

# THE SITUATION OF TURKMEN MIGRANTS FROM TALAFAR AND THE FUTURE OF TALAFAR



# **THE SITUATION OF TURKMEN MIGRANTS FROM TALAFAR AND THE FUTURE OF TALAFAR**

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## PREFACE

Talafar has been one of the most affected regions by the actions of ISIS since the terrorist organization started to gain control over Iraqi territory in June 2014. Among the most significant settlements inhabited by Turkmen in Iraq, Talafar is known as the largest county in Iraq. It is well known that while the Turkmen constituted a large part of the population in Talafar, a county of Mosul the population of which is approximately 510 thousands, the Kurdish and Arab population lived in the surrounding villages and communes in the pre-ISIS period. However, almost all of these people have become immigrants after ISIS entered Talafar, especially the Turkmen population in Talafar has suffered a great damage.

Turkmen from Talafar, who found themselves in immigration status, could not mobilize in a single region and dispersed into different provinces in Iraq. Besides, more than 70 thousand Turkmen had to migrate to Turkey. While most of the Shiite Turkmen living in Talafar settled in different provinces, mainly in Najaf, Karbala and Babylon in the south of Iraq, some of the Sunni Turkmen settled in Kirkuk as well as Dohuk and Erbil, which are parts of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Moreover, a camp was established in Kirkuk for the Turkmen from Talafar with the support of Turkey.

The ISIS control in Talafar, which started in June 2014, was completely terminated by the Iraqi security forces' operation that started on August 20, 2017 and lasted for 11 days, and Talafar was liberated from ISIS. In the wake of this process, the efforts will be made for the reconstruction of Talafar and the return of the migrants. At this point, with the aim of providing a perspective for the future, ORSAM has examined the situation of the Turkmen asylum seekers and prepared this report in line with ORSAM field studies. The report examines several titles such as the reasons for the Turkmen migration; the reason why they preferred to emigrate to Turkey; possibilities of reconciliation, peace, cooperation and conflict between Shia and Sunni Turkmen in case of their return; the Turkmen expectation and requests regarding the administrative and political future of Talafar; examination of the dynamics of perception and radicalization towards ISIS; and the view of the Talafar Turkmen towards the actors in the region (Turkey, Iran, USA, KRG, Hashdi al-Shaabi, PKK, ISIS, Iraqi Central Government). I hope this report, which has been prepared in the light of the primary sources obtained from the field, brings about a different perspective for those who are interested in the subject, and I hope you enjoy the reading.

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*President of ORSAM*



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# THE SITUATION OF TURKMEN MIGRANTS FROM TALAFAR AND THE FUTURE OF TALAFAR

## I. INTRODUCTION

Talafar, located 70 km northwest of Mosul and 110 km from Turkish border, has been the largest district of Iraq and a Turkmen city. It fell under the control of ISIS in June, 2014. Before ISIS, the population of Talafar together with surrounding villages and sub-districts was 510,000, and the population of the county seat was 230,000. While whole of the population in the county seat was Turkmen, there were three sub-districts of Talafar namely Zummar, Rabia and al-Ayadia (Avgani). Among these sub-districts, Turkmen population constitutes the majority in al-Ayadia. While majority of the population is Sunni Arab in Rabia, the are Turkmens and few Kurdish populations in the surrounding villages. In Zummar, however, there are Sunni Arab villages besides Kurdish and Gergeri majority of the population. After ISIS entered the city in June 2014, almost 95 percent of the population had to migrate. While majority of this population has been displaced inside Iraq, a certain number has migrated outside the country (mostly to Turkey). Despite its dense population and vast surface area, Talafar does not have a 'provincial status.' It has been claimed that Talafar could not become a province because only Turkmens populate this region. Talafar's becoming a province first came to the agenda in 1977. At that time, work started for Najaf, Tikrit, Dohuk and Talafar to become provinces. Three out of

four aforementioned sub-districts gained provincial status; but Talafar could not gain the same status because majority of its population was Turkmen. Afterwards, the same issue came to the agenda in 2002; but it fell off the agenda due to the invasion of Iraq. However, Talafar's demand to become a province was brought up several times after 2003 and it was also reiterated in 2005 election agenda of Iraqi Turkmen Front and by Turkmen candidates for parliament as an election promise. In Talafar, which is the largest sub-district of the city of Mosul, there was not a significant incident, rebellion or armed struggle during the US invasion of Iraq and afterwards; but almost all the Turkmens living in the city had to leave their places during the operations in September 2004 and September 2005, and a chaotic atmosphere was created in Talafar. In this process, the pressure of Kurdish groups on Talafar was increased. Iraqi Kurds could not control this area because of its Turkmen fabric; and the Kurdish groups who could not control Talafar could not create their desired pressure and hold over Mosul. Talafar is separating Syrian Kurdish regions and Iraqi Kurdish regions. That the entire Talafar has been populated by Turkmens hinders the formation of a Kurdish bloc in this region.



