents reported that at least one member of the family had missing civil documentation.¹²⁹ Strikingly, 95 per cent of female heads of household reported that their children were missing documentation (versus 63 per cent of male respondents).¹³⁰ Of the (male and female) respondents who had children born after 2014, 80 per cent did not have a government-issued birth certificate,¹³¹ while one-third of children had expired documents the respondent had been unable to renew.¹³²

In addition, 70 per cent of widows who had returned from Jeddah-1 camp had been unable to obtain a death certificate for their husband (a total of 13 women) and 70 per cent also did not know how to obtain a death certificate.¹³³ There were also two female heads of household missing a divorce

¹²⁹ Rates are similar for those who currently live in Jeddah-1 camp: 63 per cent of female respondents in Jeddah-1 camp and 47 per cent of male respondents had at least one member of their family missing documentation. Children were most likely to be missing documentation, followed by female adults. Of those who had children born after 2014, only 12 per cent had a government-issued birth certificate (14 per cent for male respondents and 11 per cent for female respondents). Another 25 per cent of children had expired documentation that the parent had been unable to renew (20 per cent for male respondents and 28 per cent for female respondents).

¹³⁰ This is linked to the fact that female headed households generally had children born after 2014, while male respondents were more likely to have children born prior to 2014 who were able to access government-issued documentation.

¹³¹ There was negligible difference between male and female headed households.

¹³² There was negligible difference between male and female headed households.

¹³³ Similarly, of those still in Jeddah-1 camp, two-thirds of (female) widows had been unable to obtain a death certificate for their husband (versus 0 men).

certificate.¹³⁴ The current advice from the Ministry of Migration and Displacement in Jeddah-1 camp (discussed below) is that people should obtain documentation from the civil status administration in their area of origin, after return. Yet, when they attempted to do so, most returnees failed.¹³⁵

The origin of this issue is that during the period of ISIL occupation, children were not issued Iraqi government birth certificates, nor did the State recognize marriages or deaths. This means that all children born under ISIL occupation since 2014 are undocumented in the eyes of the state, as are all marriages performed under ISIL (which is a further impediment to civil documentation, since Iraqi law requires parents to be married in order to obtain a birth certificate). Families with perceived affiliation face a range of challenges when applying for civil documentation and registering children born during the conflict, including the need to obtain security clearance from intelligence actors in order to access the offices that issue such documents and to meet restrictive legal and administrative requirements (discussed below). This makes the process highly complex and largely inaccessible for the majority of families with perceived affiliation.¹³⁶

There were some initial signs that this issue was being addressed, but unfortunately progress appears to have stalled. In 2019, the Ministry of Interior issued directives instructing Civil Affairs Departments to process civil documentation regardless of whether the household had obtained a security clearance (in line with Iraqi and international human rights law, which ensures the right to a legal identity). These directives, however, are not implemented consistently and there is no ability to appeal or report misprocesses.¹³⁷ In March 2021, the Court of Cassation - the court of last resort in Baghdad for criminal and civil cases - issued a decision that requires women with perceived ISIL affiliation to provide evidence of the whereabouts of the child's father in the form of a death certificate or evidence of incarceration.¹³⁸ This is impossible for women whose husbands are missing, deceased, or whose whereabouts are not documented.¹³⁹ In interviews for this study, key informants consistently referenced this decision as the primary barrier to accessing civil documentation and which, so long as it remains in place, severely limits the ability of children from families with perceived ISIL affiliation from accessing documentation. While the definition of an ISIL affiliate is opaque, this appears likely to apply to persons against whom an arrest warrant was issued by an investigative judge; those listed in the various security databases; or potentially others whose information was shared by informants or listed in ISIL documents.

Additional barriers to gaining civil documentation have been put in place since the Court of Cassation's ruling. In March of 2022, following a request from the Forensics Department of the Ministry of Health in Baghdad, courts widely began requiring that families with perceived affiliation seeking proof of paternal lineage – a requirement to obtain a birth certificate and other civil

¹³⁴ 8 per cent of female heads of household still in Jeddah-1 camp were also missing a divorce certificate.

¹³⁵ In addition, 60 per cent of returnees knew of someone who had tried to renew their documents in their place of origin and had failed.

¹³⁶ For a detailed discussion of these challenges, see Elysia Buchanan and Caroline Zullo, *Life in the Margins: Re-examining the needs of paperless people in post-conflict Iraq* (Danish Refugee Council and Norwegian Refugee Council, 2022).

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Either because the woman does not know where her husband is and authorities cannot or will not confirm his whereabouts, or because the documentation was lost.

documents for a child – provide DNA samples from up to three male paternal relatives,¹⁴⁰ an increase on the single sample ordinarily required. Even if it is possible to secure these samples, the lengthy processing time (at least one year and often much longer), the requirement to travel to Baghdad (the only location where DNA can be processed), and the cost and complexity involved make the process largely inaccessible. More recently, in July of 2022, the High Judicial Council – the judicial advisory panel which oversees the Iraqi judiciary – issued a letter to the Ministry of Migration and Displacement reaffirming the requirement of multiple DNA tests and confirming that, for women with foreign ISIL-affiliated spouses, birth registration is impossible.¹⁴¹

As a result of these developments, legal solutions exist for only a tiny minority of families of perceived ISIL affiliation: women who have access to a death certificate and to three male paternal relatives who are able to provide DNA samples at the Forensics Department in Baghdad; or those who are able to negotiate leniency with the judge handling their case, an option that returnees suggested was out of reach. Moreover, these developments mean that returnees from Al Hol are now required to return to their area of origin and apply at the Civil Affairs Directorate for the renewal or issue of civil documentation. Following this instruction, the legal service provider in Jeddah-1 is only able to renew documents if the person can provide all four expired Iraqi identity documents issued by the Government of Iraq, which is impossible for many Jeddah-1 residents who lost their documents or had them confiscated by the Al Hol authorities, or for those who were married or born under ISIL occupation and were never issued government documents. There are also consistent reports that in areas of return, organizations that provide legal assistance have stopped providing support to renew documentation for children whose fathers are dead or missing and accused of ISIL affiliation, due to the above-mentioned requirements.¹⁴² In practice, most Jeddah-1 residents who have returned without documentation have been unable to obtain documents, despite visiting the personal status administration.

Socio-economic Status

The socio-economic situation for Jeddah-1 returnees was consistently poor. Almost no returned Jeddah-1 residents (or current ones) had any savings, and virtually all faced difficulty in meeting their daily needs. Very few returnees had a reliable income. Only 32 per cent of male returnees had an occupation that could bring in income and almost none amongst the female heads of household. Only 12 per cent of male returnees – and zero female returnees – had access to a government salary, while roughly 40 per cent of returnees relied on daily labour.¹⁴³ Roughly two-thirds of female returnees (66 per cent) and one-third of male returnees (36 per cent) relied on charity or financial support from NGOs.

Many returnees were not able to access support services available to other Iraqis. For example, two-thirds of all returned female heads of household (61 per cent) and one-third of male returnees (38

¹⁴⁰ Elysia Buchanan and Caroline Zullo, *Life in the Margins: Re-examining the needs of paperless people in post-conflict Iraq* (Danish Refugee Council and Norwegian Refugee Council, 2022).

