

Migrant Mapping in Iraq from 2014 to the Present: Understanding the Effects of Influencing Factors on Human Migration

Ashna Abdulrahman Kareem Zada*

Department of Cartography and Geoinformatics, Faculty of Informatics, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

Abstract

Migration refers to the process through which a living being moves from one place to another, oftentimes referring to a seasonal or cyclical pattern. Within the context of this paper, migration is applied to displaced individuals having to travel from their prior home location to another place. This process, sometimes referred to as a migrant flight due to the fact that the individual is traveling from one place to another while fleeing a particular situation, can occur as a result of internal conflict or as a result of natural or manmade disasters.

In the case of Iraq, migrants are fleeing the country due to high levels of internal conflict present within the nation, sparked by unchecked violence and the propose of democracy that has gone unmet. The country consists of several conurbations, as well as some of the country's most rural and sparsely populated counties.

The purpose of this article is to document the migrations that have occurred within this region since 2014, allowing for a comparison of the specific events that have influenced regional migration, mapping out the thematic patterns and serving as a visual manifestation of the identified results. Mapping was completed using ArcMap, a geographic information system (GIS) application.

Keywords: Migration; Iraq; GIS; Thematic maps

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore the movement of one country's citizens to another country through the process of migration. Specifically, the focus of this investigation is the migration of Iraqi citizens from 2014 to present. In order to explore this topic, however, it is first necessary to understand the different aspects and components that can lead to or influence migration patterns, both within a given region or within a specific country.

Generally, in reports and publications, the ratio of migration is recorded and articulated in total number of individuals moved per thousand persons moved. Furthermore, since migration is observed as influencing the demographic profile of a country, the total number of deaths and births within a given population should also be acknowledged as influences on a country's demographic facts. In addition, various factors influence the migration context for a region, including political, social, economic, and environmental factors [1].

In a typical exploration of migration patterns, migration is discussed within the context of, and linked to, the economic context of the nation, expressed through analysis of available labour. However, this relationship to the economic context does not mean that other factors do not influence, or are not influenced by, migration. The best example is the fact that environmental changes across the world have influenced the rates and trends of migration in a significant manner. Moreover, the political context also influences migration ratios because governmental policies are designed with rates of fertility within the governed population, education levels within the general population, skillsets of the general population, and the specific occupations present within the general population [2].

In Iraq, perhaps one of the largest influences on migration patterns ultimately leads back to the current political system. Within the context of migration in Iraq, the political context refers to the individuals in power within Iraq, exploring the allocation of

valuation, including identification of "who gets what, when, and how, the steering mechanism which controls the ship of state, and having a monopoly on the legitimate use of force" [3].

The political system affects everyone in the country. The political movement in Iraq occurred as a reaction to the foreign occupation of Iraqi land, and the separation of states. For the purpose of this article, the research will be confined to the political situations leading to migration in Iraq for the period 2014 to the present, comparing the underlying causes of migration to see what types of political factors caused people to migrate into and out of certain areas. Moreover, Iraq is geographically diverse, from the urban central areas of the conurbation to the rural and lightly populated counties because of ethnically diverse regional population.

Methodology and Data Collection

The results of this research were dependent on the different types of data collected from different sources. All Iraq political boundaries with religions and governorates were provided by the Ministry of Municipality of the Kurdistan Region Government, Iraq. Information ISIS data was obtained from (<https://liveuamap.com/>). Internal Displaced people (IDPs) data were downloaded from (<http://iraqdtm.iom.int/IDPsML.aspx>). The population of the governorates of Iraq, according to census results and latest official estimates without Geographic Coordinate System, are stored in Table 1. This information was downloaded from (<https://www>.

*Corresponding author: Ashna Abdulrahman Kareem Zada, Department of Cartography and Geoinformatics, Faculty of Informatics, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary, Tel: 0036202720696; E-mail: Ashnakareem88@gmail.com

Received May 14, 2017; Accepted June 28, 2018; Published July 08, 2018

Citation: Zada AAK (2018) Migrant Mapping in Iraq from 2014 to the Present: Understanding the Effects of Influencing Factors on Human Migration. J Geogr Nat Disast 8: 224. doi: [10.4172/2167-0587.1000224](https://doi.org/10.4172/2167-0587.1000224)

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Name	Area (km ²)	Census 17/10/1977	Census 17/10/1987	Census 17/10/1997	Estimate 17/10/2009	Estimate 17/10/2013	Estimate 17/10/2015	Total
Anbar	135,000	466,100	820,690	1,023,736	1,483,359	1,330,600	1,715,100	6,974,585
Babylon	5,800	592,000	1,109,574	1,181,751	1,729,666	1,604,280	1,999,000	8,222,071
Baghdad	5,200	3,189,700	3,841,268	5,423,964	6,702,538	8,375,860	7,877,900	35,416,430
Basrah	19,070	1,008,600	872,176	1,556,445	2,405,434	2,245,430	2,818,800	10,925,955
Dahuk	10,000	250,600	293,304	402,970	1,072,324	696,859	1,252,300	3,978,357
Diyala	14,700	587,800	961,073	1,135,223	1,371,035	1,567,290	1,584,900	7,222,021
Erbil	12,000	541,500	770,439	1,095,992	1,532,081	1,691,740	1,797,700	7,441,452
Halbja	880	No data	No data	No data	89,958	No data	105,600	196,438
Kerbala	5,030	269,800	469,282	594,235	1,013,254	823,721	1,180,500	4,355,822
Kirkuk	10,500	495,400	601,219	753,171	1,325,853	921,246	1,548,200	5,655,589
Missan	16,070	372,600	487,448	637,126	922,890	631,360	1,078,100	4,145,594
Muthanna	51,740	215,600	315,815	436,825	683,126	1,112,210	788,300	3,603,616
Najaf	28,820	389,700	590,078	775,042	1,221,228	2,941,400	1,425,700	7,371,968
Ninewa	36,700	1,105,700	1,479,430	2,042,852	3,106,948	1,085,910	3,612,300	12,469,840
Qadissiya	8,150	423,000	559,805	751,331	1,077,614	1,147,450	1,250,200	5,217,550
SalahAldin	26,000	363,800	726,138	904,432	1,337,786	1,980,930	1,544,100	6,883,186
Slemani	20,000	690,600	951,723	1,362,739	1,694,895	1,085,240	1,990,300	7,795,497
Thi-Qar	12,900	623,000	921,066	1,184,796	1,744,398	1,712,210	2,029,300	8,227,670
Wassit	17,150	415,100	564,670	783,614	1,150,079	1,127,030	1,335,200	5,392,843
Total		12,000,600	16,335,198	22,046,244	31,664,466	32,080,766	36,933,500	151,496,484

Table 1: The population of the governorates in Iraq.

citypopulation.de/Iraq-Cities.html). Table 1 shows that the 2009, 2013 and 2015 figures, respectively, are not census results; the data is uncertain and estimated due to the volatile situation in Iraq after years of wars, sanctions, and conflicts. For this reason, there are no new statistics after 1997 in Iraq. As a last note, usually statics covering Iraq are collected during autumn.

The ARC/INFO Map software is the best tool for use in the completion of this type of research. It aids in data calculation as, following input of the map data, it generates a table and displays the final results. As it is the most accurate and precise tool available, as compared to other methods, justification for use of this software is present. In addition to generating analysed results, the tool can be utilized to create thematic maps. The generated maps allow for emphasis on a given theme or topic, layering that theme onto the base map to show the relationship between the theme and the geographical constructs of the region, similar to the integrated use of a geographic information system, or GIS. Still further, use of the software enabled the researcher to generate density maps over specific unit areas, also known as choropleth maps, providing representation of different groups of individuals within the region.

Use of ARC/INFO Map software in the creation of the presented thematic maps was a justified means of analysis, however, like all methods of analysis, certain advantages and disadvantages are present in its use. Advantages for using the software to generate thematic maps included ease in visualization of population within a given region, clearly defining regions through the generation of choropleth maps, both with and without thematic layering, and ease of indication of differences in land use practices. These benefits were not possible without certain disadvantages, or limitations. Disadvantages of using the software to generate thematic maps included the potential for false impressions due to variations in boundary changes, the potential difficulty in distinguishing regional variances due to map shading, a propensity to incur the application of inductive, rather than deductive, reasoning, and the potential for arbitrary boundaries.

A further note on the software used refers to a subset type of thematic maps employed within the analysis of collected data. Dot density maps are a type of map employed in thematic analysis; these maps utilize dots, or points, overlaid onto the given base map region in order to identify relative population distributions within a given geographic area. This type of map is commonly employed in the identification of livestock, individuals, or businesses within a region. This particular type of thematic map allows for ease of understanding of the dataset, as clustering is quickly evident. The dot density maps created during analysis use a one to many ratio in dot creation. One dot refers to 100 families or 500 individuals, allowing for improved identification of internal displaced people (IDP) data. The use of this software allows any individual, regardless of familiarity with the software, to quickly understand the economic, political, and environmental factors influencing different areas, providing a large quantity of data in a simple and direct manner.

