



World Food Programme

Flash Update – April 2016

IRAQ - Anbar

Highlights

- Since the beginning of military operations in December, food prices in Anbar have rapidly increased in the districts directly affected by the conflict. Inaccessible and besieged areas recorded the most significant changes in food prices. The highest increase in price over the past three months was observed particularly for rice.
- As the siege continued in Fallujah for the third consecutive month, no sign of improvement was recorded in March; food prices remain extremely high, and stocks in shops and households are depleting. In March, the price of wheat was six times more expensive than in December. The food security situation of the people living in Fallujah city is extremely worrying, and is likely to deteriorate further until access to the city is granted.
- In March, reports of food shortages were recorded for the first time in Heet centre, where fighting between Iraqi Security Forces and armed opposition groups intensified in February.

Situation overview

Operations in Anbar Governorate are currently underway to retake the city of Heet and other armed opposition groups' (AOGs) held areas in western Iraq. Military operations triggered new displacement of about 38,000 individuals, in addition to nearly 6,000 individuals already present in the Al Wafaa region. The situation remains fluid, with reports of new displacements and returns to areas retaken by the Government. Displacements and returns are confined to locations close to the active front-lines, in hard to reach areas for humanitarian partners. The main urban area of Fallujah has now been under siege for more than two months, with up to 60,000 civilians trapped inside and denied access to basic services in rapidly deteriorating conditions. The UN is unable to obtain access to civilians in Fallujah city, which remains under the control of AOGs. Reports indicate that conditions are deteriorating rapidly, but the UN is unable to verify reports. The food security situation is worsening especially in the besieged areas, where many people require immediate food assistance.

Humanitarian response

In response to new displacement in the hard-to-reach areas of Anbar Governorate, humanitarian assistance, including ready-to-eat food, clean water and hygiene supplies has been provided through the Rapid Response Mechanism, led by WFP and UNICEF, to nearly all the newly displaced people in accessible areas; supplies for an additional 60,000 people have been pre-positioned in anticipation of the Fallujah response. About 30,000 people in the Kilo 7/18 and Kilo 60 (Al Wafaa shelter) areas had been reached with emergency life-saving supplies by 31 March. Between 14 and 31 March, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) distributed 2,500 Immediate Response Rations (IRRs) at the Al Wafaa IDP site. NRC also distributed 4,200 IRRs at the Kilo 18 IDP site between 11 and 31 March.

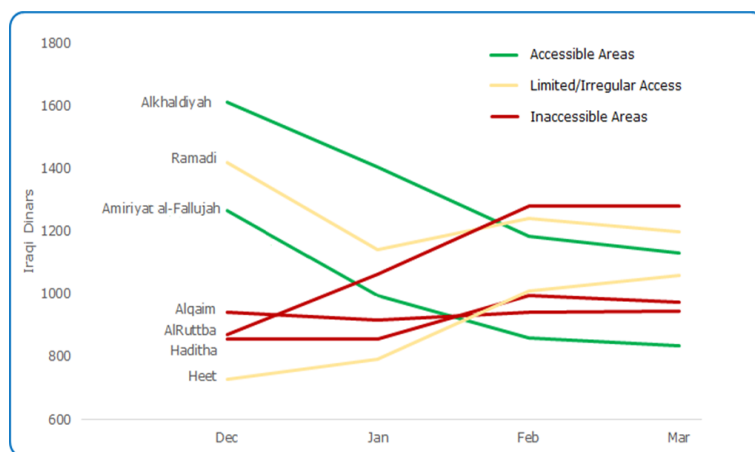


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Markets and food prices

At the district level, a difference in food prices has been observed between the accessible and the inaccessible areas (Figure 1). In the non-accessible districts of Al-Ruttba, Haditha and Heet, the cost of the food basket increased by 32, 12 and 31 percent respectively since December 2015 (Table 1).

Figure 1: Average cost of a food basket in Anbar governorate December 2015 – March 2016



Source: WFP mVAM, March 2016

Reportedly the only food available comes from the stocks that some families still have in their homes, and is being sold at extremely high prices to other families (Table 2). Since the beginning of the siege, prices have increased and are approaching the maximum purchasable level for consumers, indicating a further depletion of availability. With the siege of Fallujah tightening, supplies are not reaching civilians. Aid has not reached Fallujah since the government recaptured nearby Ramadi in December 2015, with supply routes cut off by Iraqi forces and the armed groups preventing civilians from leaving. There are reports from key informants that people wanting to leave the city and seek safety are unable to do so.

The high level of unemployment reported by all the respondents in Fallujah and the increase in the food prices has eroded their purchasing power. In addition, complete unavailability of cooking gas and fuel was reported in Fallujah, and electricity is available only for a few hours a day.

