

Dohuk Governorate Profile



Source map: [Joint Analysis and Policy Unit](#)

Dohuk at a glance

Fast facts

- Area: 6553 km²
- Average High Temperatures: 11°C (January) to 42°C (July)
- Population: 1,133,627
- Capital City: Dohuk
- Average Low Temperatures: 3°C (January) to 27°C (July)
- Population Distribution rural-urban: 25,6%-74,4%

Geography and Climate

Located in the northwest of Iraq, Dohuk (alternatively spelled as Duhok or Dahuk) borders Turkey and is Iraq's northernmost governorate. Surrounded by mountain ranges on three sides, Dohuk governorate's terrain mostly consists of mountain slopes, hills and valleys, giving way to the Sumail plain on the west.

The climate of Dohuk governorate is comparable to that of surrounding regions, with hot and dry summers and mild winters. Rainfall averages 616 mm yearly and is limited to the winter months.

Population and Administrative Division

The governorate of Dohuk is part of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and is made up by the districts of Dohuk, Amedi, Sumel and Zakho.

Kurds are the dominant ethnic group, with small minorities of Turkmen and Arabs living across the governorate. The Sunni branch of Islam is followed by the majority of Dohuk's inhabitants, but the province also hosts a mainly Kurdish Yezidi minority and several Assyrian, Chaldean and Armenian Christian communities.

Economy

Just like the other Kurdish governorates, Dohuk governorate benefitted from the relative calm and stable security situation in the KRI after the US-led invasion of 2003. Due to a number of reasons, the Kurdish region was less affected by the UN sanctions, which were imposed on Iraq after the 1990 invasion of Kuwait and were only lifted after the 2003 invasion. One of the main reasons was that the UN, instead of the Iraqi central government, managed the humanitarian relief and development efforts in the Kurdish region after the war. A large share of the UN Food for Oil program was allotted to the Kurdish region, and the higher presence of international aid organizations in Iraqi Kurdistan also dampened the effect of the sanctions. Finally, cross border smuggling made it easier to circumvent sanction imposed import restrictions.

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) is a semi-autonomous region consisting of the governorates of Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah. The KRI was granted autonomy in the 2005 constitution of Iraq and is ruled by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and its parliament, the Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA). Under the 2005 constitution, the KRG is allowed to have its own security forces, which operate independently from the Baghdad controlled Iraqi military and security hierarchy. The KRG remains dependent on Baghdad for its budget and the export of its oil, which in the past years regularly lead to tensions between the KRG and the central government. Unresolved territorial disputes about Kirkuk and other areas in the governorates of Diyala and Ninewa with a significant Kurdish presence also keep poisoning the relations between the KRG and the central government.

Foreigner friendly investment laws also contributed to the spike in foreign investment the governorate witnessed since 2003. Bilateral trade with Turkey in particular flourished and the tourism sector also benefitted from the stability and peace in Dohuk. During the last decade, the governorate witnessed a

construction boom, and a number of foreign companies are involved in oil exploration in Dohuk. The governorate has some regional importance in agricultural production, and more specifically orchards and pasturage.

Dohuk's economy is however still hampered by limited infrastructure and corruption. The economic prosperity failed to drive down unemployment, especially for women. The agricultural sector is still below its pre-1980 productivity level and has been hit hard by water shortages in the past decade. The wave of IDPs that arrived in Dohuk since the IS conquest in the summer of 2014 is also putting a lot of stress on the governorate's economy.

Historical Introduction

The governorate of Dohuk is part of the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRG), a region which has been locked in a long struggle for more autonomy from Iraq's central government. Since the 1920s, Iraq's Kurdish region witnessed many revolts against the central authorities in Baghdad – be them the British, the Hashemite monarchy or the Baathist regime – all of which were violently put down.



The city of Dohuk with the Dohuk dam in the background. Source: [Claus Weinberg](#)

The relations between the Kurdish region and the central government started off relatively well after the Ba'athist takeover in 1968. The promising Kurdish Autonomy Agreement of 11 March 1970 however was cancelled and replaced by a unilaterally declared autonomy statute in 1974 following disagreements over the borders of the Kurdish region and the disputed territories around Sinjar, Kirkuk and Khanaqin, issues which still linger on today. The following Kurdish revolt led by Mustafa Barzani was

crushed by the regime, which then embarked on an 'Arabization' campaign aiming to alter the demographical balance of the Kurdish region. The Iran Iraq war, which started in 1980, diverted Baghdad's efforts and resources and the central government gradually lost control over the Kurdish region.

In 1987 the Iraqi regime decided to end the 'Kurdish problem' once and for all. Under the command of Ali Hassan Al-Majid, a cousin and close friend of Saddam Hussain, the Iraqi army launched the Spring 1987 campaign, which started with chemical strikes on villages in the Balisan valley. Then ground forces moved in and demolished hundreds of villages throughout Kurdistan, forcing their residents to resettle

or move to government-built camps. The Spring campaign however was only the prelude for the even bloodier Anfal campaign. Between February and September 1988, eight Anfal campaigns were launched, sweeping the entire Kurdish region of Iraq. The Anfal campaigns all followed a similar two-staged battle plan. First a wave of chemical attacks, airstrikes and artillery shelling was launched against both Peshmerga positions and villages. After the first phase Iraqi ground forces moved in, demolishing entire villages and detaining and deporting the civilian population. Captured battle age men were then split from the other detainees and executed. Other civilians of all ages were also targeted by mass executions and disappearances. By the end of the Anfal campaign, at least 2000 villages had been razed and varying sources estimate that between 50,000 and 187,000 civilians were killed during gas attacks, executed by the Iraqi army or had perished from hardships endured when they fled the violence. Many others had been 'disappeared', their fate unknown to their relatives up to today.