Discussion and Results

Iraq, located in the west of Asia, is bordered on the north by Turkey, on the east by Iran, on the south by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, on the southeast by the Persian Gulf, and on the west by the Syrian Arab Republic and Jordan. A map of Iraq and its bordering geographic features and countries is shown in Figure 1, below. Iraq is 438,320 square kilometers. The country, shaped like a basin, includes the Great Mesopotamian alluvial plain, a region situated between the Euphrates River and the Tigris River [4]. Geographically, the country includes both desert plains and rugged mountain regions in its northern region and low elevation marshes near its southern borders. Both the Tigris River and the Euphrates River run through the center of the country, flowing from northwest to southeast.

Denizens of Iraq are often affiliated with a societal group, in addition to being citizens of Iraq. Societal groups found within Iraq include Shia, Sunni Kurd, Sunni Arab, Yazidi, and Turkoman; Figure 2 displays the concentrations of different societal groups within Iraq's borders. The Sunni and Shia societal groups are founded in religion, and a high number of historical and political conflicts have occurred

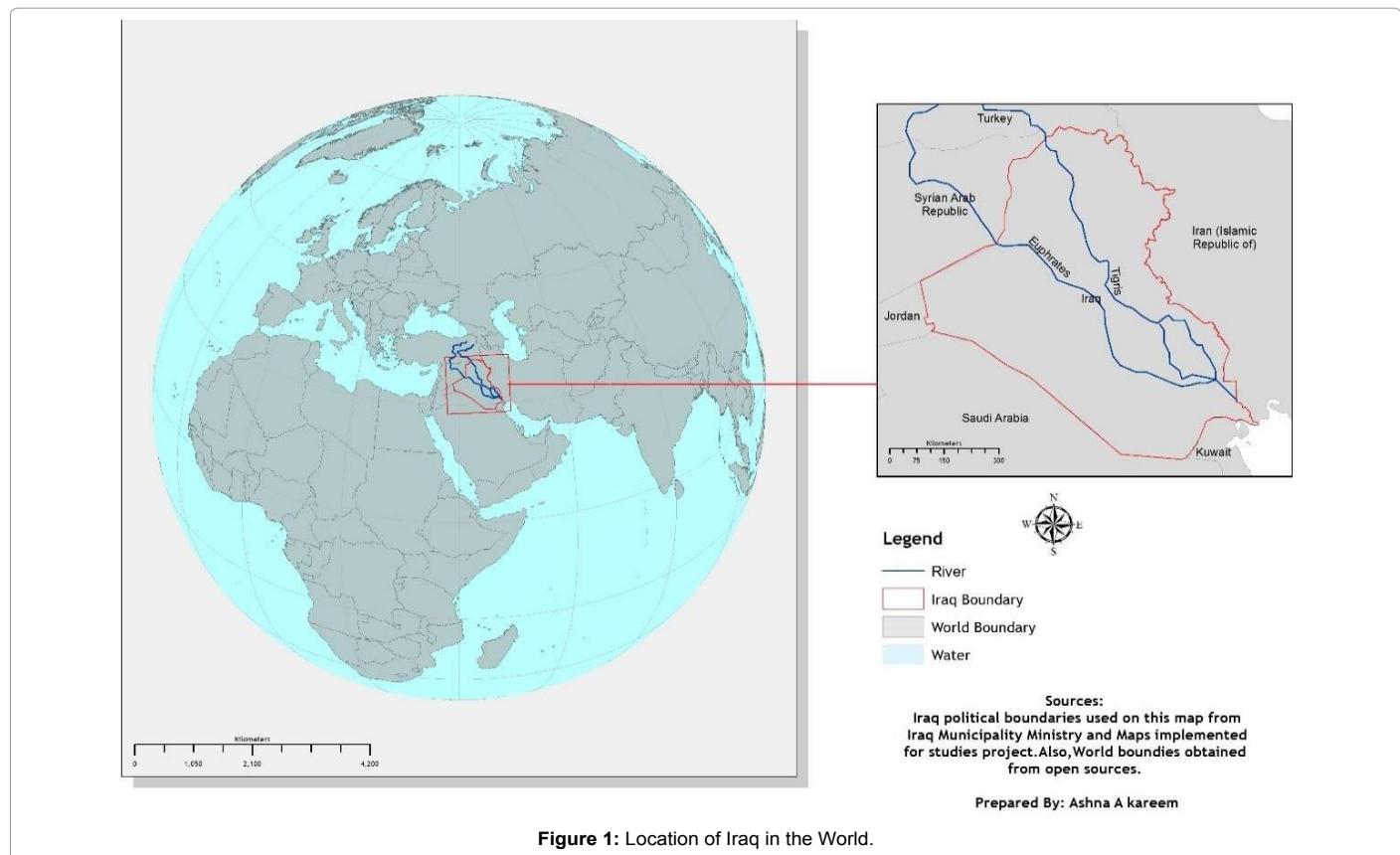


Figure 1: Location of Iraq in the World.

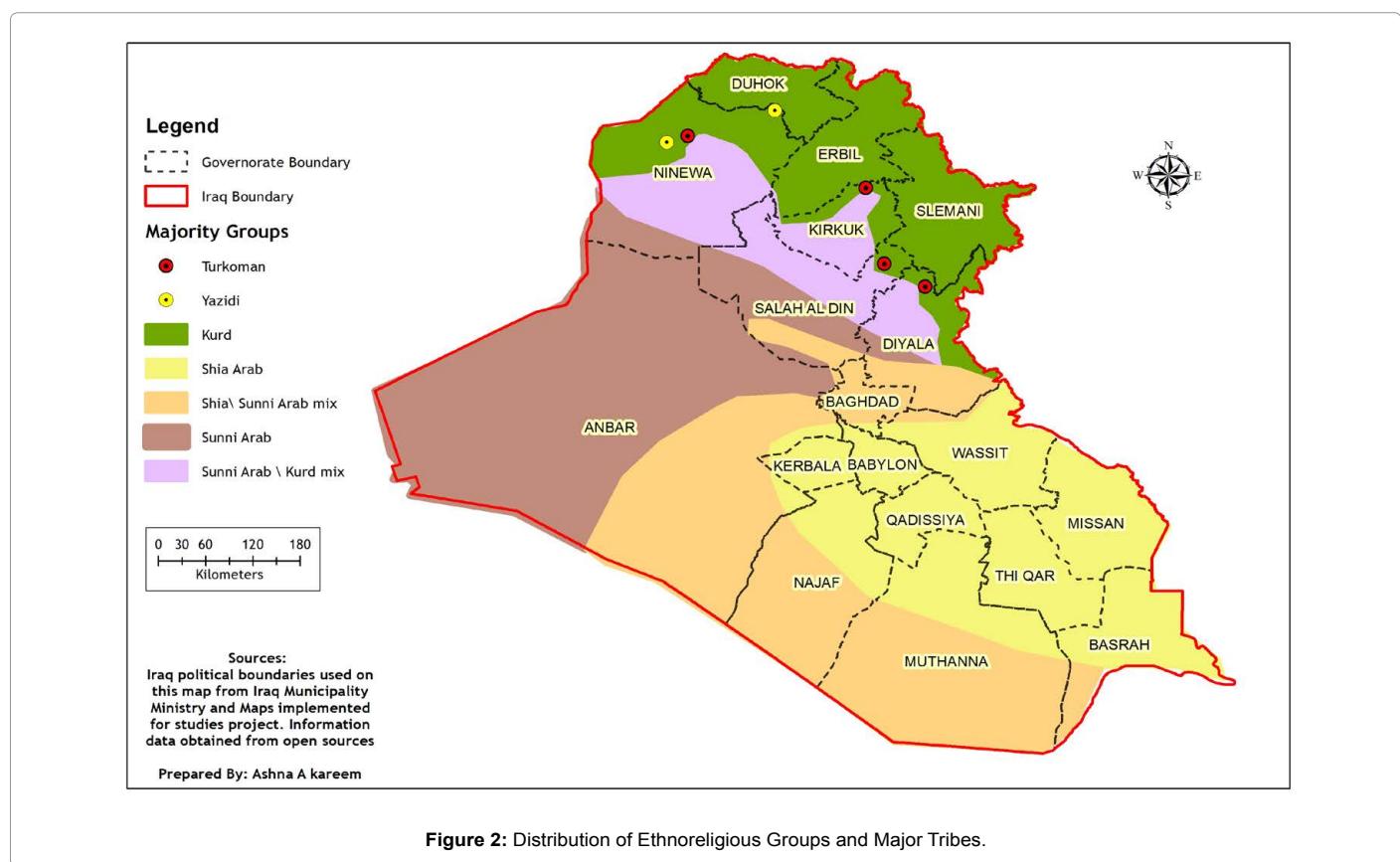


Figure 2: Distribution of Ethnoreligious Groups and Major Tribes.

between the two groups due to the adopted perspectives of the groups on Islamic history.

