



# Ninewa

## *NCCI Governorate Profile*

Compiled in December 2010

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*A map of Ninewa and its districts*

## Geography

The governorate of Ninewa (also sometimes referred to as “Nineveh”) is located in northwestern Iraq. It shares borders with Syria and several Iraqi governorates. Ninewa is the third largest governorate in terms of size. Its total land area is estimated at 37,323 km<sup>2</sup> (8.6% the total size of Iraq). The provincial capital is Mosul city, located in the northeast. Telafar is another major city in Ninewa, located approximately 30 miles northwest of Mosul city. The Tigris and Greater Zab rivers irrigate much of Mosul. The Tigris river extends from the governorate’s northwest to the south. There are arid, semi-desert plains south of Mosul city.

The name “Mosul” comes from the Arabic root “to come,” as people from all direction came to Mosul as a trading destination. Ninewa province also includes many valuable ruins from various historical periods. Many of these ruin sites have not been properly excavated, or remain to be discovered, due to the difficult security, political and economic conditions that have faced this region in the past decades. Some of the most acclaimed archaeological sites in Ninewa include Nineveh, Nimroud, Al-Heder (also known as Hatre), and Al-Shikhan.

Parts of Ninewa are considered “disputed territories” as the central government and the Kurdistan Regional Governemnt (KRG) simultaneously claim ownership over certain areas. These issues remain largely unresolved, and could serve as the fault line for a major conflict in the future. In the meantime, Ninewa is officially administered by the Iraqi central government. The districts of Sinjar, Telafar, Tilkaif, Al-Shikhan have “disputed boundaries” with Dohuk, a governorate included in the KRG semi-autonomous region. Al-Hamdaniya district is also considered to share a disputed boundary with Erbil, another governorate included in the KRG.

## Population

Ninewa is the second highest populated governorate in Iraq. The Ministry of Trade estimated Ninewa’s total population at 3,273,000 in 2009, which constitutes at least 9% of Iraq’s total population.<sup>1</sup> Mosul city is the third most populous city in Iraq, after Baghdad and Basra. It is also estimated that 61% of Ninewa’s residents live in urban areas.<sup>2</sup> The governorate includes the eight districts of Mosul, Telafar, Al-Hamdaniya, Al-Shikhan, Tilkaif, Al-Hatre, Sinjar, Makhmour and Al-Ba’aj. Akre was a district of Ninewa before 2000, and is now considered a district of Duhok governorate under complete KRG control. Some reports state that Akre actually became part of Duhok after First Gulf War in 1991.

Mosul city actually rests at the northern tip of the “Sunni Triangle,” a region of northwestern Iraq that is densely populated by Arab Sunnis. Yet throughout history, a diverse mix of ethnicities and religions has lived in Ninewa. In addition to the sizeable Arab Sunni population, Arab Shias, Kurds, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Turkmen, Yezidis, Shabak and other minorities live in the governorate. Over the past decades, policies of Arabisation, Kurdicisation, as well as the targeting of certain minorities, has aggravated tensions regionally.

Since the 2003 US-led invasion, the Kurds have more assertively asserted political and military control over Ninewa. In turn, some of Ninewa’s natural geographic divisions have also come to symbolize its sectarian divisions. The Tigris river, which geographically cuts through the northwestern side of Ninewa and Mosul, now demographically cuts the area.

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<sup>1</sup> “Governorate Profile for Ninewa.” *Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit and OCHA*. Dec. 2010. <<http://www.iauiraq.org/reports/GP-Ninewa.pdf>>.

<sup>2</sup> “Governorate Profile for Ninewa.” *Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit and OCHA*. Dec. 2010. <<http://www.iauiraq.org/reports/GP-Ninewa.pdf>>.

The right bank of the Tigris river, also known as the “Ninewa plains,” is mostly populated by Kurds, as well as minorities like the Turkoman. A number of towns and villages are predominantly populated by Christians (including areas in the Hamdaniya and Telkaif districts). The right bank also has some of Ninewa’s most modern infrastructure. The left bank of the Tigris river, which is generally less developed, is mainly inhabited by Sunni Arabs. The three northeastern districts of Telkaif, Al-Hamdaniya, and Al-Shikhan are part of the Nineveh plains. Most of the Nineveh plain’s inhabitants are Syriac Christians who speak Aramaic. Assyrians consider this area the heart of their homeland. There is also a significantly smaller population of Shiite Muslims in Ninewa concentrated in Talafar. Many Yezidis are concentrated in Sinjar district.