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² MEAC, *Interview #29 with service provider in Jeddah-1 camp* (Jeddah-1 July 2022); MEAC, *Interviews with key informants in areas of return* (July 2022).

¹⁴³ 44 per cent of male returnees and 37 per cent of female returnees.

per cent) did not have access to their Public Distribution System (PDS) ration card. The PDS ration card allows low-income Iraqis to access a weekly food allowance and thus functions as a key element of the Iraqi social safety net and a vital source of food security for the most vulnerable. It appears likely that some returnees cannot access their PDS card due to absent civil documentation or because they live somewhere other than their place of origin; however, this requires further research.

Housing

For those who had left Jeddah-1, access to adequate housing was poor. Although 81 per cent of male returnees and 39 per cent of returned female heads of household reported owning a house, many were not living in that house because it was destroyed.¹⁴⁴ In fact, no female returnees surveyed owned the house they were currently living in.¹⁴⁵ Female headed households who had returned were much more likely to share with relatives or friends (71 per cent), highlighting the importance of social networks for women's reintegration prospects.

A large percentage of returnees (42 per cent of male returnees and 21 per cent of returned female heads of household) were living in a damaged or unfinished house or building. The poor condition of their homes created concerns for all returnees, but particularly about safety for female returnees (100 per cent versus 29 per cent of male returnees, the latter of which were often concerned about the weather or sickness). These gendered differences should be taken into account when deciding what kind of repairs are offered, since the type or extent of repairs that resolve concerns about the weather or sickness may not be sufficient to address safety concerns.

Social Networks

Social networks have a vital impact on reintegration experiences and transition outcomes. In most of the areas to which Jeddah-1 residents return (or relocate), cultural norms dictate that family members should be present in the same area, particularly for female headed households. As one Mukhtar in Anbar explained: "Because we're a tribal community, people live with their family, nobody goes to a location where they will be alone, with the exception of big cities like Baghdad, Erbil. But to live in a small city [like ours] you need your relatives."¹⁴⁶

Social networks are also vital because they are the primary way that returnees access accurate information about return conditions, reach key stakeholders who can facilitate the return process from Jeddah-1, and receive support to reintegrate.

There was a marked difference in the social networks of people who had already departed Jeddah-1 and those who remained in the camp, particularly amongst female heads of household. Those who remained in Jeddah-1 had significantly weaker social networks, suggesting that this is a key factor in enabling return.

¹⁴⁴ 18 per cent of female heads of household and 14 per cent of male returnees reported that the house they owned was 'completely destroyed.'

¹⁴⁵ 40 per cent of male respondents owned the house they were living in.

¹⁴⁶ MEAC, *Interview #16 with mukhtar in Anbar* (Anbar, September 2022).

Figure 3 – “How close are you now with your family?” Jeddah-1 and Returnee Female Heads of Household Comparison

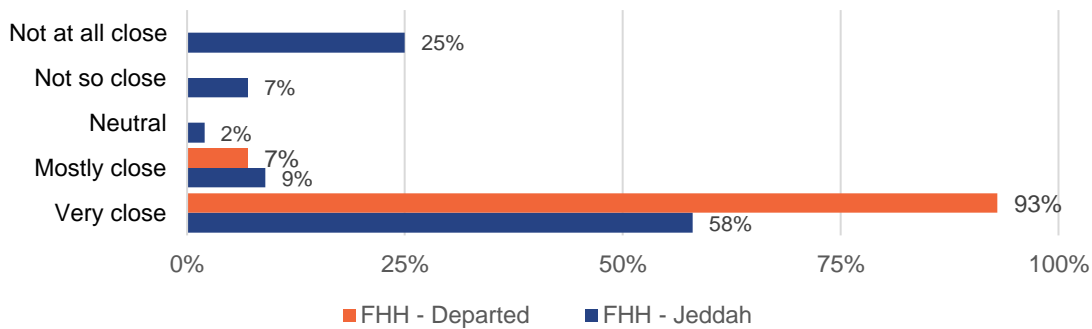
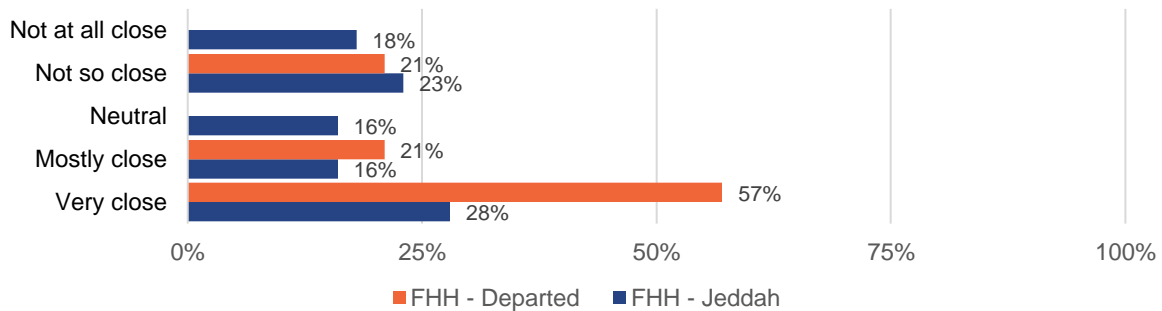


Figure 4 – “How close are you now with your friends?” Jeddah-1 and Returnee Female Heads of Household Comparison



As the charts above demonstrate, female heads of household that had departed Jeddah-1 were much more likely to report that their relationships with family and friends were close. While it is unclear if this sense of closeness grew post-return, it is notable that 32 per cent of female heads of household in Jeddah-1 reported that their relationship with family was not close (versus 0 returnees); 40 per cent also reported that their relationship with friends was not close (versus 21 per cent of returnees). The situation for male respondents was quite different – whether they were in Jeddah-1 or had departed - most considered their relationship with both family and friends to be close.

Figure 5 – “How close are you now with your family?” Jeddah-1 and Returnee Male Respondent Comparison