At the beginning of 2014, another resolution regarding Talafar's becoming a province was issued. However, the process completely stopped initially by Iraq's entering into election process and then because of ISIS. The chaotic atmosphere of 2004-2005 was repeated again with the existence of ISIS and Talafar fell under the control of ISIS in June 2014. Talafar, which became one of the main strongholds of ISIS in the process, was especially the east-west connection point for ISIS and came to the fore as the passage area for militants between Syria and Iraq.

Mosul was the main center of ISIS in Iraq and the ISIS leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, proclaimed his "caliphate" in this city. To take back the city from ISIS, Iraq security forces in coordination with International Coalition Forces Against ISIS initiated Operation to Recapture Mosul on 17 October 2016. The operation officially ended when Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi visited the city on 9 July 2017 and made a speech of victory. Afterwards, he officially announced that the Talafar Operation started. However, before this when the Mosul Operation had started, Hashd al-Shaabi made a move towards Talafar on 1 October 2016. Hashd al-Shaabi started an operation to open a corridor from Hammam Al-Alil through Talafar. With this operation that started under the leadership of Hashd al-Shaabi and supported by Iraqi police and army, Talafar Airport was taken back on 8 October 2016 and ISIS was purged from Talafar's surrounding villages. However, afterwards the Hashd al-Shaabi operations did not advance to the Talafar center but to the west (to Syrian border) from Talafar's south. As a result, the operations reached to Syrian border on 29 May 2017. The operations advanced along the border through Qaim

instead of Talafar city center. During this time, since Mosul Operation had also been continuing, an operation for another city was not added to the agenda. However, with the termination of Mosul Operation, operations to the last town under the control of ISIS like Talafar, Hawijah, Qaim, Hit, came to the agenda and Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi officially announced the start of Talafar operation on 31 August 2017. Especially issues like who would conduct the operation for Talafar, who and how would ensure the control of the city created controversy on the part of the operation. The question marks regarding whether Hashd al-Shaabi would participate in the operation occupied the agenda; but at the end Hashd al-Shaabi participated in the Talafar operation together with the army and police units. On the other side, recapturing Talafar was not only very important for Talafar but also for termination of ISIS in northern Iraq.

Although Talafar is a Turkmen city, the sectarian struggle in Iraq and the pressure of al-Qaeda on Talafar has created problems among the Turkmens living in Talafar. These problems have deepened after ISIS has taken control of Talafar. In the current situation, Hashd al-Shaabi's participation in the operation and its deployment in town raise question marks about the returns to Talafar and how they will be ensured. At this point, examining the migrants from Talafar will play an important role for determination of return conditions. In the light of the data gathered during the field studies conducted by ORSAM, this study deals with the situation of Turkmens of Talafar who were displaced inside Iraq and who migrated to Turkey.

## 2. THE SITUATION OF MIGRANTS FROM TALAFAR INSIDE IRAQ

After ISIS became active and ensured control of areas in Iraq like Mosul, Anbar, Tikrit, Diyala on June 2014, a massive movement of migration begun. Besides displacements inside Iraq, there were migrations from Iraq to states like Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon. However, it is possible to say that the migration after ISIS occurred mostly in the form of internal migration. Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration states that as the result of migrations occurred after the expansion of ISIS in Iraq, the number of migrants exceeded over 4 million people. Iraqi government endorsed the policy of return of all the migrants to the places that they migrated from. Iraqi government afforded initially 1 million Iraqi dinar and then 250,000 Iraqi dinar one-time assistance to migrant families through the agency of Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration. Although locally clothes, food, cleaning materials, household goods are provided to migrants with aids from time to time, it is impossible to say that Iraqi government has a systematic migration policy.