The national census has been repeatedly postponed; consequently, no precise ethnic or sectarian estimates exist for Ninewa. However, there has been a clear decrease in the number of Assyrian Christians, Yezidis, and other minorities who were particularly targeted by armed groups. Since 2003, there have been many waves of minority exodus—particularly Assyrian Christians and Yezidis—from Ninewa, mainly due to threats, violence and high unemployment. Some analysts expect that Ninewa’s Christian population will largely vanish in the coming years if these trends continue.

## **Historical Overview**

The ancient city of Nineveh, located on the east bank of the Tigris in ancient Assyria, set the foundations for modern-day Mosul city and urban life in Ninewa. The earliest known mention of Nineveh describes the city as a center for worship for the goddess Ishtar, before Christianity and Islam had reached the area and mainly replaced polytheism in the region.

Nineveh city was located along a major highway used for trade between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean, which added to its commercial and strategic value. The Assyrian crown prince Sennacherib led an intense development campaign of Nineveh beginning in about 700 BC. He ordered the construction of an impressive moat around the city for defence purposes. Within the city, he oversaw the planting of large gardens and parks, the building of one of the world’s first aqueduct, and restored many temples.

However, by 612 BC, the invading Medes, a Persian people, managed to take control of and violently raze Nineveh. This was one of the main watershed events that led to the Assyrian empire’s collapse. Nineveh fell into decay and neglect for a long period thereafter.

## **Pre-2003**

The Ninewa governorate was assimilated into the Ottoman Empire in 1534. Ninewa was considered part of the “Wilayat Mosul,” which included the modern-day governorates of Dohuk, Erbil, Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah. However, in that period, Ninewa governorate was known as “Mosul” and would retain this name until the 1970s.

Ottoman authorities empowered the local elites of Ninewa, who they perceived as key agents in maintaining a cohesive, unified empire. For example, a majority of merchant families residing in Ninewa steadfastly preserved Sunni orthodoxy while adamantly opposing the encroaching influences of the Shiite Safavid Empire in Persia/modern-day Iran. Ninewa, or “Mosul,” quickly rose to become one of the Ottoman Empire’s most prominent mercantile centers. Throughout this period of relative prosperity, the residents of Ninewa traded regularly with merchants from Syria, Turkey, Iran, and other nearby nations that shared this common trade route; as a result, they

generally had a more cosmopolitan experience than their counterparts in other Iraqi governorates. Ninewans established especially close cultural ties to Aleppo in Syria.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the vying British and French powers sought to gain colonial control over the strategically valuable area of Ninewa. The Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)—an agreement whereby the French and British unlawfully divided the Middle Eastern region up amongst themselves as intended spheres of future colonial control—included Wilayat Mosul as part of a French mandate, to be included in modern-day Syria. However, the British actually managed to colonize the area after conducting two years of intense warfare in Iraq.

Upon learning that the Ottoman Turkish Empire sided with Germany in the First World War, British forces entered Al-Faw on the Shatt Al-Arab, Basra. The British eventually managed to militarily occupy Mosul in November 1918. With this key victory, the British asserted authority over Wilayat Mosul, excluding some of the Kurdish highland regions bordering modern-day Iran and Turkey. The French officially renounced their claims to Mosul with the Long-Berenger Agreement (1919).

The British faced considerable opposition against colonizing Mosul as part of the British Mandate over Mesopotamia. First, Mosul had a significant Kurdish population that wished to establish an independent state, separate from both Iraq and Turkey. The Treaty of Sevres (1920) actually included part of Mosul as an independent Kurdish state, but the rise of Turkish leader Mustafa Kamal weakened Kurdish efforts for autonomy in the region. The British successively failed in their attempts to create an autonomous Kurdish entity.

Secondly, the British were intent on maintaining control over Mosul as part of the Iraqi state, as they believed that the governorate was a site of large oil deposits. Residents of Mosul clearly outlined their demands to have a stake in the British-controlled Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC). In reality, their demands were essentially quite modest, as they insisted in a 20% equity participation in TPC, which would derive its profit almost exclusively from exploiting Mosul's valuable resources. Yet the British ultimately ignored these stipulations in the 1925 final agreement, stirring considerable tensions.

In 1925, the League of Nations suggested that the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty be extended from twenty-one additional years. This recommendation allegedly stemmed from a concern to protect the Kurdish minority, which was not eager to come under the rule of a fully independent Iraqi state and lose some of the privileges that Kurds held under control the British Mandate. The Iraqi assembly reluctantly ratified the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty the following year. This settled the potentially explosive "Mosul question" for the time being. In 1976, "Mosul Province"—which had formerly included parts of present-day Duhok governorate—was renamed to Ninewa.