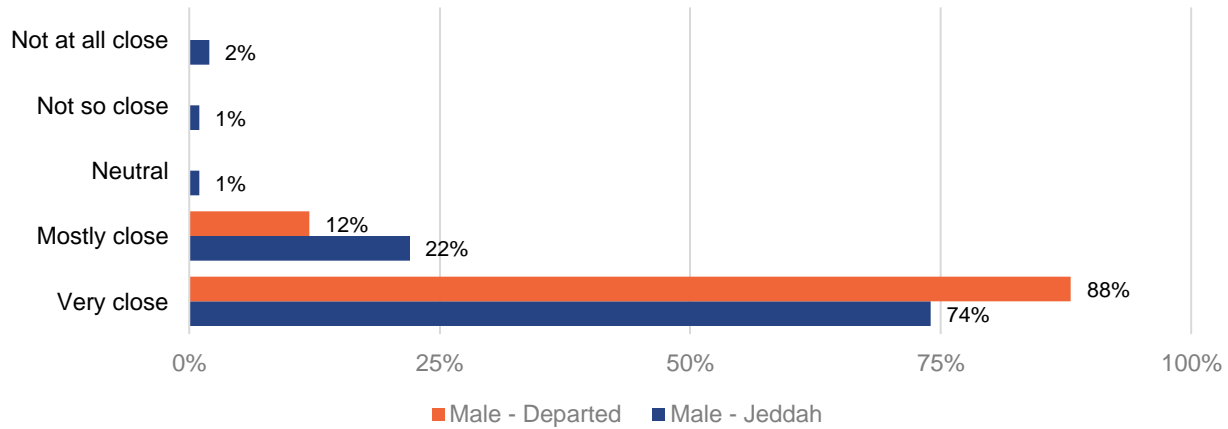
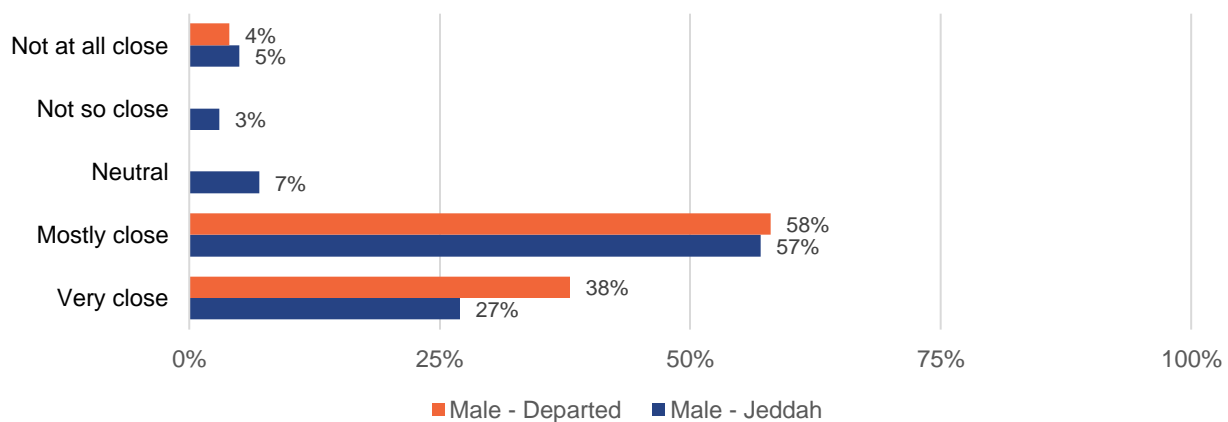


Figure 6 – “How close are you now with your friends?” Jeddah-1 and Returnee Male Respondent Comparison

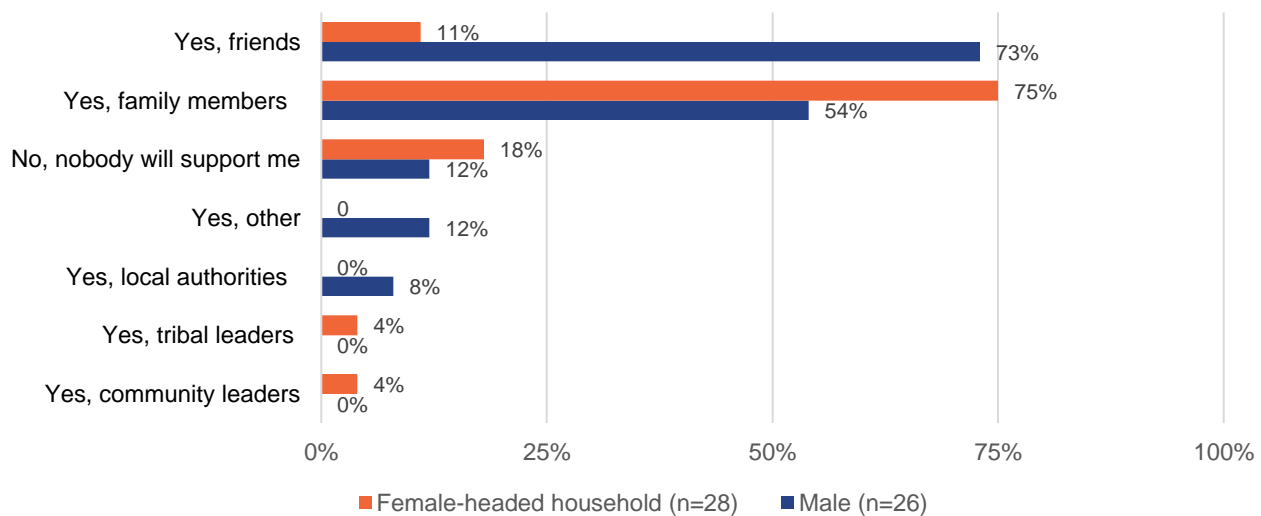


Weaker social networks undermined multiple transition outcomes. Almost half of all returned female heads of household stated that nobody assisted them in returning to Iraq, compared to one-quarter of male returnees.¹⁴⁷ Roughly one-fifth of returned female heads of household said that nobody had helped them to feel accepted by the community since they returned (versus 12 per cent of male returnees) and 39 per cent of female heads of households had nobody to turn to for guidance (versus 7 per cent of male returnees). The difference was even more stark in terms of financial support. More than half of all returned female heads of household (54 per cent) had nobody to borrow money from

¹⁴⁷ Roughly one-third of male returnees and one-third female returnees were assisted by family members in the process of return. Male returnees were more likely to rely on friends to help them with the return process (36 per cent versus 11 per cent of female returnees), whereas female returnees were more likely to rely on community leaders (17 per cent of versus 0 male returnees) and local authorities (40 per cent versus 28 per cent of male returnees).

in an emergency (versus 4 per cent of male returnees) and 18 per cent of female heads of household noted that nobody had supported them financially since they returned to their area of origin (versus 12 per cent of male returnees). Women typically relied more heavily on family to provide support, and unlike men, could not easily rely on friends. This means that women who are not close to, or accepted by their families, have few other options to provide highly needed (financial, material, and social) support.

Figure 7 – “Since you have returned, has anyone supported you with daily needs or with financial support?”



Community Acceptance

Female headed households that returned from Jeddah-1 were much more likely to face social stigma and exclusion. While almost all male returnees felt ‘mostly’ or ‘fully’ accepted by people in their area, 15 per cent of female heads of household did not feel accepted,¹⁴⁸ and almost half reported that people in their area express critical or negative perceptions of them because they do not agree with the experience they had during the war.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, almost all male returnees reported that they ‘never’ felt excluded from social gatherings or activities, whereas 43 per cent of female heads of household felt excluded ‘sometimes’ or ‘always,’ including from family gatherings. In addition, female heads of household were twice as likely as male returnees to experience poor treatment in the community on a daily basis,¹⁵⁰ and were also more likely to be threatened.¹⁵¹ Asked why they were

¹⁴⁸ 3 per cent of women felt ‘not at all accepted,’ 3 per cent felt only ‘a little accepted’ and 6 per cent felt neutral.