Iraq was not a naturally formed country; it did not grow organically as a result of a shared societal construct, vision, or unified set of laws [5]. The country was formed as a result of the dealings of French and British diplomats following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Analysis of the country suggests that due to war and strife within the nation, it is possible that the country would not be able to survive as individual nation states [6]. Without political intervention, it is possible that, at some point in the future, the country may break up into three regions, separating the nation between three social groups, the Sunnis, the Shi'ites, and the Kurds, as shown in Figure 3 [7].

The Sunni and Shi'ites are religious based social groups, while the Kurds are an ethnic social group, non-Arabic in nature, who speaks a language that is similar to Persian. The majority of individuals who identify as Kurd follow the Sunni Muslim religion.

Figure 3 explores the locations of the Kurds, the Sunni who do not identify as Kurds, and the Shi'ites. The Kurds are concentrated in northern Iraq, while the Shi'ites is concentrated in the central and southern portions of the country. The Sunni are concentrated to the north and west of the centre of the country, situated north of Baghdad and along the Euphrates River and Tigris River. Due to variations in the religious beliefs of the Sunnis and the Shi'ites, political turmoil was historically common within the region as a result of dissenting viewpoints within the nation.

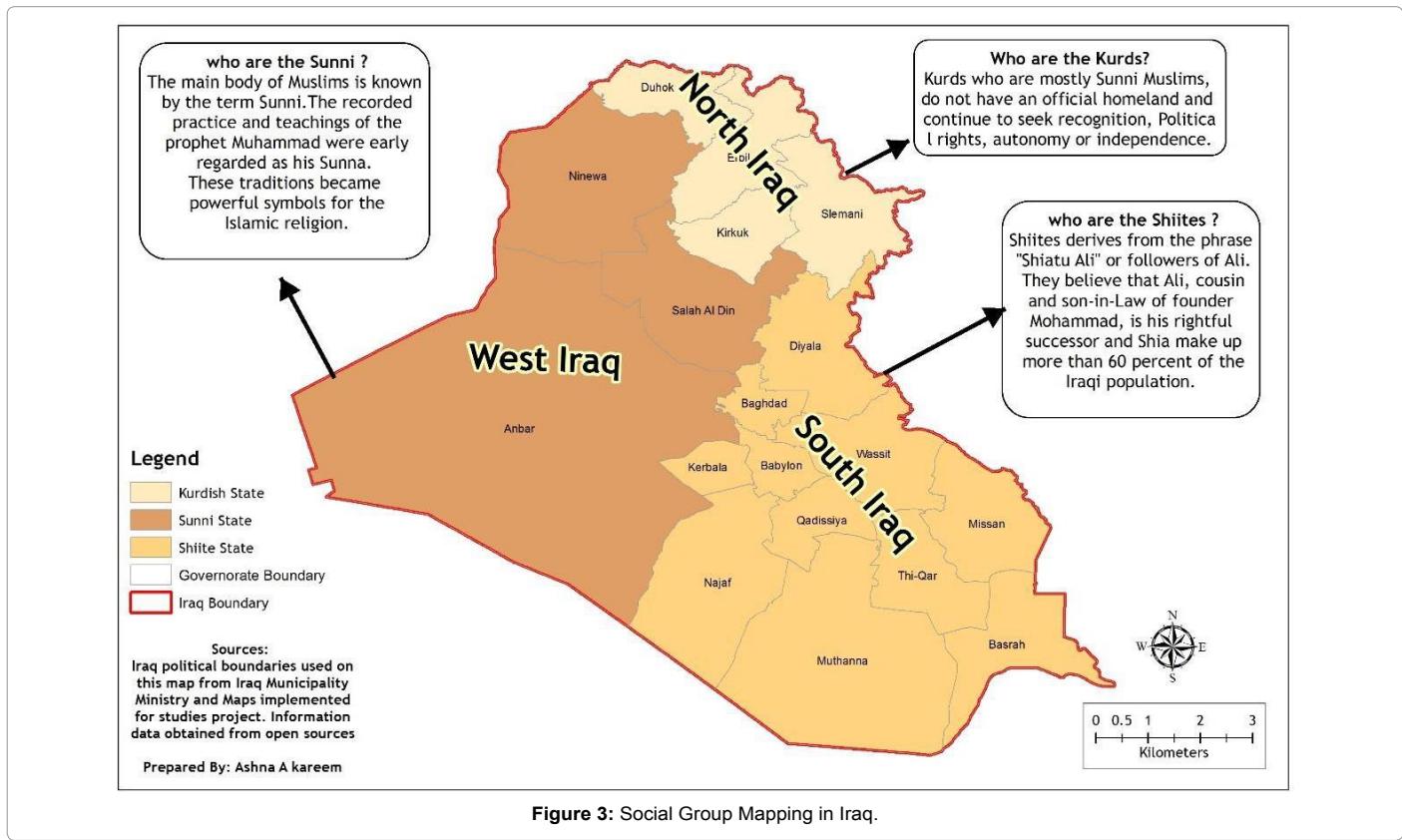
Thematic maps offer a graphic or visual representation of a geographical location overlaid with spatially related concepts. Point Symbol Data in Figure 4 shows the distribution of governorates in Iraq. A dot distribution map, employed in Figure 4, shows the total

population in Iraq, wherein one dot represents fifteen thousand people. Within this map, it is clear that places like Baghdad and the upper south are the most densely populated parts of the country.

Figure 4 symbolizes that the population growth increased significantly in Iraq from 1977 to 1987 to 1997 to 2013 to 2015, respectively. For instance, in 2015 the population of Iraq grew by approximately 36,933,500 million, as compared to the previous year's population, shown in Table 1.

Adler and Gielen conducted research to examine the availability of resources for the people who were currently living in a given country [8]. In some countries, availability of migration related information is easily accessible; however in other countries, like Iraq, it has always been difficult to determine the population changes. When countries have accurate and reliable information, migration rates and ratios can be calculated easily, reflecting authentic findings and results [9].

The population of Iraq during 2013 was estimated to be about 3 million, with an urban and rural ratio, as shown in Table 1 and represented graphically in Figure 4. This estimation was driven by data collected from a USGS Landsat satellite in 2013 by the Ministry of Municipality in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Iraq's population has increased since that time in spite of a higher death rate and an exodus of refugees. This increase is due to larger than average birth rates, with an average of four children per Iraqi family combined with low infant mortality rates [10]. The age distribution of the population in Iraq is typical of a high fertility nation. While Iraq has a high growth and fertility rate, conflict present within the nation has resulted in widespread displacement, and additional outside influence on the nation, including the more than half a million deaths since the 2003 Iraq War, led by United States Army and called Operation Iraqi Freedom, have worked to further skew normal population projections for the region.