Arabisation (Ta'rib), which was not necessarily a new policy, was more seriously pursued by the post-1968 Ba'athist regime. The Ba'athist regime sought to instil national unity via a collective Arab identity and simultaneously oppressed Kurdish nationalism and identity. Consequently, the government forcibly displaced Kurdish residents in Ninewa and other governorates on more than one occasion. After orchestrating a campaign of mass displacement, which was often imposed by violent means, the Iraqi government would encourage Arabs to relocate onto the vacated land. In addition to the Kurds, the Ba'athist regime also targeted and forcibly displaced many large Yezidi communities in Ninewa. At least 80,000 Kurds were displaced in northern Iraq in the 1980s.

An additional one million Kurds, as well as many Shi'a communities in southern Iraq, were displaced after rebelling against the Ba'athist state in the aftermath of the First Gulf War. While this revolt failed, many predominantly Kurdish areas in the north came under control of the Patriotic Union of

Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). They established Kurdish autonomous zones in the north, protected by the “no-fly zones” (1991-2003) monitored and patrolled by both the United States and Great Britain. Even though Mosul and greater Ninewa were not considered as part of the autonomous Kurdish zones, they were still included in the “no-fly zone.”

## Post-2003

In the US-led invasion of Iraq, Turkey opposed the Multi-National Forces in Iraq (MNF-I)’s original plan to station troops in Turkey and invade Ninewa from the north. Consequently, most of the Ninewa invasion was actually executed via air bombardment.

Two days after the fall of Baghdad, Mosul surrendered to US control on the 11<sup>th</sup> April 2003. Kurdish fighters soon moved into the provincial capital and took control of the surrounding areas. Within weeks, Mosul had dissolved into a city of intense crime, with widespread looting taking place. Opposition to the Kurdish forces grew as they failed to secure the city. Furthermore, many Arabs suspected the Kurdish Peshmerga of attempting to establish new boundaries for Kurdistan by annexing the east bank of the Tigris river in Mosul, the Nineveh Plains, and other areas of the governorate.

Kurdish political parties, and especially the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), flooded into Ninewa to fill the political vacuum left by the deposed Ba’athist regime throughout 2003. Arabs commonly assert that the KDP relied on brute force to achieve its objective of gaining control over Ninewa and changing the governorate’s demographic composition.

Kurdish forces and politicians generally supported the policy of *takrid* (Kurdicisation), which many Kurds refer to as “normalisation,” as they consider it an undoing of previous Arabisation (which was implemented under the Ba’athist regime and before). The Kurdistan Regional Government has recently provided incentives for Kurds to return to areas of former displacement. The MNF-I’s perceived exclusive alignment with Kurdish forces bred further suspicion and anger, especially among Ninewa’s Sunni residents.

In February 2004, major American divisions were redeployed from Ninewa to other areas in Iraq. They were mainly replaced by Kurdish forces, which made up the majority of troops stationed in the governorate. Politically, a similar change was occurring. In summer 2004, Governor Usama Kashmula, a Sunni Arab, was assassinated and the governing council fell apart due to council members’ resignation over a growing Kurdish influence in the council. As the local political process derailed, insurgent groups were simultaneously forming. They perceived an opportunity to attack and drive out the Kurdish forces (and particularly the Peshmerga forces), the newly instituted ISF, and the MNF-I from Mosul while American attention was primarily directed towards the “Second Battle of Falluja” (known by the American military as “Operation Phantom Fury”) in Anbar, beginning on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2004.

Insurgents in Ninewa showed impressive coordination and strength. Within three days, they had captured and destroyed many police stations. The Iraqi police forces deserted most stations, and the insurgents were able to re-stock their weapons supply from the police armories. The insurgents also managed to take control over a major bridge on the Tigris river and set fire to the Kurdistan Democratic Party’s headquarters in Mosul. The Kurdish Peshmerga forces managed to prevent the insurgents from taking most of eastern Mosul but western Mosul—predominantly populated by Arabs—easily came under insurgent control. By the 13<sup>th</sup> November, insurgents were said to have taken control of at least two-thirds of the city.

The US forces retook control over southern, northern and western Mosul by the 16<sup>th</sup> of November. US officials estimated the insurgent casualty figures from the “Battle for Mosul” at approximately 200, although many sources contend that the insurgent and civilian death tolls were much higher. More than 70 bodies of murdered ISF soldiers, allegedly captured and killed by insurgents, were found throughout the city in the battle’s aftermath.