Table 1: Cost of basic food commodities in Anbar governorate December 2015 vs. March 2016

District	Wheat Flour	Rice	Sugar	Vegetable Oil	Lentils	Partial Food Basket
Alkhalidiyah	↓ -28%	↑ 87%	↓ -33%	↓ -3%	↑ 20%	↓ -43%
Alqaim	↓ -20%	↑ 89%	↓ -50%	= 0%	= 0%	= 0%
AlRuttba	↑ 50%	↑ 94%	↑ 33%	↑ 11%	↑ 32%	↑ 32%
Amiriya al-Fallujah	↓ -33%	↑ 86%	↓ -28%	↓ -28%	↓ -100%	↓ -51%
Haditha	↓ -17%	↑ 90%	↑ 7%	↑ 19%	= 0%	↑ 12%
Heet	↑ 26%	↑ 89%	↑ 14%	↑ 36%	↑ 27%	↑ 31%
Ramadi	↑ 13%	↑ 89%	↓ -17%	↑ 6%	↓ -39%	↓ -18%

Source: WFP mVAM, March 2016

Table 2. Average prices of basic food basket commodities in Fallujah

Food commodity	Average price in December 2015: Fallujah (IQD)	Average price in January 2016: Fallujah (IQD)	Average price in February 2016: Fallujah (IQD)	Average price in March 2016: Fallujah* (IQD)	Average price in March in Iraq (IQD)
Wheat flour (kg)	2,600	24,000	22,000	16,300	1,203
Imported rice (kg)	2,650	20,000	15,000	NA	1,915
Sugar (kg)	2,200	20,000	15,000	16,750	1,157
Vegetable oil (litre)	3,200	20,000	21,000	26,250	1,931
Lentils (kg)	3,800	NA	NA	NA	1,728

* These figures are based on four markets in Fallujah, Hay Almoalmin sub-district. Key informant interviews are ongoing.

Source: WFP mVAM, March 2016

In **Amiriya al-Fallujah**, **Ramadi** and **AlKhalidiyah**, data shows a 3 to 5 percent decrease in the average cost of the food basket in comparison with February. This decrease might be linked to the Public Distribution System (PDS) deliveries in these areas in March. In addition, WFP distributed IRRs to 3,400 newly displaced people that arrived Amiriya al-Fallujah in March.

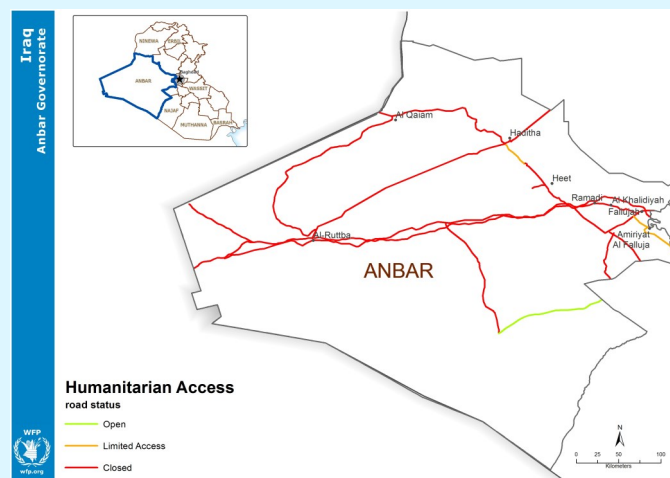
Al Ruttba, continued to report the highest food costs in Anbar governorate (1,280 IQD), with prices 23 percent higher than the average.

All monitored locations, with the exception of Haditha and Amiriyat al-Fallujah, indicated that no PDS deliveries had been received in March and that there is a large need for assistance, especially for the displaced population.

Methodology

The following mVAM (mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping) findings are based on market information from 10 locations in Anbar governorate collected with the assistance of Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) in March 2016, covering the following districts: Al Khalidiyah (1 location), Al Qaim (1), Al Ruttba (1), Amiriyat Al-Fallujah (1), Fallujah (2), Haditha (1), Heet (2) and Ramadi (1). Due to a lack of humanitarian access, WFP started remote phone-based data collection and food security monitoring in Iraq through the mVAM approach. Survey respondents are contacted via live calls, and asked to respond to a short series of questions on food markets. Due to the disruption of networks following the military operation that began in December 2015, reaching respondents in Anbar - particularly in Fallujah - has become increasingly difficult and very limited information is available. Reportedly, AOGs have shut down many transmitter towers in the areas under their control, preventing people from using mobile phones.

Map 1: Monitored markets in Anbar and access, March 2016.



Source: WFP mVAM, March 2016

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