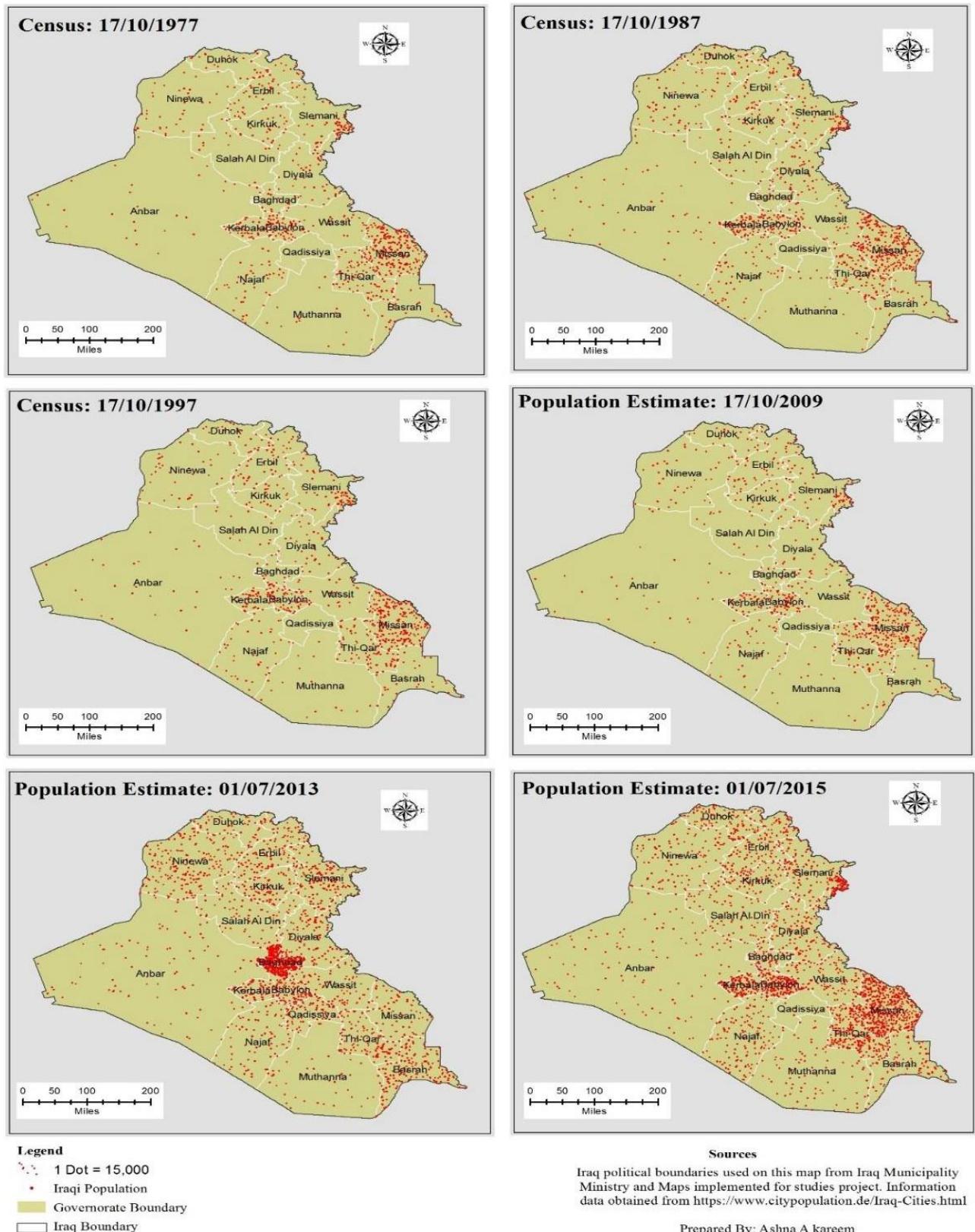


Figure 4: Populations in Iraqi Governorates.

Internal displacement is a further concern in Iraqi communities. In the history of Iraq, internal displacement occurred as a result of internal conflict, persecution stemming from political affiliation, general violence, or persecutions stemming from ethnic or religious reasons. Following the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, the nation had no time to recover before another war was sparked, the war of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL, versus the Islamic state, or IS. The faction ISIL traces its roots to 2004 with the formation of al Qaeda [11]. The war between ISIL and IS stems from a desire on the part of ISIL to create a caliphate spanning Syria, Iraq, and extending from there; within its borders, a stricter, more fundamentalist political regime with a heavy religious influence is the goal. On the 4th of June, in 2014, ISIL sparked a targeted offensive in the northern region of the country in its efforts to overthrow the IS. Figure 5 details the areas controlled by ISIL in 2014, with their reach spanning parts of Iraq and Syria, extending from the Mediterranean coast across the region to the southern area of Baghdad.

Since January 2014, heavy fighting between the Iraqi Security Forces and Armed Groups has resulted in instability, violence, and population displacement. Figure 6 displays the most recent data for IDPs from 2014 to 2018, obtained from the International Organization for Migration (2017). The IOM (2017) identified over 3 million Iraqis internally displaced by violence, as shown in Figure 6.

Public executions, crucifixions, and other acts were among the tactics employed by agents of ISIL, resulting in migration through internal displacement within the nation. Internal displaced persons

(IDPs) originated primarily in three provinces, fleeing Anbar, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din in order to escape from ISIL influence (Figure 5). Many of those becoming IDPs within the nation are groups or individuals who would not be treated well or who would suffer outright under ISIL's practices; single women, families with young children, individuals who follow the Christian faith, and those who identify as Yezidis have all become IDPs in light of the beliefs and political practices that ISIL is attempting to implement under rule (The Humanitarian Crisis in Iraq: Internal Displacement) [12]. Of further concern was the rumour in 2014 that ISIL was holding women and children as slaves, primarily from the Yezidi community, prompting more individuals to become IDPs.

The result of the ISIL vs. IS war has been the effective division of the country into three regions. The northern part of Iraq is controlled by Kurdistan Governorate forces and by their army, known as the Peshmarga. Other Iraq parts are under the Central Governorate forces and controlled with their armies except the remaining eastern south areas of Iraq took held by ISIL (Figure 7).

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) reported an estimation of 1.3 million people internally displaced as of June 2015, comprising approximately 42% of the IDP since 2014. These IDPs are living in areas controlled by the Republic of Iraq and held under military force [13]. The region of the country held by the Kurds held approximately 1.2 million IDPs alone, totalling almost 38% of the IDPs of the nation (IDMC, 2015). Estimates suggest that approximately