In January 2005, most Sunni Arab political factions boycotted the January 2005 provincial elections. Accordingly, the Kurdistan Alliance List (KA), a Kurdish coalition, won by a landslide, taking 31 of 41 seats in the Provincial Council. Moreover, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), considered a Shiite entity supportive of the KA, won 5 seats. The Kurdistan Democratic Party, led by KRG president Masoud Barzani in Erbil, took this opportunity to name Kurds to high-ranking government positions and intensify the Kurdicisation process.

The political crisis of 2005, which led to severe underrepresentation of Sunni Arab interests, led to the division of Mosul. Arabs and Kurds generally narrate this development from polar perspectives. Many Arab residents assert that while the Kurds controlled the Provincial Council, there were widespread attacks, murders and forced expulsion. Most Kurds deny these accusations and contend that they were asked by both the US forces and the Baghdad government to rule Ninewa amidst the potentially destabilizing power vacuum.

In the aftermath of the 2005 elections, Mosul became split into two distinctive banks, bisected geographically by the Tigris river. Much like Baghdad post-invasion, Mosul lost its heterogeneity and formerly fixed neighbourhoods were redrawn along sectarian lines. The right or “eastern bank” of the Tigris, which is generally considered a more modern area and hosts Mosul University, is now home to most of Ninewa’s minorities, whether Kurdish, Turkoman or Christian. The University of Mosul was established in 1967 and has since been considered one of Iraq’s top universities. However, these days, students from other governorates are enrolling in the University in Mosul in significantly lower numbers. It is believed that the primary reason for this is Mosul’s severe security deterioration since 2005. Most areas of the western or “left bank” are considerably less developed and Sunni Arabs constitute the majority.

In 2007, the primarily Sunni-led insurgency in Anbar, Baghdad and Diyala suffered major defeats and set-backs, and many insurgents retreated to northern Iraq, and mainly Mosul. There was simultaneously significant fighting in Tal Afar (west of Mosul), Kirkuk city, and Hawija. At that time, Mosul was thought to be the only remaining stronghold of Al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI). Ninewa’s history of Arabist identity and strong military tradition, strengthened by an opposition to growing Kurdish influence in particular, made the governorate a prime base for many Sunni insurgents. AQI and other militant groups have found it relatively easy to recruit destitute Arab youth from poor neighbourhoods. Furthermore, the poorly guarded Syrian border allowed these groups to easily conduct cross-border trade and stockpile weapons.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2008, the ISF were tipped off about a massive weapons cache in an abandoned building in Mosul. When Iraqi police approached the building, the explosives were detonated; these explosions killed 60 and wounded 280. As investigators entered the area, gunfight between insurgents and the ISF commenced. On the 25<sup>th</sup> January 2010, Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki announced that ISF reinforcements would be called into the area to target remaining AQI members.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> May 2007, the US and Iraqi forces launched “Operation Lion's Roar” in Mosul. Daily curfews and mass detainments were the main features of this operation. The Iraqi government issued arrest warrants for hundreds of “wanted” Al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI) leaders. Within five days, the Iraqi forces officially announced that they had thus far detained 833 people. On the 24<sup>th</sup> May, the

Iraqi government declared that the operation was completed and that AQI no longer posed a significant threat in Ninewa, allegedly its last stronghold in Iraq. The Iraqi Army stated that Al-Qaeda had been cleared from their remaining stronghold in the country. Some high-profile AQI leaders were killed, including Abu Khalaf, the leader of AQI in Ninewa, also known as the “Emir (Prince) of Mosul.” There was a large number of civilian casualties in this operation, although exact casualty figures were never released. AQI remains strong up to the present. Despite a declining amount of media and government attention towards the AQI’s presence, the group continues to launch attacks and plot assassinations of both ISF members and civilians on a near daily basis.

In 2009, major Sunni Arab parties called for an end to their boycott of the electoral process, hoping to regain representation. Many Sunni Arabs were outraged by years of what they perceived as discriminatory policies and sectarian bias in the Kurdish-dominated local government. In the January 2009 provincial elections, Al-Hadbaa, a nationalist party mainly led by Sunni Arabs, took 19 of the 37 seats. The Ninewa Fraternal List boycotted the PC after the elections, sensing a distinct policy of marginalization and claiming that Al-Hadbaa’s agenda to minimize Kurdish influence in Ninewa undermines the notion of power-sharing. The Kurdish Ninewa Fraternal List finished second with 12 seats. The Iraqi Islamic Party won three seats, and the religious minorities (the Shabaks, Christians, and Yazidis) received one seat each under the quota system.