¹⁴⁹ Versus only 15 per cent of male returnees. In addition, 3 per cent of female returnees said that people in their area ‘always’ express critical or negative perceptions of them because they don’t agree with the experience they had during the war, versus zero men.

¹⁵⁰ Almost all male returnees stated that they were ‘never’ treated poorly in a shop or market in the past month, whereas 11 per cent of female headed households had experienced poor treatment. It is worth noting that zero female returnees within male headed households reported instances of poor treatment.

¹⁵¹ In the past month, 14 per cent of female heads of household versus only 4 per cent of male returnees reported that they received threats.

excluded, treated poorly, or threatened, most female returnees said it was because of “perceptions related to the war” or because they came from Al Hol or Jeddah-1 camp.¹⁵²

Three factors help explain why female headed households experience lower rates of community acceptance. First, female heads of household are often perceived as more closely affiliated to ISIL due to the behaviour of a close relative (typically their husband). Of those who had departed Jeddah-1 camp, one-third of female heads of household (versus 8 per cent of male returnees) had a close relative detained, convicted, or sentenced due to accusations related to the war with ISIL. Second, female heads of household typically have weaker family support, meaning they cannot rely on their family to encourage community acceptance.¹⁵³ And third, one-quarter of female headed households do not return to their area of origin (versus 8 per cent of male returnees), which may encourage rejection. One mukhtar explained: “I prefer when people from [our area] return [to our area] because they are our children and we can reintegrate them, whereas if they go to other areas, they are called ISIL.”¹⁵⁴

Trust and Interactions with Local Institutions

Rates of trust in local institutions, measured by perceptions of fair treatment, were relatively good amongst former Jeddah-1 residents. Most expected to be treated fairly much of the time. Roughly 5 per cent stated that their family was ‘never’ treated fairly by local authorities;¹⁵⁵ 8 per cent of male returnees stated that they were ‘never’ treated fairly by tribal authorities;¹⁵⁶ and 3 per cent of women stated that they were ‘never’ treated fairly by security actors.¹⁵⁷ These rates were slightly higher compared to returnees with perceived ISIL affiliation who displaced within Iraq and then returned to their area of origin.¹⁵⁸ Almost all male returnees (92 per cent) felt the security clearance process was applied fairly to everyone, although only two-thirds of female heads of household (68 per cent) agreed. This may be due to the higher levels of pressure on female headed households to disavow relatives (particularly missing husbands) and to obtain a sponsor prior to return, discussed earlier.

¹⁵² These rates of stigmatization and threats are markedly higher than those reported by people with perceived ISIL affiliation returning from inside Iraq. Of those with perceived ISIL affiliation returning from within Iraq, 5 per cent said they ‘sometimes’ were treated poorly in a shop or market and 1 per cent ‘always.’ In addition, 9 per cent of those with perceived ISIL affiliation returning from inside Iraq said people ‘sometimes’ acted like they did not trust them and 3 per cent ‘always.’ The rate of threats was also higher against Jeddah-1 returnees: only 5 per cent of families with perceived ISIL affiliation who returned from within Iraq reported that they received threats over the past month. See: Dr. Jacqueline Parry and Yousif Khalid Khoshnaw, with Dr. Siobhan O’Neil and Dr. Juan Armando Torres Munguía, “Supporting the Reintegration of Families with Perceived ISIL Affiliation in Iraq,” MEAC Iraq, forthcoming.

¹⁵³ While almost all male respondents (96 per cent) stated that family members ‘never’ express critical or negative perceptions of them because they don’t agree with the experience they had during the war, 36 per cent of female headed households were perceived critically by family members. Some 29 per cent of female headed households were perceived critically by family members ‘sometimes’ and 7 per cent ‘always.’

¹⁵⁴ MEAC, *Interview #14 with mukhtar in west Nineveh* (Nineveh, September 2022).

¹⁵⁵ 6 per cent of female returnees and 4 per cent of male returnees.

¹⁵⁶ Versus 0 female returnees.

¹⁵⁷ Versus 0 male returnees.

¹⁵⁸ See Dr. Jacqueline Parry and Yousif Khalid Khoshnaw, with Dr. Siobhan O’Neil and Dr. Juan Armando Torres Munguía, “Supporting the Reintegration of Families with Perceived ISIL Affiliation in Iraq,” MEAC Iraq, forthcoming. Of those with proximity markers to ISIL, 12 per cent felt that local authorities ‘never’ treat them fairly; 9 per cent reported that tribal authorities ‘never’ treat them fairly; and 7 per cent confirmed that local security forces ‘never’ treat them fairly.

A key concern of Jeddah-1 residents – and an influential factor in deciding where they would return to after departing Jeddah-1 – was the unreliability of security clearances issued by the Government. Even after receiving security clearance from the Government of Iraq during the Al Hol registration process, and a second security clearance from the Operations Command Centre at the provincial level, the fractured nature of the Iraqi security sector meant that people (and particularly men and boys) returning to central and southern Iraq remained at risk of arrest and detention. The plethora of armed actors present in these areas, as well as the multiple security departments within the Government and the influence of local stakeholders such as tribal leaders, meant that new accusations could be made against returnees which could lead to their arrest or detention. The weak rule of law meant there was no forum through which to challenge or clarify such accusations. As a result, numerous Jeddah-1 residents chose to relocate to the Kurdish Region of Iraq (typically Erbil) since once you receive permission to enter the KR-I, there is no ongoing risk of arrest due to the consolidated nature of the government and security forces. A key ask from Jeddah-1 returnees and residents was for stronger guarantees from the Government that the security clearance granted in Jeddah-1 would protect them from future arrests.