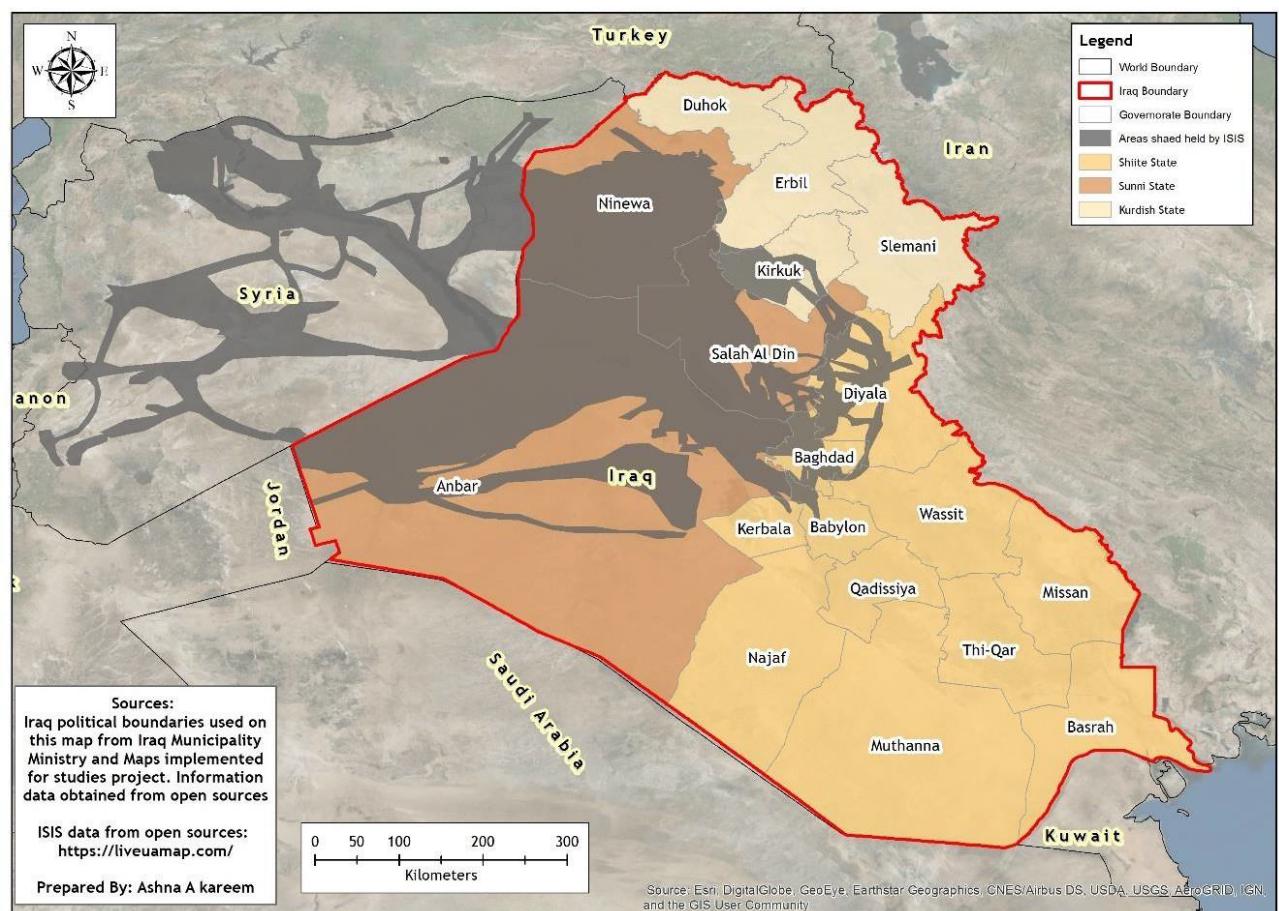
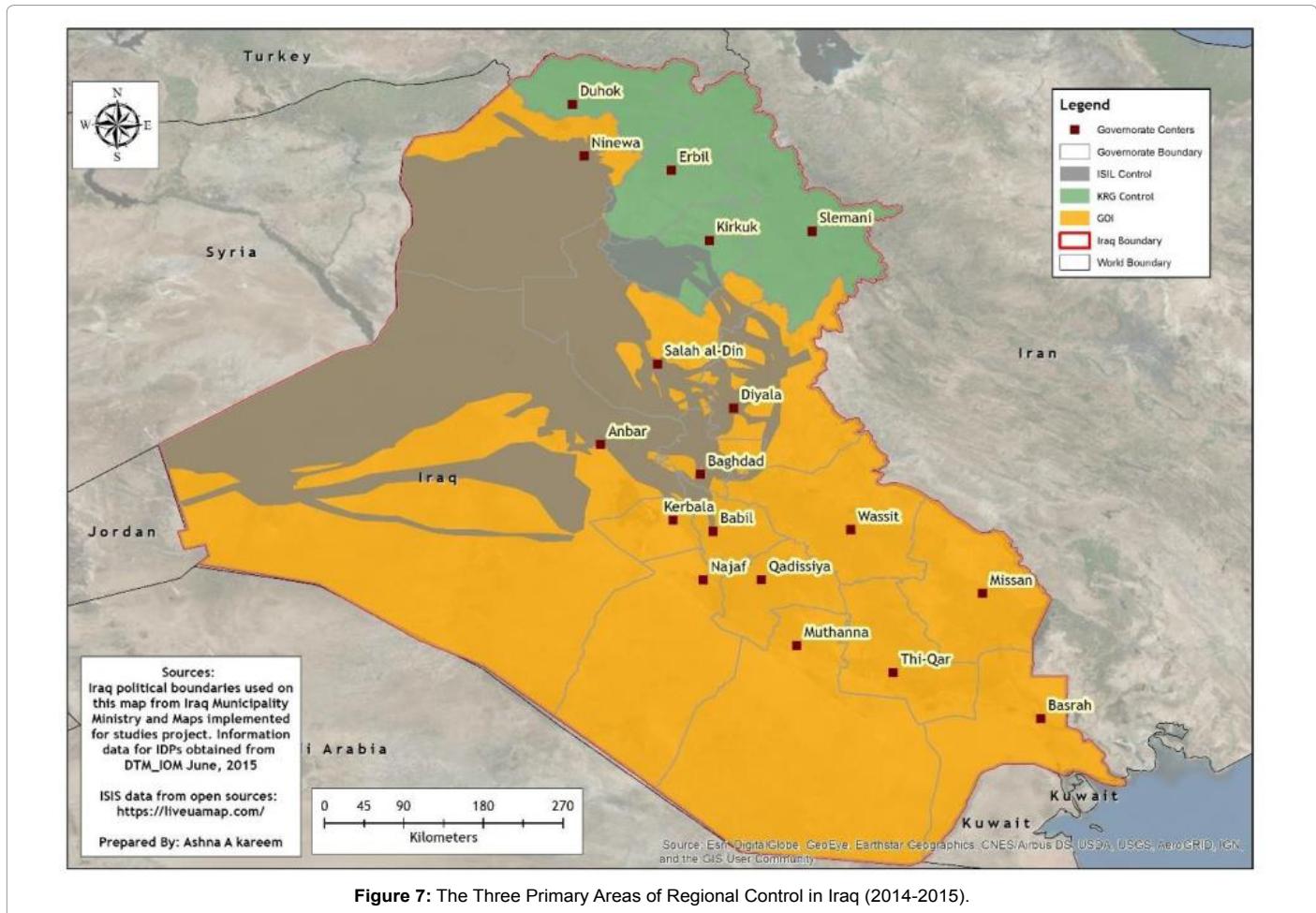
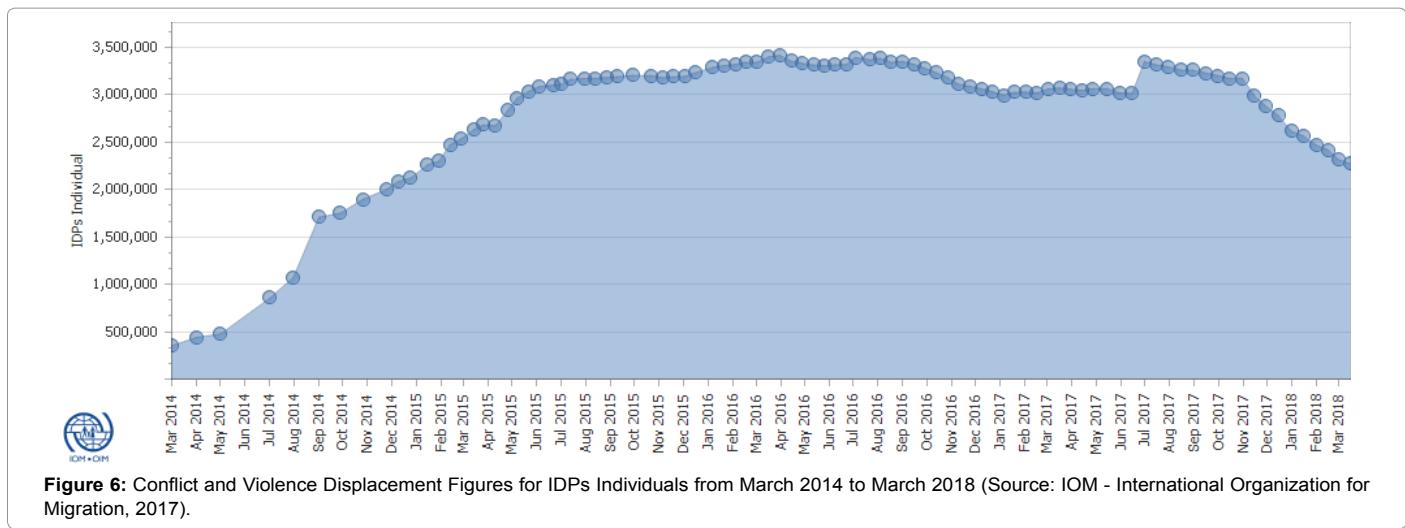