Although the Kurdish parties won approximately one-third of votes in the 2009 provincial elections, proportional to their relative population, they have mainly boycotted local government institutions in what they protest as unjust policies. There are significant tensions between Al-Hadbaa and Kurdish factions, as Al-Hadbaa claims Mosul as an “Arab city” and adamantly opposes any Kurdish design to annex parts of Ninewa into the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The Al-Hadbaa continues to marginalize the Kurdish authorities, and many Kurds accuse the party of attempting to push Kurds back over the “Green Line” (the Ninewa governorate border shared with the KRG).

Arab and Kurds continue to vie for control in many areas of Ninewa. The mix of official and unofficial armed groups, including the ISF, the Iraqi national police, the Peshmerga (the KRG’s security forces, the Asaesh (the KRG’s security police), remaining factions of Sunni Arab insurgent groups, and some tribal militias, threatens to inflame the precarious security situation in Ninewa. As Arab and Kurdish elements come into direct conflict over issues of land and political representation in particular, any combination of these armed groups may become involved. Although AQI and many insurgent groups’ capacities have been significantly diminished by USF/ISF operations in recent years, many remain active.

Meanwhile, a number of minorities who compose no more than 10% of Ninewa’s total population—mainly Christians, Yezidis, Turkomans and Shabaks—have oftentimes been caught in the crossfire of the US occupation, ISF operations, and insurgent attacks. Sometime the ISF and insurgent groups seek to co-op minorities, or they are forcibly displaced by order of the local government. Generally, minorities have become pawns in the oftentimes violent Kurdish Arab standoff.

There are some proposals to create autonomous zones for these vulnerable populations, and namely the Syriac Christians. Many Syriac Christian communities, supported by some Kurdish factions in the KRG, seek to create an autonomous zone in the Nineveh plains, a northwestern area in Ninewa where the Syriac Christian’s historical and cultural roots can be traced. Syriac Christians claim that they cannot be secure without such a protective autonomous zone. Yet support for an autonomous Assyrian entity is not widely supported within the central Iraqi government, and this plan is unlikely to be implemented anytime in the near future.

## Armed Groups

The security situation in Ninewa is currently unstable and fragile. Violent attacks and armed groups' operations have noticeably increased since the highly contested March 2010 national parliamentary elections, which led to a nine-month political stalemate. It is believed that many armed groups are seeking to exploit the late government formation in Baghdad, which left a political and administrative vacuum. It is also thought that a general resolution and negotiation between the various conflicting factions will increase stability in the governorate. In general, a lack of central control and administration, particularly concerning issues of security, threatens to set tensions ablaze in Ninewa.

After the second American-led siege on Falluja, many insurgents began to leave Anbar governorate and disperse between Baghdad, Diyala, Salah Al-Din, and Ninewa (mainly within Mosul). This led to major security deterioration in Ninewa, mainly between 2005 and 2008. Initially, many armed groups' presence was accepted without protest. Of course, this may have been due to the local residents' lack of means to resist armed groups in many areas. However, as violence and lawlessness became widespread, many residents of Ninewa began to differentiate between the promises in the armed group's slogans and their often contradictory actions. Some armed groups' were considered cruel, leading to a decline in their popularity.

Al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI), followed by Ansar Al-Sunnah (the Sunni Supporters) and a few other factions, have the biggest influence of all of the armed groups currently operating in Ninewa. Today these and other armed groups mainly operate in a secretive manner and target the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), the US Forces in Iraq (USF-I), and government employees working in non-service sectors. Those individuals and groups who have openly opposed an armed group have also been targeted.

The Iraqi Forces number about 60,000 in Ninewa, of which approximately 25,000 are local police and Facility Protection Service (FPS). There are two Federal Police brigades and two Iraqi Army brigades (i.e. the Second Brigade and the Third Brigade) in Ninewa.

Although no major Shiite militias have been reported or noticed in Ninewa, many residents in the governorate talk about the ways in which the ISF operate under the Shiite-dominated central government's cover.

The Islamic State of Iraq (a faction of Al-Qaida in Iraq) is one of the most prominent and active armed groups in the governorate. Other major armed groups include the Supporters of Islam, the Naqshabandiya Army, the Mujahideen Army, the Hamas Brigade of Iraq, the Islamic Army, the Muhammed Army, the 1920 Revolution Brigade, and other factions. There are no "Sunni" militias in the sense of the word, but rather many of the militias in Ninewa follow radical and extremist ideologies. Most of the victims of militant attacks are Sunni in Ninewa

The Peshmerga had its strongest influence between 2005 and 2008, when it executed military operations in most regions of Ninewa. Today the Peshmerga's influence is mostly limited to areas adjacent to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), yet they still retain some control in Ninewa's more central areas by jointly operating at checkpoints with the ISF and the USF-I.