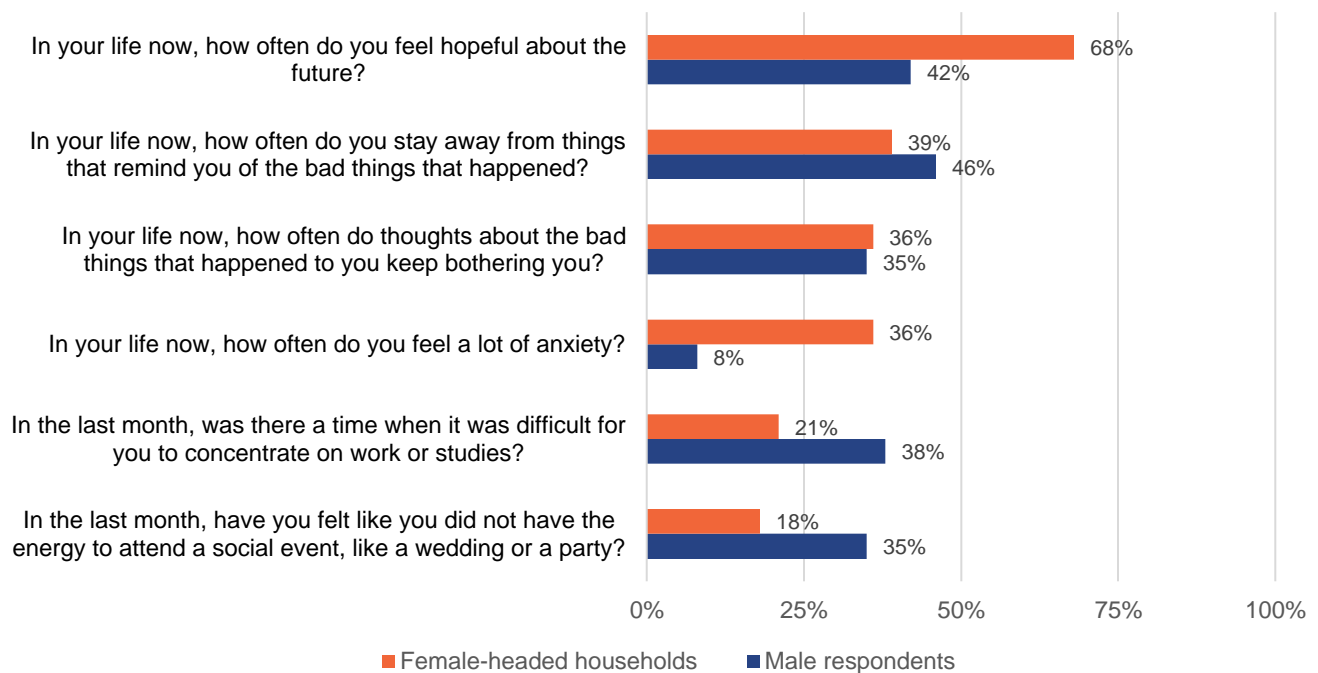
Mental Health and Psychosocial Well-being

Mental health amongst Jeddah-1 returnees was mixed, with gendered differences in how mental well-being manifested. Overall, all male returnees reported to feeling less stressed now (in the area of return) compared to when they first arrived in Jeddah-1 camp, whereas only 89 per cent of female heads of household noted the same.¹⁵⁹ This is likely influenced by the consistently higher barriers to reintegration that women face, as well as the weaker social support available to them.

In terms of mental health indicators, male and female returnees demonstrated similar rates of avoidant behaviour and intrusive thoughts, which relate primarily to traumatic experiences. However, female returnees were much more likely to report high levels of anxiety, whereas male returnees were more likely to report difficulty concentrating and low levels of energy.

¹⁵⁹ 4 per cent of female heads of household felt the same level of stress as when they first arrived and 7 per cent felt more stressed than when they first arrived at Jeddah-1 camp.

Figure 8 – Answer = “Most of the time” to mental health indicators



Reintegration Assistance

Since returning from Jeddah-1 camp, roughly 40 per cent of respondents had not received any assistance from international or local organizations.¹⁶⁰ Of those who had received support, the most common type was cash,¹⁶¹ livelihood support,¹⁶² basic needs,¹⁶³ shelter or housing support,¹⁶⁴ skills training,¹⁶⁵ education,¹⁶⁶ and MHPSS.¹⁶⁷ Cash, livelihood support, shelter support, and basic needs support were reported to have the most positive impact on the lives of recipients. Just over half of all male returnees but only 17 per cent of female returnees reported that they had a say in the type of support they received.

Two-thirds of respondents reported that community members do help those returning from Jeddah-1 camp with food or other items such as blankets or furniture. One-third of women also noted that community members sometimes gave Jeddah-1 returnees a place to stay for free if their house was destroyed.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁰ 43 per cent of female headed households and 27 per cent of male returnees reported that they had not received any assistance from international organizations or NGOs.

¹⁶¹ 54 per cent of women and 12 per cent of male returnees.

¹⁶² 24 per cent of male returnees and 0 female returnees.

¹⁶³ 11 per cent of female returnees and 4 per cent of male returnees.

¹⁶⁴ 8 per cent of male returnees and 3 per cent of female returnees.

¹⁶⁵ 4 per cent of male returnees and 0 female returnees.

¹⁶⁶ 3 per cent of female returnees and 0 male returnees.

¹⁶⁷ 3 per cent of female returnees and 0 male returnees.

¹⁶⁸ Similar responses between female headed households and women in male headed households.

Defining ‘Successful’ Reintegration in the Jeddah-1 Context

This section contemplates: What does ‘successful’ reintegration look like for someone returning (or relocating) from Jeddah-1 camp? How might it differ from the experience of other Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Iraq?

The MEAC framework and transition outcomes discussed throughout this report, offer a way to understand reintegration progress. In Iraq, our focus is on individuals who identify – or more often, are identified by others – as affiliated with ISIL due to their wartime experiences.¹⁶⁹ In this context, reintegration progress is seen as shifting away from an orientation towards conflict – including with regard to identity – and moving towards the economic, social, physical/mental, civic well-being standards of the broader community to which they return. While the MEAC framework focuses on the transition from war to peace for people who are perceived to be influenced by an armed group, it substantially overlaps with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs that is typically used to quantify the reintegration of displaced persons.¹⁷⁰ Many of the benchmarks in the IASC Framework mirror those in the MEAC Framework¹⁷¹ and both can be used concurrently: the IASC benchmarks provide a way to judge progress towards a durable solution, while the MEAC Framework offers a way to understand the wider orientation shift those leaving Al Hol go through, heightened reintegration challenges those identified as ISIL affiliates face, and factors that promote community acceptance. While the MEAC and IASC Frameworks provide a conceptual starting point and indicators for measuring reintegration progress, it is essential to consider what success means to the individuals involved – both those Iraqis who are reintegrating after time in Al Hol and the communities that receive them. Reintegration is a two-way street, and it must be understood through the eyes of those involved.

Defining ‘Successful’ Reintegration: Community Perspectives

The study sought to understand how communities perceive ‘successful’ reintegration of Jeddah-1 returnees. The study findings suggest that the reintegration of Al Hol returnees is often perceived differently from IDPs within Iraq (even when those IDPs have perceived ISIL affiliation). A substantial part of the Iraqi population does appear to fear – and some oppose – the return of families from Al Hol. In a wider survey of four communities across Iraq,¹⁷² concern about the return of families from Al Hol was 30 percentage points higher, compared to IDPs with perceived ISIL affiliation who returned from within Iraq. The reason for the higher rate of concern was a lack of trust, fear that the

¹⁶⁹ This includes people who were combatants; those who joined armed groups in non-combatant roles; those accused of joining (willingly or by force) an armed group; and those whose transition or reintegration is affected by their perceived connection to an armed group (even if distant, or ideological, rather than material). While wartime experiences and transition pathways vary considerably, the common factor amongst such diverse groups is the heightened challenge they face when transitioning from war to peace as a result of their identity.

¹⁷⁰ The IASC Framework offers a valuable set of measures to help determine the extent to which a ‘durable solution’ has been achieved – defined as occurring when IDPs no longer have specific assistance and protection needs linked to their displacement, and as such can enjoy their human rights without discrimination resulting from their displacement.

¹⁷¹ The IASC Framework sets eight benchmarks against which to judge progress towards a durable solution, which are: (1) safety and security; (2) adequate standard of living; (3) access to livelihoods; (4) restoration of housing, land, and property; (5) access to documentation; (6) family reunification; (7) participation in public affairs; and (8) access to effective remedies and justice.