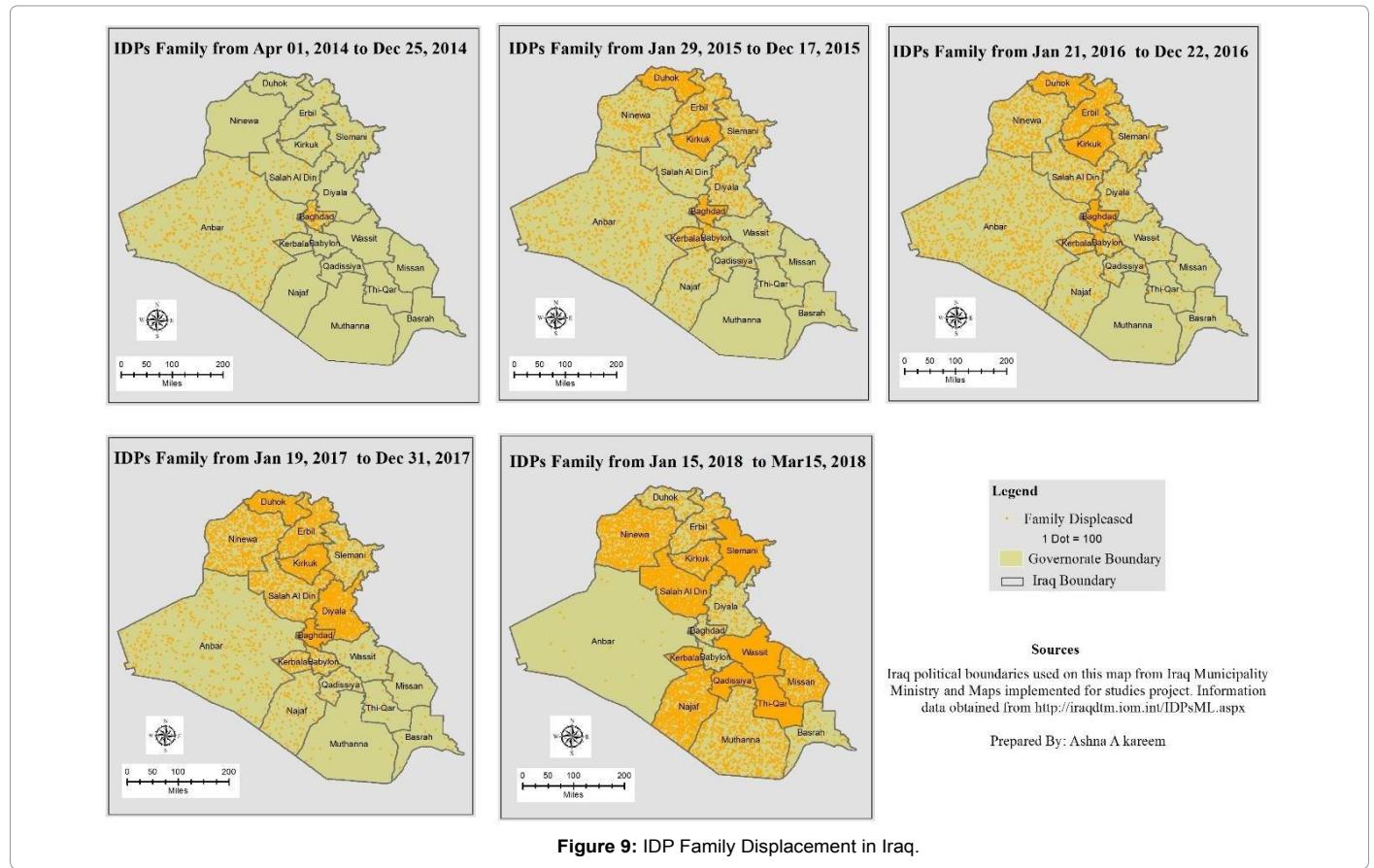
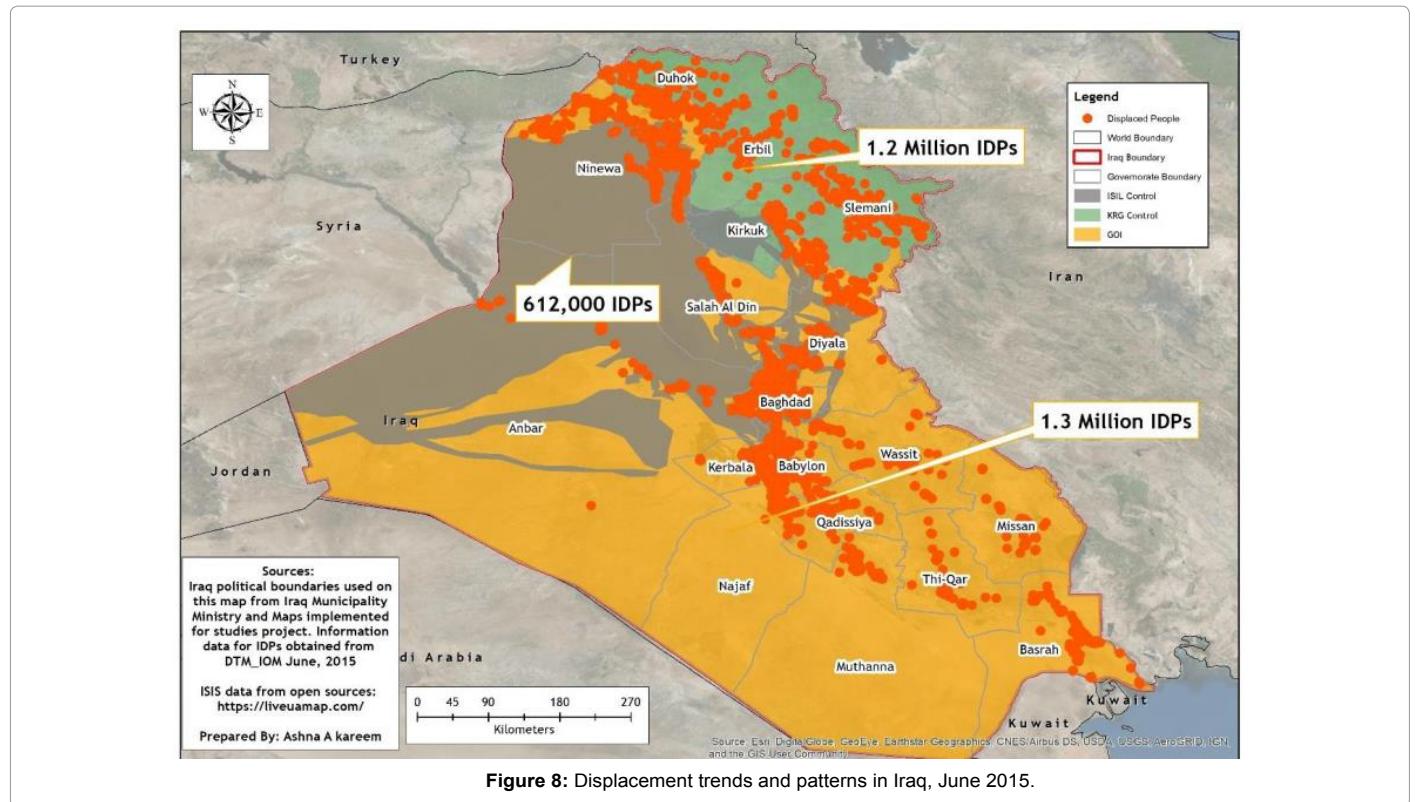
Figure 5: ISIL Controlled Lands in Iraq-2014.



612,000 IDPs remain in ISIL controlled areas, making up almost 20% of the IDP total for the nation (Figure 8).

Using a dot density map, it is possible to see variations in geographic population distribution within the Iraqi landscape from April 2014 to March 2018. Figures 9 and 10, respectively, indicate the increase in displaced persons from the start of the war to the present. Some, but

not all, variations in IDP populations coincide with battles, skirmishes, or airstrikes. It should be further noted that Figures 9 and 10 focuses on both internally displaced family units and individual IDPs, suggesting that if these figures are understood, the humanitarian crisis present within Iraq and its true toll on the individuals residing therein can be better understood.



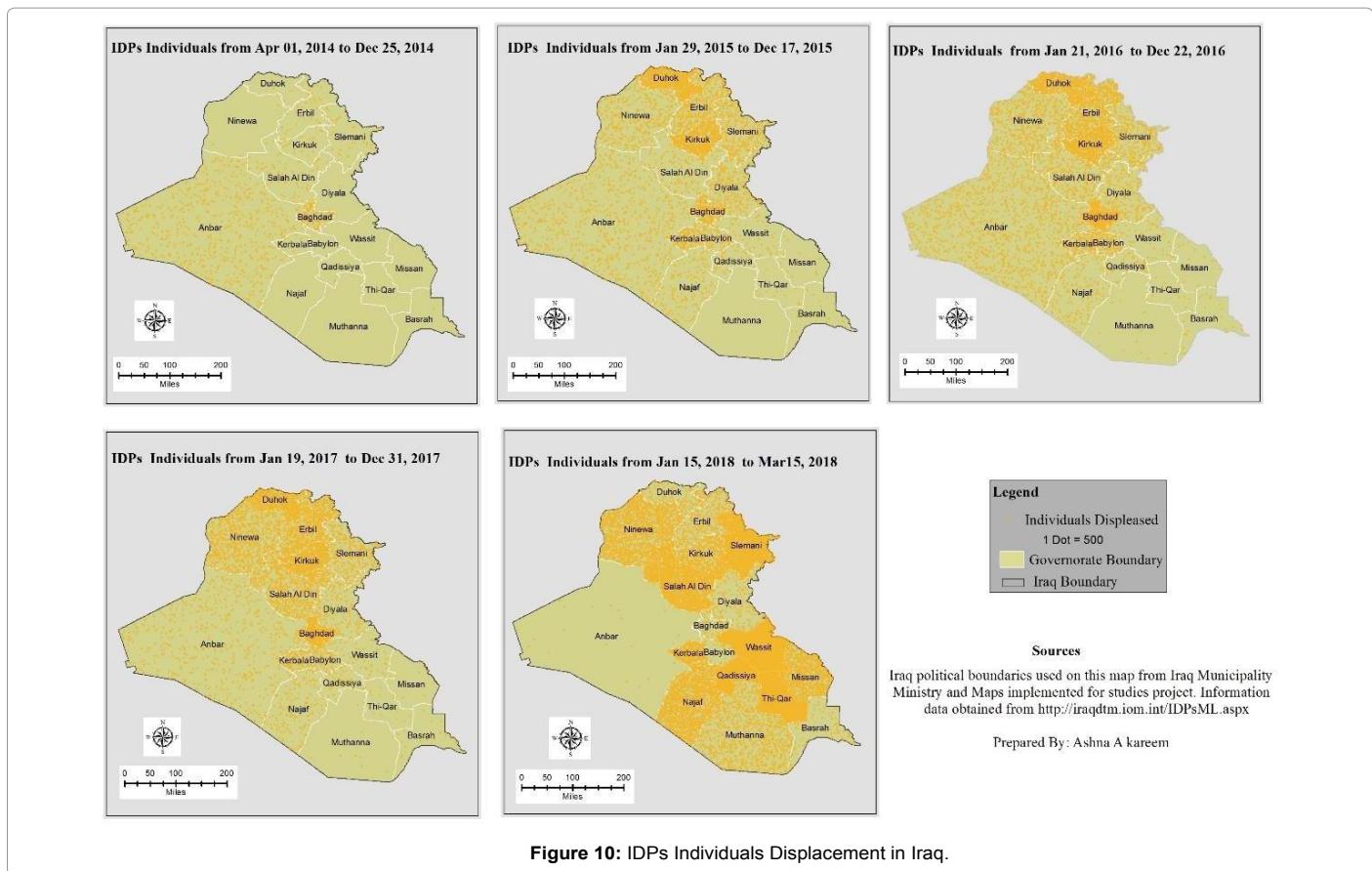


Figure 10: IDPs Individuals Displacement in Iraq.