The activities of Al-Asayesh, the KRG's internal security services, are more public and pronounced than the Peshmerga in a limited area of Ninewa. The Asayesh have influence in areas where mainly Yezidis, Shabak, and Al-Jarjariya live, and are also found in some predominantly Christian areas inside Mosul city. They do not have headquarters or major offices in Mosul, except for the Parastin, which has an office in al-Arabi neighborhood.

Division of control and influence between these multiple forces is extremely complex and dynamic. As of this writing, the center of Sinjar district is controlled by the Asayesh and Peshmerga forces; local police forces are also found patrolling the area, but they have significantly less authority. Ba'aj district is mainly controlled by ISF, while the Kurdish Asayesh and Peshmerga forces control the predominantly Yezidi regions and Qahtaniya sub-district. The Telafar district is mainly under the control of ISF as well, except for the Zummar area and a few parts of Rabeea which are under the control of the Kurdish Asayesh and Peshmerga forces. The ISF and the Iraqi police forces currently control Mosul district. A majority of the areas in the Tilkaif district are controlled by the Asayesh and Peshmerga forces. The center of Al-Hamdaniya is controlled by the ISF, with Kurdish forces having less control over it; the Ba'shiqa sub-district is controlled by Kurdish forces with less authority for the Iraqi police. The ISF and Kurdish forces share control as joint forces in the Nimroud and Bartella sub-districts. Makhmour is primarily under the control of the Kurdish forces, with some ISF and Iraqi police presence as well. There is no ISF presence in Al-Shikhan; rather, the Kurdish forces control the whole area. The Hatra district is completely controlled by the ISF and Iraqi police. Armed groups have the most influence and presence in Mosul, as well as large areas in southern and western Ninewa, but their activities are nearly nonexistent in Shikhan, Talkef and Makhmour districts.

In some periods, the government forces have initiated campaigns in different areas of Ninewa that have moderately impacted local militias' armed operations and activities. Many residents remark that administration and financial corruption seem to weaken the ISF's ability to operate effectively. Furthermore, the alleged infiltration of armed groups into the ISF compromises their ability to appropriately and efficiently respond to armed groups' threats. The weak judicial system in Ninewa poorly prosecutes armed groups. Many judges and legal professionals have been threatened by armed militants. As a result, many armed groups operate with virtual impunity in Ninewa.

An unofficial "tax" is periodically imposed on capital owners, traders, farmers, and some governmental occupations, which then supports armed groups so that they may continue their operations in some areas. AQI has recently imposed such fees on pharmacists, retail and shop owners, parks owners and public-transportation companies, among other professionals. Some individuals who have refrained from obeying this order have been assassinated.

The initiative of forming Awakening Councils in Ninewa basically collapsed after Fawaz Al-Jarba's announcement that the Sahwa forces would oppose AQI. This prompted many factions to stand against the Awakening Council. Furthermore, the Kurdish parties had little interest in promoting the formation of armed Arab tribal forces, which would likely compete with Kurdish forces' control over various areas in the governorate. A number of Arab tribal leaders also voiced opposition to forming Awakening Councils, either out of fear that the rise of new tribal structures would alter power dynamics and negatively impact their influence or because some heads of tribes are under the influence of armed groups, and especially AQI. For instance, the rising power of the Shemmar clan, which is a large tribal entity, could weaken other clans if it gained influence via the Awakening Council.

Movement and transportation are considered especially difficult in Mosul city because of the number of checkpoints and other security measures set-up and controlled by the ISF and the Iraqi police. It is not uncommon to see lines of cars stretching for a number of kilometers, waiting to pass through a checkpoint at the time of rush hour traffic.

Over the past years, local residents' frustration towards these security measures has significantly increased. They note that pollution in the city has increased as the level of fuel consumption and emissions exhaust rises at checkpoints, roadblocks, and other barriers. It is also becoming increasingly difficult to move between different districts. Many residents report that the process of

crossing the “border zones” between various districts has recently become more chaotic and less organized. For example, it is nearly impossible for an individual to enter Telafar unless he has official business or is accompanied by a local resident in the area. Some areas are controlled by Kurdish forces, which impose fixed procedures for visiting or moving inside these areas such as Sinjar, Zummar and Telkef. In general, the main roads leading to Baghdad, Kirkuk, Erbil, Dohuk and Syria are secure. Large transport trucks are generally not permitted entry into Mosul between 6 AM and 4 PM.