¹⁷² Dr. Jacqueline Parry and Yousif Khalid Khoshnaw, with Dr. Siobhan O’Neil and Dr. Juan Armando Torres Munguía, “Supporting the Reintegration of Families with Perceived ISIL Affiliation in Iraq,” MEAC Iraq, forthcoming.

families would continue to support ISIL, fear that they would introduce security risks to the community, and fear that they would put the reputation of the community at risk.¹⁷³ These fears suggest that people who spent time in Al Hol are perceived as closer to, or more heavily influenced by ISIL, possibly due to their longer time spent under ISIL occupation and the perception that people ‘chose’ to move from Iraq to Syria. In the same survey, roughly 30 per cent of respondents felt that returnees from Al Hol should fulfil different conditions from those imposed on IDPs with perceived ISIL affiliation returning from within Iraq. The top conditions were additional security screening, completion of a psychological rehabilitation program, and disavowal of family members who joined ISIL. Notably absent from this list was the expectation that Al Hol returnees serve a prison sentence, suggesting that residents in most areas did not equate returning Al Hol residents with those who committed crimes under ISIL. Most respondents felt that communities would not allow Al Hol returnees who originated from another area to settle in their area – suggesting that those who could not secure security clearances from their community would likely have a hard time getting a new community to accept them.¹⁷⁴

Most community leaders in areas of return suggested that the key indication of successful reintegration was the absence of revenge attacks or other community problems. One mukhtar described this as: “When a returnee has no personal issue with a member of the host community,”¹⁷⁵ while a tribal leader described successful reintegration as when “all returnees are living peacefully in the area.”¹⁷⁶ However, while social relations formed a prominent component of reintegration progress, many local stakeholders believed that reintegration would be achieved by addressing ‘ordinary’ reintegration benchmarks such as gaining employment or physical resettlement in permanent housing, obtaining civil documentation, accessing services, or making connections with existing residents. They emphasized the need for livelihoods, MHPSS, legal assistance for documentation, housing reconstruction, and infrastructure to support service provision as a means of ensuring successful reintegration. For example, a sheikh in Al Qaim noted that: “Those who returned are normal people, they live normally like other people. Therefore, success means the returnee should have a place to live, a source for livelihood, and to send their children to school.”¹⁷⁷ In west Nineveh, a mukhtar shared a similar view: “Reintegration happens after return when people have jobs, their house is reconstructed, they can live here, and be reintegrated.”¹⁷⁸

Another common theme – and one that connects the first two perspectives – is that the ‘ordinary’ reintegration needs of Jeddah-1 returnees cannot be addressed without first, or at least concurrently, addressing the needs of ISIL victims. Mukhtars in multiple areas advocated that compensation for victims¹⁷⁹ would “help people who fear the returnees to accept them,”¹⁸⁰ and that the UN and the Government should focus on “improving the economic situation and livelihood opportunities for the

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ MEAC, *Interview #5 with mukhtar in Anbar* (Anbar, September 2022).

¹⁷⁶ MEAC, *Interview #4 with mukhtar in Anbar* (Anbar, September 2022).

¹⁷⁷ MEAC, *Interview #19 with religious figure in Anbar* (Anbar, September 2022).

¹⁷⁸ MEAC, *Interview #14 with mukhtar in west Nineveh* (Nineveh, September 2022).

¹⁷⁹ MEAC, *Interview #2 with mukhtar in Anbar* (Anbar, September 2022).

¹⁸⁰ MEAC, *Interview #16 with mukhtar in Anbar* (Anbar, September 2022).

whole community” before turning attention specifically to Jeddah-1 returnees.¹⁸¹ One government actor in west Nineveh explained: “First we need to reconstruct the area and compensate victims so we can ask the community to accept [the Jeddah-1 returnees]Before encouraging return [from Jeddah-1], you need to improve the situation in the place of origin [and] target the victims first... you should start with the victims not the accused.”¹⁸²

With community acceptance as the driving force behind successful reintegration, many local stakeholders emphasized that the UN needed to adapt its approach to reintegration assistance. Rather than dealing primarily with local government officials (such as mayors or civil administrators) as is usually the case, it is vital to collaborate closely with mukhtars and tribal leaders, given their influence and the efforts they make to encourage tolerance within the community. Multiple stakeholders shared the view expressed by one tribal leader in west Nineveh, that for reintegration to be successful, “it should be led by tribal leaders and mukhtars and not by the government itself,”¹⁸³ since they take the lead on issues that affect social cohesion. Mukhtars and tribal leaders visit the relatives of victims to “prepare the ground for return,”¹⁸⁴ and often host community meetings to encourage coexistence and try to solve problems as they arise.¹⁸⁵ In that regard, a mukhtar from Anbar summarized a common piece of advice: “For reintegration to be successful it’s vital that the UN cooperates with mukhtars and tribal leaders more closely, because they are the ones who have influence in the community, and they play a better role than the government in solving community issues. The government is applying laws only [whereas mukhtars and tribal leaders deal with social issues].”¹⁸⁶

Connecting Rehabilitation and Reintegration

A key finding of the study is that the time spent in the relatively safer Jeddah-1 camp, together with the services and activities provided there – which cumulatively led to positive behavioural change – affects the likely success of reintegration in two ways. First, it gives residents the opportunity to prepare for return and strengthen their prospects for successful reintegration. The possibility to renew civil documentation (for those able to do so), reconnect with social networks, reach out to key local stakeholders (such as mukhtars and tribal leaders), strengthen livelihood prospects and socio-economic standing (when available, through skills training, livelihood opportunities, or cash-for-work), and improve mental health are all factors that contribute to better reintegration prospects on return. These outcomes are not a given, and residents have varying access to these services – however, those who are able to access this array of support services also have stronger prospects for successful reintegration. Second, the time spent in Jeddah-1 can be used to strengthen community acceptance, and thereby the likelihood of successful reintegration. Many communities appear to trust Al Hol returnees more when they have transited through Jeddah-1 camp and the associated

¹⁸¹ MEAC, *Interview #14 with mukhtar in west Nineveh* (Nineveh, September 2022).

¹⁸² MEAC, *Interview #8 with security actor in west Nineveh* (Nineveh, September 2022).

¹⁸³ MEAC, *Interview #6 with mukhtar in west Nineveh* (Nineveh, September 2022).

¹⁸⁴ MEAC, *Interview #9 with tribal leader in Anbar* (Anbar, September 2022); MEAC, *Interview #19 with religious figure in Anbar* (Anbar, September 2022); MEAC, *Interview #12 with mukhtar in Anbar* (Anbar, September 2022).

¹⁸⁵ MEAC, *Interview #16 with mukhtar in Anbar* (Anbar, September 2022).