After the defeat of Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War, revolts broke out in Iraqi Kurdistan and the mainly Shiite southern governorates. The revolts were violently crushed by the government, but the stream of refugees fleeing Kurdistan triggered an international response: a safe haven was declared in the Kurdish region, guaranteed by the international coalition that fought Iraq in 1991. A massive relief operation was also set in motion in the Kurdish governorates. Clashes between Kurdish Peshmerga and the Iraqi army however continued on a limited scale after the Kurds seized Erbil and Sulaymaniyah in July 1991.

In 1994, open hostilities broke out between the rival KDP and PUK factions, at one time involving Iran on the side of the PUK and the central government supporting the KDP. In 1998 the two factions finally signed a US brokered peace agreement. When the US-led coalition force invaded Iraq in 2003, Kurdish forces joined the fight against Saddam's regime. After the overthrow of the Ba'athist regime, the Kurdish region, including the governorate of Erbil, remained relatively calm and untouched by the sectarian strife that engulfed other parts of Iraq. Tensions between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the central government in Baghdad however remained. The disputed oil-rich areas around Kirkuk, the partition of the oil-revenue and the presence of Baghdad-controlled security forces in or near Kurdish areas are all points of contention between the Kurds and Baghdad. The IS-conquest of large parts of northwestern Iraq in 2014 and the following retreat of the Iraqi army left many of these contested areas de facto under control of Kurdish Peshmerga forces, thus adding another layer of complexity to the ongoing territorial conflict.

Humanitarian Issues

Dohuk governorate escaped the widespread sectarian violence that erupted in other parts of Iraq following the 2003 invasion. Dohuk was also spared from the onslaught of the IS conquest that swept much of the country's northwestern and central region. Criminality, civil unrest and cross border smuggling do pose a limited but persistent security threat. The alleged presence of PKK fighters in the governorate has also been a cause of tension with neighboring Turkey. Just like the other Kurdish governorates, Dohuk governorate too is littered with minefields and unexploded ordnance.

Since the IS incursion into Iraq it has been getting increasingly difficult to employ Arab staff in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Arab Iraqi's working for NGOs in the KRI have been questioned, delayed or

even blocked at security checkpoints. These checkpoint issues not only hinder NGO operations in the region, but also make the life of thousands of IDPs residing in the region more difficult. Arab Iraqis and Arab nationals from other countries are also facing problems in obtaining visa to enter the KRI.

	Population under the poverty line	Unemployment	Enrollment primary education	Enrollment secondary education	Literacy
Dohuk Governorate	4,9%	8,8%	94,7%	65,7%	69,3%
National Averages	11,5%	11,3%	90,4%	48,6%	79% ¹

Despite being one of the governorates with the lowest poverty numbers, Dohuk governorate scores below average on a number of other development indicators. Notwithstanding the higher than average enrollment rates in primary and secondary schools, illiteracy remains a serious problem in the governorate. Food insecurity actually increased from 1% in 2007 to 5% in 2011. The number of people living below the poverty line of \$2,5 a day also varies between the districts: 2011 data indicate that 12,5% of the population was living under the poverty line in Al-Shikan district, dropping to 0% for the district of Dohuk. The number of people with access to an improved water source (96,2%) or improved sanitation facilities (97,3%) are both above the national average, but the public electricity network fails to deliver a consistent source of power to the governorate's inhabitants. Limited transport options and financial means hamper access to health facilities.

The most urgent humanitarian issue currently facing Dohuk governorate is the large number of IDPs in the governorate. The IS conquest of large swaths of northwestern Iraq in 2014 triggered a wave of internal displacement, with many of the IDPs seeking refuge in Iraqi Kurdistan, including Dohuk governorate. IOM estimated in September 2014 that more than 75,000 IDP families were residing in the governorate, the highest number of IDPs in any Iraqi governorate. By June 2015 this number increased to more than 441,000 individuals. The majority of them fled from the neighboring governorate of Ninewa, with a much smaller number hailing from Anbar. A large number of them are members of various religious minorities, including Yazidis and Christians. The governorate is also hosting more than 100,000 Syrian refugees. The influx of IDPs and refugees is putting great stress on the local economy. For an up to date overview of the numbers and locations of IDPs, refugees and camps in the governorate please consult [IOM's displacement tracking matrix](#) or [REACH Iraq's resource center](#).

Presence of NGOs

Please see the [members' area](#) on NCCI's website for full access to our weekly field reports, which include an up to date humanitarian situation overview.

¹As by UNICEF, *State of The World's Children 2015 Country Statistics Table*, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/iraq_statistics.html , 25/02/2015. All other data are from JAU, *Dahuk Governorate Profile 2013*, <http://www.jauiraq.org/documents/470/GP-Dahuk%202013.pdf> , 24/02/2015.



NCCI's [online NGO mapping](#) gives an oversight of local and international NGO presence on a governorate level.

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