With the decision taken on 2 February 2017 by Iraqi Prime Ministry, Ethnic Groups Counselling Commission at-

tached to the Prime Ministry was established. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi appointed Jafar al-Hussein as the head of the commission. Besides the Head, there are five other members in the commission. The representative of Turkmen in this commission is Nahla Hussein. Also, together with Nahla Hussein, Hunain al-Kaddo (Shabak), Harith Shensher (Sabeen), Hajji Kandur Al-Sheykh (Yazidi) and Joseph Silvia (Christian) are members of the commission. It is stated that this commission is established to determine the needs of the ethnic groups and the commission members will directly convey the problems and needs of the ethnic groups they represent to the prime minister.

The tables regarding the migration situation in Iraq obtained from the Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration are provided below in order to see the migration situation more clearly. Although all the data are obtained from Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration, the figures given in the three tables below regarding the general migration situation in Iraq differ. However, the figures are approximate.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Migrants in the Provinces as of March 2017

		Provinces Migrated From							
Provinces Migrated To	Name of the city	Nineveh	Kirkuk	Salahaddin	Diyala	Baghdad	Babel	Anbar	Total
	Erbil	62425	1195	19080	878	1341	153	29712	114784
	Anbar	86	8	706	32	2222	1366	114678	119098
	Basra	839	299	878	174	33	33	548	2804
	Suleimaniyah	6601	76	11265	13016	4243	2112	18600	55913
	Qadisiyah	1843	531	219	77	134	68	818	3690
	Muthanna	531	18	84	21	29	1	211	895
	Najaf	10242	201	300	147	156	24	491	11561
	Babil	4852	48	541	142	535	2785	3206	12109
	Baghdad	9581	306	12789	2555	17066	945	45681	88923
	Dohuk	138526	22	782	29	47	5	862	140273
	Diyala	242	103	2356	35071	179	13	396	38360
	Dhi Qar	853	357	185	53	39	49	393	1929
	Salahaddin	70	76	23120	153	24		213	23656
	Karbala	9612	226	961	357	272	330	710	12468
	Kirkuk	7808	19797	45456	6701	654	308	9612	90336
	Maysan	519	139	74	24	27	8	61	852
	Nineveh	4629		30		2		2	4663
	Wasit	3409	231	321	170	69	21	599	4820
	Total	262668	23633	119147	59600	27082	8221	226793	727134

**Table 2.** Number of Migrant Families and Families Returned Home as of March 2017

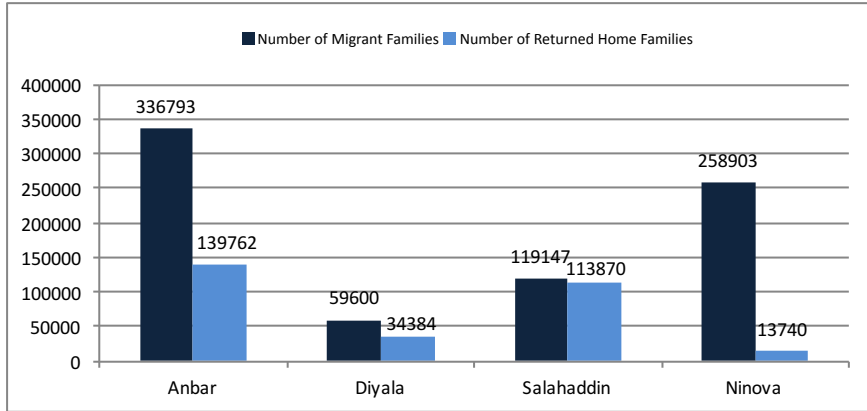
Province	District	Number of Migrant Families	Number of Families Returned Home	Ratio of Families Returned Home to Migrant Families	Migrant Families Left
Anbar	Rutba	173	1848		
	Ramadi	117250	66720	% 57.0	50530
	Fallujah	32201	37311		
	Qaim	5207			
	Haditha	1431	3573		
	Rawa	8741			
	Anah	1661			
	Heet	9832	9701	% 98.60	131
	Karma	14145	11810	% 83.0	2335
	Khalidiya	36152	8799		