IDPs have crossed no borders, nor do they seek refuge in other countries; instead, they have opted to remain within their home country to whatever degree possible, though the cost remains the same. Livelihoods, resources, and homes are lost, health status may be compromised, and educations are disrupted. The result is an impoverishment of millions of individuals, not only on the part of the IDPs, but on the part of those from whom they seek aid within their own country, as families and individuals take on the additional cost burden of caring for more than those for whom they have an immediate responsibility. The support systems in Iraq had only recently started to recover following the withdrawal of American troops were not equipped to address the needs of this many additional individuals and are on the verge of collapse once more.

More than 90% of the IDP population in Iraq desires to return to their original homes within the nation, as long as the ISIL vs. IS conflict can be resolved to the detriment of the ISIL. As the Kurds slowly work to reclaim their land from ISIS, IDPs whose homes are on that reclaimed land have started to return to their homes, reclaiming their villages and towns through resumption of their normal duties. As of March 2018, just over 3.5 million people had returned to their homes, as shown in Figure 11.

Those IDPs who have been able to return home make their homes in one of five different provinces: Diyala, Salah ad-Din, Anbar, Kirkuk, and Ninewa (Figure 12). Of these five reclaimed provinces, slightly more than half of the returning population has gone back to Salah ad-Din. Figures 12 and 13, respectively, offer density maps designed to represent the reclamations by Iraq's security forces and mobilized infantry within the provinces.

The deduction can be made that if all IDPs are able to reclaim their land, they will be able to maintain more engaging lifestyles. Such a deduction is based on the golden age of Iraq during the 1970s, wherein the national sentiment was one of maintaining current practices, emigration was down, and both the housing and the job market were growing.

The 1980s, on the other hand, resulted in high levels of emigration due to military service and a desire for families to be removed from the fighting in the conflicts between Iraq and Iran.

The 1990s saw Iraq experiencing an economic crisis due to sanctions placed on the country by the United States, leading to a still further increase in emigration.

The early 2000s saw the return of many of those who had emigrated, bringing back the population in tandem with U.S. troop occupations, only to have those hopes dashed with the presence of a civil war that resulted in increased emigration once more. ISIL's emergence resulted in a high level of displacement as well, though these displaced individuals are not considering emigration; instead they are attempting to hold on to that which was once possible within the country, the dream of the resurgence of the golden age.

Yet, in spite of this hope against the need to emigrate, one of the most pressing issues faced by minorities within Iraq stems from a lack of representation in the sphere of political influence. Not only does the government not provide any form of political representation when it comes to minority interests or concerns, the government neither recognizes nor protects minorities as defined by either their ethnic or indigenous status. These individuals, viewed primarily by

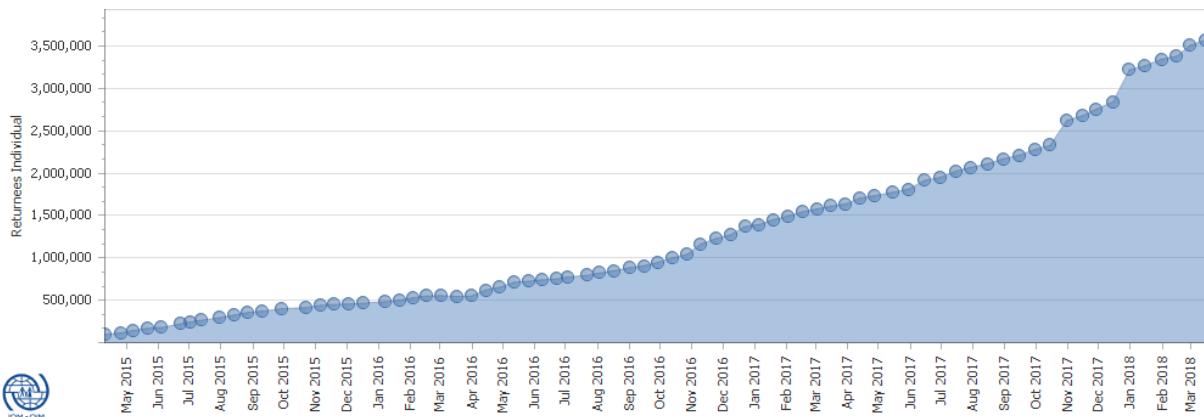


Figure 11: Conflict and Violence Displacement Figures for Returnees Individuals (Source: IOM, 2017).

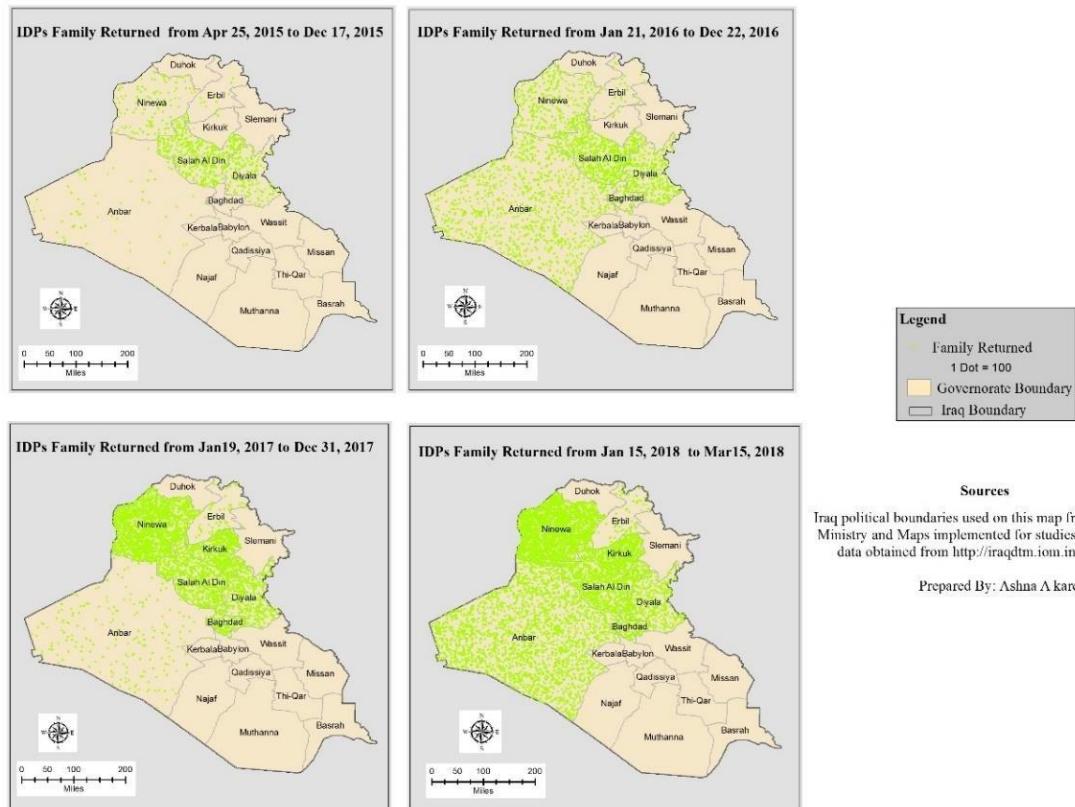


Figure 12: Returnees IDPs Family.

the government as religious minorities, are not only not protected in general political matters; they lack political response or representation against targeted violence, and lack that same representation within the confines of the legal system of the country. This lack of representation is causing more individuals to consider emigration as a viable alternative to displacement.

A study conducted by IOM (2015) resulted in the findings that the majority of the Iraqi people polled indicated their preference between emigration and displacement was emigration to Europe, citing a belief that they would be better treated in Europe than they were in their own home country, with health benefits, a sustainable home, and ample work

opportunities. The decision to emigrate appears, based on the findings of the IOM (2015) study, to be based more on the circumstances surrounding current lifestyles, as opposed to being based on a single causality. An initial reading for all of the response that has done by IOM is the high level of volatility, the sense of uncertainty and the precariousness of the situation in Iraq. Figure 14 shows the distribution of the respondents by country of current residence in Europe.