## Humanitarian Overview

Ninewa, and particularly Mosul city, has faced a protracted IDP crisis since the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq. Continuously high levels of violence and territory ownership disputes make this governorate a site on concentrated—and often repeated—displacement and return in Iraq. Ninewa hosts approximately 7% of all Iraqi IDPs and 46% of IDPs in northern Iraq<sup>3</sup>.

In 2010, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) noted that about 50% of recently displaced resident prefer to resettle to a third location rather than return home, which is a new trend<sup>4</sup>. Few IDP families wish to remain permanently in their current location. Ninewa currently suffers from a particularly acute “brain drain” and capital flight, as many prominent local entrepreneurs and professionals have left the governorate, mainly moving to the more stable and secure KRG region.

Protection remains a concern for many minorities, and particularly Christian families living in Mosul. Regular anecdotal reports indicate that many Christian families still receive threatening phone calls and written messages, or are targeted in their homes and communities. The number of displaced Christian families in Mosul has steadily risen in 2010, indicating that the area is still not safe for them<sup>5</sup>.

Violence targeting Christians in Mosul was particularly violent in October 2008. The UN high commissioner for refugees (UNHCR) estimated that more than 2,200 families (approximately 13,000 people, accounting for more than half of Mosul city’s Christian community), left their homes to escape persecution and violence, mainly fleeing to outlying villages of Mosul, neighbouring Syria, and northern Iraqi governorates in the KRG (Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah)<sup>67</sup>.

Electrical services in Ninewa are generally poorer than in neighboring governorates. According to the UN Information and Analysis Unit (IAU), approximately three quarters of residents in Al-Ba’aj, Sinjar, Tilkaif, Al-Shikhan, and Al-Hamdaniya have more than 11 hours of power cuts daily, or are not connected to the national electric grid at all<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup>“Ninewa Governorate Profile: IDP and Returnee Assessment.” *International Organization for Migration*. Feb. 2010. <[http://iomiraq.net/library/IOM\\_displacement\\_monitoring\\_reports/governorate\\_profiles/2010/IOM%20Iraq%20Ninewa%20GP%20Feb%202010%20EN.pdf](http://iomiraq.net/library/IOM_displacement_monitoring_reports/governorate_profiles/2010/IOM%20Iraq%20Ninewa%20GP%20Feb%202010%20EN.pdf)>

<sup>4</sup> “Ninewa Emergency Needs Assessment.” *International Organization for Migration*. Apr. 2010. <[http://www.ncci-library.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/438/1/IOM%20-%20Displacement%20from%20Mosul,%20Ninewa%20\(2010\).pdf](http://www.ncci-library.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/438/1/IOM%20-%20Displacement%20from%20Mosul,%20Ninewa%20(2010).pdf)>.

<sup>5</sup> “Displacement in Mosul.” Situation Report No. 3, *UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*. 6 March 2010. <<http://www.uniraq.org/documents/OCHA%20Iraq%20SitRep%20No.3%20-%20Displacement%20in%20Mosul%20-%206%20March%202010.pdf>>.

<sup>6</sup> “Christians Trickling Back to their Homes in Mosul.” *IRIN News Service*. 6 Nov. 2008. <<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=81317>>.

<sup>7</sup> “Killings Force 13,000 Christians to Flee Mosul.” *The Guardian*. 25 Oct. 2008. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/oct/25/iraq-religion>>.

<sup>8</sup> “Governorate Profile for Ninewa.” *Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit and OCHA*. Dec. 2010. <<http://www.iauiraq.org/reports/GP-Ninewa.pdf>>.

Safe drinking water is a persistent need in many areas of Ninewa. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that 1,364 families from Ninewa have left their homes due to water scarcity since 2006<sup>9</sup>. More than 50% of households in the districts of Telafar, Sinjar, Al-Ba'aj and Hatra are not connected to the general water network.

Local human rights defenders have been targeted by insurgents in Ninewa since the beginning of the US-led invasion. This pattern has particularly intensified since 2005. Local journalists are especially vulnerable to attack, and Ninewa is still considered one of the most dangerous governorates for journalists in Iraq<sup>10</sup>.

Tel Afar, Al-Shikhan and Al-Hatre are the most impoverished areas in Ninewa in terms of per capita income and per capita expenditure. Al-Ba'aj and the right (eastern) bank of the Tigris river in Mosul city are more economically stable areas. Unemployment in Ninewa averages 13%, which is about the national average in Iraq<sup>11</sup>.

## Presence of NGOs

### Local NGOs

In NCCI's Local NGO (LNGO) Mapping Survey (last updated in September 2010), 24 LNGOs were identified in Ninewa. The LNGOs in Ninewa are divided by sector. There are also Yazidi, Shabak, Christian and Kurdish organizations. The Kurdish organizations are mainly based in KRG and have access to disputed areas.