¹⁸⁶ MEAC, *Interview #5 with mukhtar in Anbar* (Anbar, September 2022).

government security screening process and rehabilitation programme.¹⁸⁷ Those who felt time in Jeddah-1 would make a difference justified their view on the basis that the Government could conduct security screening¹⁸⁸ and provide psychological rehabilitation to families.¹⁸⁹

Long-term Vulnerability to Recruitment or Influence by Armed Groups

In the long-term, there is a risk that armed groups (such as ISIL) may utilize shortcomings in reintegration to prey on underlying grievances.¹⁹⁰ Failure to resolve the documentation issue, particularly for children, is of particularly high concern. Without legal documentation, children cannot attend government schools and face limitations in accessing healthcare and social welfare. Moreover, the repercussions extend into adulthood, when those without documents are unable to cross checkpoints without risk of arrest, and therefore cannot access employment or daily labour beyond their own village (putting them at high risk of long-term unemployment); they also cannot obtain a formal job, get legally married, or access government services. This will undoubtedly result in social exclusion and marginalization, poor socio-economic status and poor mental health outcomes, which may push them towards opportunities offered by armed groups – in the words of one key stakeholder, to “the first person who offers them money” and enables them to survive.¹⁹¹ This situation also provides armed groups such as ISIL, or other groups associated with organized crime, an opportunity to generate rumours that this policy was an intentional punishment of the Sunni community on the part of the GoI, and may enable them to exploit grievances for recruitment purposes. Similarly, protracted or indefinite confinement in Jeddah-1 camp (as a result of the inability to obtain a sponsor, documentation, or community acceptance etc.) may also be exploited by armed groups such as ISIL as an intentional punishment of Sunni families and utilized for recruitment purposes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

- **Most communities were satisfied with the existing return protocol for Jeddah-1 returnees** which involves a government security clearance, a period of time in Jeddah-1 camp, and ‘standard’ reintegration assistance. This was based on the profile of current Jeddah-1 residents

¹⁸⁷ Based on data collected for the MEAC Iraq case study. Approximately one-quarter of respondents stated that the community is less comfortable with returnees who come directly from Al Hol and bypass Jeddah-1. See Dr. Jacqueline Parry and Yousif Khalid Khoshnaw, with Dr. Siobhan O’Neil and Dr. Juan Armando Torres Munguía, “Supporting the Reintegration of Families with Perceived ISIL Affiliation in Iraq,” MEAC Iraq, forthcoming.

¹⁸⁸ 90 per cent of respondents.

¹⁸⁹ 70 per cent of respondents.

¹⁹⁰ United States Institute of Peace and Wilson Center, [The Jihadi Threat: Isis, Al Qaeda, and Beyond](#) (Washington, DC: 2017).

¹⁹¹ MEAC, *Interview #29 with service provider in Jeddah-1 camp* (Jeddah-1, July 2022).

and returnees, which most communities did not perceive as a threat. However, if the profile of returnees from Al Hol changes and becomes more complex, community tolerance may change.

- **Communities that reject the return of any Jeddah-1 returnees require dedicated and immediate attention**, since Jeddah-1 residents who originate from these locations are unlikely to be able to return in the foreseeable future and find an alternate resettlement location. As such, these individuals face protracted – or even indefinite – confinement in Jeddah-1. This issue may become even more entrenched – and potentially more widespread – if the profile of Al Hol returnees becomes more complex with future returns.
- **The behaviour of many residents does change during their stay in Jeddah-1 camp**, even though targeted ‘rehabilitation’ activities designed to transform extremist behaviours or ideas are not provided. When people arrive in Jeddah-1 they are often overwhelmed by fear and anxiety; some display high rates of aggression, and a minority express ‘extremist’ beliefs. However, over time, people change their manner of dress, show greater empathy towards each other, socialize more, and display fewer psychological symptoms of stress.
- **Behavioural changes in Jeddah-1 are attributed mainly to environmental factors**. Positive influences on behaviour included the perception that Jeddah-1 is safe; there is access to services, psychosocial support, and livelihood activities; and residents have increased control over their futures. Additionally, the anticipation of return to ‘normal’ life, improved access to information, and respectful treatment by authorities and service providers were thought to influence behavioural shifts.
- **Some residents have markedly less control over their future and departure from Jeddah-1 than others, which puts them at high risk of protracted or indefinite confinement and poor reintegration outcomes**. This includes people who cannot renew their civil documentation, those who cannot return due to lack of approval or poor community acceptance, those with a close relative who is accused of committing crimes under ISIL, and those with poor access to information. Female headed households are disproportionately affected.
- **Female headed households face higher barriers to return and reintegration**. For example, female headed households spent longer in Jeddah-1 due to higher barriers to return; were less likely to return to their original neighbourhood;¹⁹² were more likely to be required to obtain a sponsor¹⁹³ and struggle to secure one;¹⁹⁴ were more likely to have a close relative detained, convicted, or sentenced due to accusations of ISIL-related crimes;¹⁹⁵ and were more likely to

¹⁹² 92 per cent of male respondents had returned to their original neighbourhood, whereas only 75 per cent of female headed households had managed to do so.

¹⁹³ Of the respondents who had already returned from Jeddah-1 camp, 57 per cent of female headed households and only 4 per cent of male returnees had to obtain a sponsor.

¹⁹⁴ 14 per cent of female heads of household versus only 3 per cent of male heads of household reported that they could not depart Jeddah-1 camp as they were unable to secure a sponsor.

¹⁹⁵ One-third of female heads of household had a close relative detained, convicted, or sentenced due to accusations related to the war with ISIL (compared to 2 per cent of men).

face opposition to their return,¹⁹⁶ threats from the community,¹⁹⁷ and discrimination in the community.

- Female headed households experience lower rates of community acceptance due in part to their perceived proximity to ISIL and weaker family support and social networks.** Female heads of household are often perceived as more closely affiliated to ISIL, given that one-third have a close relative detained, convicted, or sentenced due to ISIL-related crimes, compared to male respondents. Female heads of household often receive weaker family support, meaning that many cannot rely on their family to encourage community acceptance, and also have much weaker and narrower social networks than men. A third contributing factor may be that a substantial number of female headed households do not return to their area of origin and may face stronger community rejection in an area of relocation.
- People with weak social networks find it harder to meet the departure requirements and have greater difficulty reintegrating.** People who remained long-term in Jeddah-1 had significantly weaker social networks than those who had already managed to return. Social networks make a vital difference to both rehabilitation and reintegration: they are the primary way that returnees access accurate information about return conditions, connect with key stakeholders to facilitate the return process, and receive support to reintegrate. Female heads of household are disproportionately affected by weak social networks: they were less likely to be in contact with family members prior to return;¹⁹⁸ experienced less family support compared to men;¹⁹⁹ and unlike men, they could not rely on friends for support.²⁰⁰
- Those who cannot find a sponsor are at high risk of protracted – if not indefinite – confinement in Jeddah-1 camp.** Moreover, the pressure to find a sponsor in order to leave puts female heads of household at high risk of forcible marriage and other forms of exploitation. The issue of sponsorship requires dedicated and immediate attention to identify better methods for securing a sponsor, or alternatives when this is not possible, particularly if the complexity of the profiles returning from Al Hol changes.

¹⁹⁶ Of those still in Jeddah-1 camp, almost 20 per cent of female heads of household reported opposition to their return from tribal leaders, relatives, neighbours, and local authorities, versus only 7 per cent of male respondents.