Conclusion

In completing the migration mapping based on current, publicly available datasets, even without all of the information on the situation,

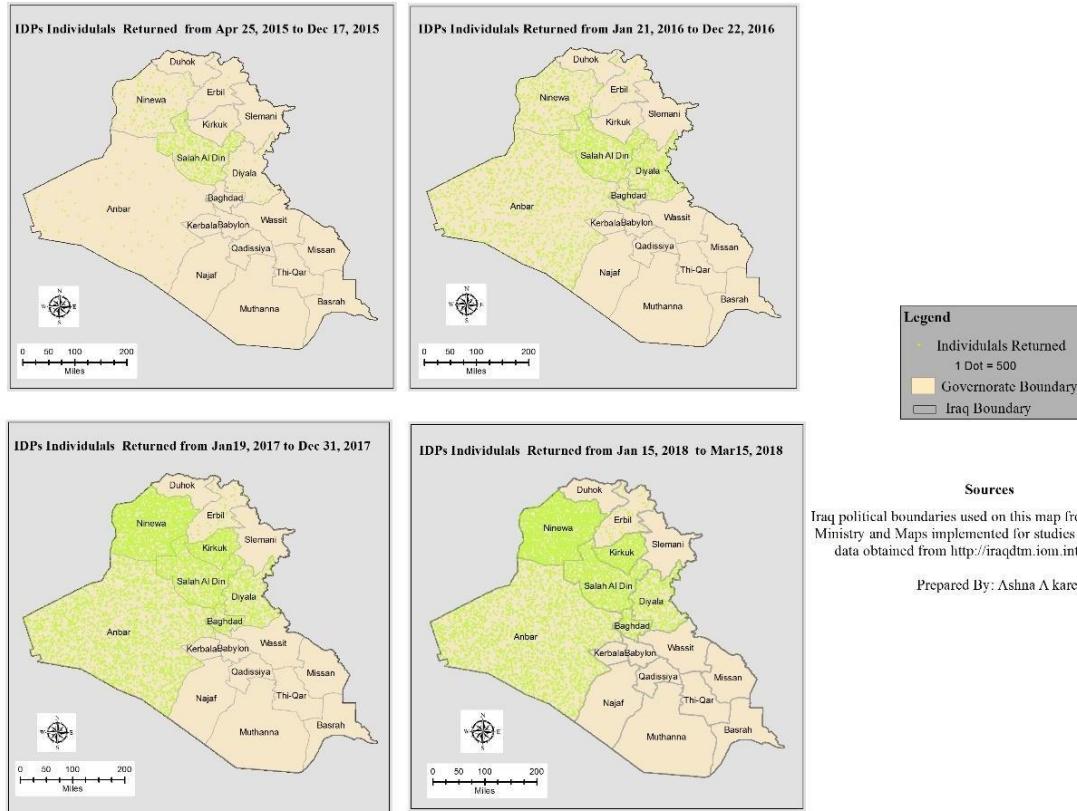


Figure 13: Individuals IDPs Returnees.

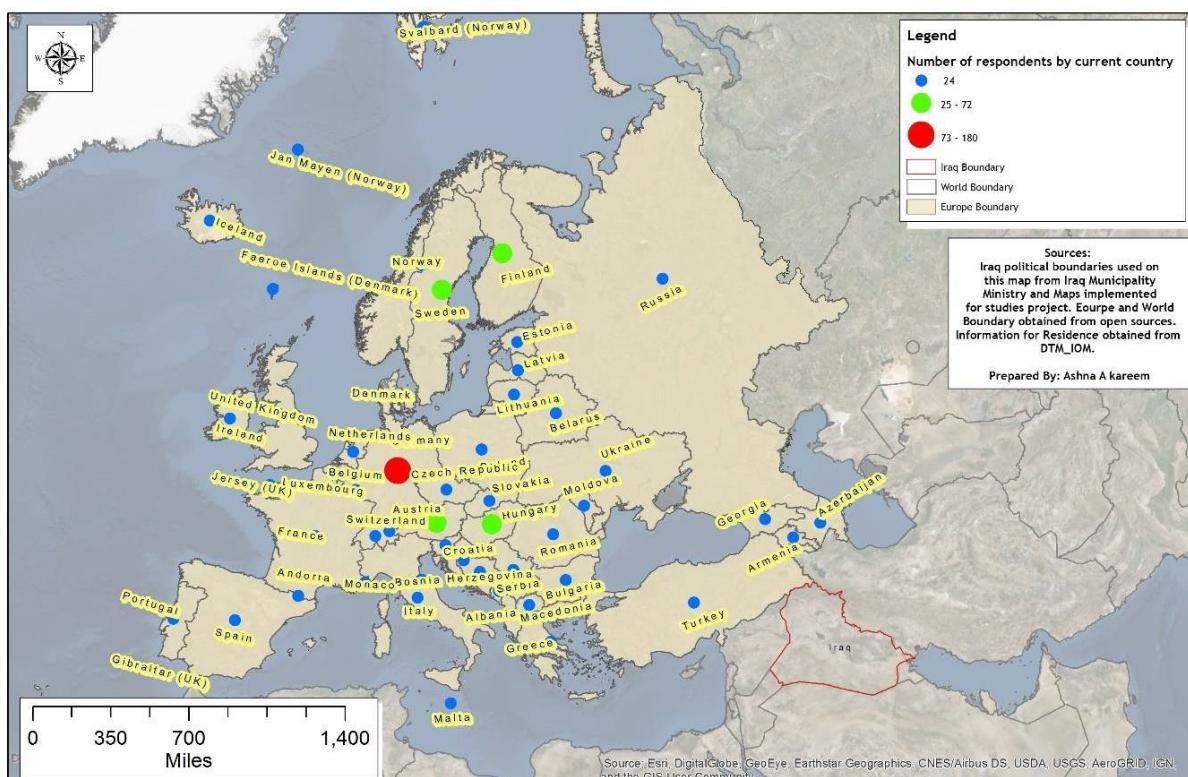


Figure 14: Number of respondents by current country of residence in 2015.

it is clear that the humanitarian crisis in Iraq continues to deteriorate. The deterioration of the country occurs as a result of a perfect storm of detrimental situations that have been compounding for the past several decades. Political, civic, cultural, and societal factors have all combined with a rising tide of violence and increased discrimination and exclusion, creating a powder keg situation. The consequences of this deterioration within the nation are far reaching and may adversely affect the continued cohesiveness of the nation.

Overall, can also be observed from the maps and data that political, social, economic, and environmental factors have a strong relationship with migration rates. The best example to understand the above phenomenon is that migration is defined and discussed with the natural resources, urbanization, and usage of land as well as desertification. The primary reasons the fact that when migration ratio changes (difference between the numbers of people who moved out and moved in) influences the resources of any country that it has and vice versa.

The vast majority of the problems present in Iraq have been multiplied due to the continued displacement of Iraqi citizens. The number of IDPs within the nation has placed a heavy burden on available services, affecting education, healthcare, security, and other social services provided by the government. The cost of this situation is not clear and will not be clear for years to come due to the fiscal burdens placed on the nation by war, displacement, and rebuilding. Until such a time as this can occur, efforts should be made to do all that is possible to assist IDPs in obtaining basic societal services.

This leads to the conclusion that IOM, based on the results of their 2015 study, has a proven ability to reach vulnerable populations in even the most remote locations of Iraq. In order to reach displaced and vulnerable Iraqis in greatest need of assistance, more information is still needed, however. Clearly, censuses are defined as one of the most significant and key sources of information reflecting the facts about migration. However, since every country has its own way of presentation, the data collected between one year and another is most likely to vary. The majority of censuses include the numbers of people and their current and past residential history. As a result, the data between two years is most likely to have different results and findings. It is therefore noted that in order to determine the accurate international and internal migration, practitioners need accurate rate of change and absolute data.

A dot distribution map is used to show populations within a certain given area from 1977 to 2015. The main conclusion that can be drawn is therefore that data on thematic maps may be presented in a great many different ways, the choice must always meet the fundamental criteria of good communication: clarity and honesty.

Finally, it should be noted that, despite decreases in the levels of violence within the nation, progress in Iraq to return IDPs to their homes remains slow. This, combined with the targeting of vulnerable groups by threats and violence due to ethnic or religious identity, creates a situation that requires immediate attention. Until such a time as these political concerns are addressed, members of minority groups will continue to emigrate as needed, following the trends and patterns identified by the IOM in 2015.

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