Most of these NGOs focus on culture, youth, children's rights, and women's rights. The majority of these NGOs were established in 2003 and 2005. These LNGOs most commonly identified a lack of sufficient funding, a lack of community understanding of the role of NGOs, and weak cooperation from governmental authorities as their biggest obstacles. In terms of what LNGO leaders would most like to develop and improve, the priorities in Ninewa are as follows: NGO management, project management (which includes proposal writing, project cycle management, and monitoring & evaluation), and humanitarian and NGOs principles.

### International NGOs

The NCCI Survey of International NGOs (INGOs) operating in Iraq (conducted in April 2010) identified at least 9 INGOs which were actively running operations in Ninewa. Most of the INGOs focused on health and human rights projects.

## Culture

Ninewa is one of the most diverse Iraqi governorates, with ethnicities including Arab, Kurd, Turkomen, Yezidi, and Shabak. The majority of Muslims in the governorate are Sunni, but there are also many Shiites. Additionally, there are many Christian communities, including Syriac and Assyrian Christians. These communities have been reduced significantly due to war and occupation. There

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<sup>9</sup> "Ninewa Governorate Profile: IDP and Returnee Assessment." *International Organization for Migration*. Feb. 2010. <[http://iomiraq.net/library/IOM\\_displacement\\_monitoring\\_reports/governorate\\_profiles/2010/IOM%20Iraq%20Ninewa%20GP%20Feb%2010%20EN.pdf](http://iomiraq.net/library/IOM_displacement_monitoring_reports/governorate_profiles/2010/IOM%20Iraq%20Ninewa%20GP%20Feb%2010%20EN.pdf)>

<sup>10</sup> "Ongoing Violence Sees Rising Concern for Journalists' Safety." *IRIN News Service*. 15 Dec. 2005. <<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=25687>>.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.uniraq.org/documents/OCHA%20Iraq%20SitRep%20No.3%20->

are also some small Yazidi communities in Ninewa. The largest community of Iraqi Jews used to live in Ninewa before they mostly immigrated to occupied historic Palestine in the 1940s. There is also significant diversity between urban and rural lifestyles in Ninewa.

The Mosul elite, many of whom rose to power during Ottoman rule, continue to hold high military and government positions. Most of these elite are Sunni Arabs, although Kurds have come into significant positions of power since the 2003 US-led invasion. Mosul's urban merchant and political elites remarkably reject secularism. Social conservatism is a prominent value in Mosul. A deep-rooted pride in "Arabism," Arabic ethnic and religious origins, amidst Ninewa's considerable diversity also distinguishes it from many of its neighboring provinces.

The province's economy is overwhelmingly dependent on agriculture. Food production has a long history in Mosul city where a number of factories produce grain, wheat and other materials. In previous years, mainly before the sanctions and American occupation, these products were exported to many neighboring countries.

Ninewa is also known for many ancient crafts, including the production of copper and household appliances. There are many craftsmen and shops remaining throughout the governorate. Pottery production, mainly for the purpose of storing and cooling water, was also very popular in Ninewa. The governorate was actually known for producing excellent pottery kilns as well.

In addition to the religious festivals normally celebrated by Iraqi Muslims and Christians, the Yazidis also have some special religious festivals and trips. Perhaps the most important and distinguished of these festivals is the Sheikh Aadi trip, a ceremonious occasion which the Yazidis celebrate annually.

In the summer, family outings in a forest area is a typical recreational activity. This forest area was mainly planted with perennial trees in the beginning of the 1900s, extending many kilometers near the east coast of the Tigris river. Visitors can also ride boats in this area. There are many delicious restaurants serving fresh seafood in this area as well.

The dominant language in Ninewa is Arabic, which the majority of residents speak. There are also many local languages used in certain communities, such as the Shabaki language (spoken by the Shabak people, which includes a mix of Persian, Kurdish and Arabic), and Turkman and Kurmanji (spoken by the Turkomen people). Kurmanji is a Kurdish dialect also spoken by the Yazidi, Al-Jarjariya, and other locals.

In Mosul, there are many famous and delicious meals including "maqloubeh" (a rice and meat dish, meaning "upside down" because it is turned over while cooked), stuffed vegetables, "dolmah" (vegetables stuffed with rice and meat), famous "Mosulian kebab" (meat filled with a paste of grain and meat). Some other dishes have influences from Aleppo and Turkey. There is also a famous dish for western desert areas in Ninewa called "al-thareed," which is cooked sheep, served on bread with fat extracted from sheep milk.

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