¹⁹⁷ Female headed households were more likely to delay their return from Jeddah-1 camp because they faced threats from the community: 7 per cent of female heads of household versus only 1 per cent of male heads of household in Jeddah-1 camp reported that they had not yet returned because they faced threats from the community. In addition, female heads of household were also more likely to be threatened: in the past month, 14 per cent of female heads of household versus only 4 per cent of male respondents reported that they received threats. Asked why they were treated poorly or threatened, most women attributed it to perceptions related to the war and because they came from Al Hol or Jeddah-1 camp.

¹⁹⁸ 91 per cent of male Jeddah-1 respondents were in touch with family members versus only 75 per cent of female heads of household amongst the sample of current Jeddah-1 residents.

¹⁹⁹ 57 per cent of male Jeddah-1 respondents versus 47 per cent of female Jeddah-1 respondents stated that they could rely on family members for financial support, and 57 per cent of male Jeddah-1 respondents versus 51 per cent of female Jeddah-1 respondents stated that they could rely on family members to feel accepted.

²⁰⁰ 69 per cent of male Jeddah-1 respondents expected to rely on friends for financial support and to feel accepted, versus only 3 per cent of female Jeddah-1 respondents.

- **The inability to renew civil documentation significantly undermines both ‘rehabilitation’ and reintegration.** It undermines virtually all transition outcomes, including access to education, access to livelihoods, socio-economic status, mental health, and social inclusion. It puts children and adults at risk of protracted confinement in Jeddah-1 camp, as well as future recruitment or influence by armed groups. Female headed households have higher rates of missing documentation (95 per cent have children with missing documentation) and are less likely to understand the process for renewal.
- **The socioeconomic status of Jeddah-1 returnees was poor.** Almost no Jeddah-1 residents or returned Jeddah-1 residents had any savings and virtually all faced difficulty in meeting their daily needs. Very few returnees had a reliable income. Two-thirds of all female heads of household and one-third of male respondents did not have access to their PDS ration card.
- **From a community perspective, ‘successful’ reintegration of Jeddah-1 returnees revolves around community acceptance** (namely, the absence of revenge attacks or other community problems.) This also means that the ‘ordinary’ reintegration needs of Jeddah-1 returnees cannot be addressed without first, or at least concurrently, addressing the needs of ISIL victims.
- **The time spent in Jeddah-1 which is viewed locally as a period of ‘rehabilitation’ – even though there are no specific ‘rehabilitation’ interventions offered - is closely connected to the success of reintegration.** First, it gives residents the opportunity to strengthen their prospects for successful reintegration by renewing civil documentation, reconnecting with social networks, reaching out to key local stakeholders (such as mukhtars and tribal leaders), strengthening socio-economic prospects, and improving psychosocial health. Second, the time spent in Jeddah-1 encourages higher rates of community acceptance.

Recommendations

The findings and conclusions outlined above form the basis for these recommendations, which are directed primarily to the UN and its partners.

- **Develop interventions specifically for those at high risk of protracted (or indefinite) confinement in Jeddah-1 camp.** This should include identifying those within the camp population who fall within the ‘at risk’ categories identified in this study; designing interventions to address their specific barriers to departure (examples listed in the recommendations below); and taking a case management approach to ensuring that individuals are supported to achieve a timely departure from Jeddah-1 camp. These interventions should also focus on strengthening the control that individuals have over the departure process and their future.
- **Advocate for the issuance of civil documentation for all Jeddah-1 residents prior to return.** Support the government to provide accurate information about obtaining civil documentation in

areas of return and monitor the experience of returnees to see if adjustments in messaging are required.

- **The Government of Iraq should remove or adjust the restrictive requirements that make obtaining civil documentation inaccessible for most families with perceived ISIL affiliation.** Specifically, it should adopt an exception on supporting documentation requirements for children born during the conflict who lack birth registration and whose families do not have security constraints; and standardize procedures for the issuance of death certificates and marriage certificates for men who disappeared during the conflict, including via alternative means of community verification (e.g., a letter from a mukhtar).
- **The Government of Iraq should ensure that civil documentation is issued in accordance with the 2019 Ministry of the Interior directive to all Civil Affairs Departments (which recognizes the right to an identity under Iraqi law)** and that additional requirements, such as multiple DNA samples and security clearances, are not incorporated into the application procedures. This should include a directive overturning the Court of Cassation decision that prevents the issuing of civil documentation to many families with perceived ISIL affiliation.
- **Target the areas that reject the return of any Jeddah-1 returnees with tailored interventions to encourage community tolerance,** at least for the return of low-risk profiles. This requires understanding what each specific community requires in order to increase acceptance, and may include compensation to victims, reconstruction of areas damaged during the war, or social dialogue.
- **Encourage and strengthen the support and activities in Jeddah-1 camp – and promote a safe and respectful environment there - to encourage positive behavioural changes among residents.** This includes ensuring the ongoing safety of the camp even as profiles change, addressing gaps in service provision, increasing access to specialized MHPSS support, expanding access to livelihood activities, and ensuring respectful treatment by authorities and service providers.
- **Support Jeddah-1 residents (and particularly female heads of household) to strengthen and expand their social networks, including family relationships.** This may involve strengthening the work of the Visitor Centre, encouraging key local stakeholders and family members to visit Jeddah-1 camp, providing access to phone credit or a means to contact relatives, and offering dialogue or mediation support where required.
- **Support female heads of household** to secure a sponsor or, where sponsorship is elusive, advocate for alternatives to sponsorship.
- **Initiate dialogue at the provincial level as to whether disavowal is required as a condition to return,** given that it can deprive women of their rights and often goes against the wishes of female heads of household in particular. In a separate study, community trust in the disavowment

process was relatively low and only a minority (25 per cent) expected returnees to disavow relatives,²⁰¹ which suggests that this process is not always community driven and will not necessarily lead to community rejection if it were removed as a requirement for return.

- **UN programming should focus on interventions that address social relations and social inclusion of Jeddah-1 returnees**, alongside reintegration assistance (such as livelihood support and housing reconstruction). Asked what the UN could do to make Jeddah-1 residents feel safer after departure, Jeddah-1 respondents focused on issues that relate to social inclusion: issuing civil documentation, conducting social cohesion activities, encouraging community acceptance, and helping to resolve tribal disputes.
- **Advocate for greater reliability of security clearances issued by the Government in areas outside the Kurdish Region of Iraq**. Specifically, advocate for stronger guarantees from the Government that the security clearance granted in Jeddah-1 will protect residents from future arrests.
- **Involve mukhtars and tribal leaders as central players in reintegration assistance for Jeddah-1 returnees**. Given the sensitivity around social relations and the need to utilize programming to build community acceptance, it is vital to deal with local actors that hold close connections with community members (including victim families).

²⁰¹ See Dr. Jacqueline Parry and Yousif Khalid Khoshnaw, with Dr. Siobhan O'Neil and Dr. Juan Armando Torres Munguía, "Supporting the Reintegration of Families with Perceived ISIL Affiliation in Iraq," MEAC Iraq, forthcoming.