Province	District	Number of Migrant Families	Number of Families Returned Home	Ratio of Families Returned Home to Migrant Families	Migrant Families Left
Province Total		336793	139762	% 62.0	52996
Diyala	Khalis	13199	6211	% 47.0	6988
	Muqdadiya	3109	7636		
	Ba'quba	10303	33	% 0.32	10270
	Balad Ruz	951	131	% 18.0	820
	Khanaqin	32038	20373	% 64.0	11665
Province Total		59600	34384	% 58.0	29743
Salahaddin	Daur	7568	13155		
	Shirqat	7438	7975		
	Faris	1216			
	Dujail		1500		
	Balad	10009	3800	% 38.0	6209
	Baiji	18149	29052		
	Tikrit	33819	30301	% 90.0	3518
	Samarra	26813	28087		
Province Total		119147	113870	% 96.0	9727
Nineveh (Mosul)	Ba'aj	5808	-		
	Hatra	675	-		
	Shikhan	715	-		
	Mosul	131378	4740	% 3.60	126638
	Talafar	31984	-		
	Makhmur	3360	1950	% 58.0	1410
	Tal Kaif	17892	-		
	Hamdaniya	20618	-		
	Sinjar	46473	7050	% 15.0	39423
Province Total		258903	13740	% 5.30	167471
Final Total		664443	301756	% 45.40	259937

**Table 3.** Number of families returned to their provinces and districts as of March 2017 according to the data of Iraqi security forces

Province	District	Number of Families Returned	Province	District	Number of Families Returned
Salahaddin	Tikrit	29273	Diyala	Muqdadiya	6719
	Daur	13150		Khalis	6136
	Alem	17230		Balad Ruz	130
	Abu Ujail	2095		Ba'quba	0
	Sharq Baiji	9495		Khanaqin/ Karatepe	2930
	Shirgat	7975		Khanaqin / Sadiye	2997
	Samarra (Center)	700		Khanaqin / Celevle	11776
	Samarra (surrounding area)	1850	Total		30688
	Balad (Center)	3800	Nineveh	Makhmur	1950
	Samarra / Dhuluiya Ayittin	5700		Sinjar	7050
	Dhuluiya / Samidin	4373		Qayyarah	4740
	Makshufiyah	1687	Toplam		13740
	Samarra / Muqtasim	5490	Al-Anbar	Ramadi	66720
	Samarra / Yathrib	4675		Heet	9701
	Samarra / Ishaqi	1100		Rutba	1848
	Dujail	1500		Khalidiya	11180
	Huwaish	1200		Jazirat al-Khalidiya	630
	Abbasiya	1060		Karma	8799
	Salam / Sayyid Gharib	140		Haditha	3573
	Salam ( Farhatiya)	122		Fallujah	37311
Total		112605	Total		139762
Final Total			296795		

**Graph 1.** Number of Migrant Families and Returned Home Families as of March 2017 According to Provinces



The figures provided here show the migrants after June 2014 when ISIS has become active in Iraq. The previous migrations are not included in the figures above. As it can be seen in Table 1-2-3- and Graph 1, Ministry of Displacement and Migration data provided number of families. Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration said that individuals per family was calculated between 5 to 8 individuals. According to this, in Iraq after ISIS at least 3 million 300 thousand and at most 5 million 300 thousand people are migrants.

Table 1-2-3- and Graph 1 show that the greatest migration after ISIS occurred from Anbar. Then, Mosul, Salahaddin and Diyala comes in order. Although one of the first places recaptured from ISIS was Diyala, 42% of the migrated population could not return home as of March 2017. The reason for this is stated to be the activities of Hashd al-Shaabi in Diyala. It is stated that Hashd al-Shaabi prevented people to return to Diyala. It is stated that the major security element in Diyala is Hashd al-Shaabi and for this reason Hashd al-Shaabi determines the families who will return to Diyala. However, Hashd al-Shaabi does not allow even the families who are not connected to ISIS but one individual among them joined ISIS in the heat of the moment. It is claimed that Hashd al-Shaabi employs a population policy that

will change the demographic structure in favor of Shi'as in Diyala where Shi'a and Sunni population live together but Sunni population is the majority. It is known that Iran puts pressure on Diyala in this issue. It is possible to say since Diyala is the only province that has a Sunni Arab population majority in Iran-Iraq border, Iran wants to secure its border by decreasing the number of Sunni population here.

It draws attention that 95% of the population migrated from Salahaddin returned home although it was recaptured after Diyala. However, the most striking point about the statistics regarding Salahaddin is that among 14135 families migrated from Tuz Khurmatu, none of them could have returned. Yet, while analyzing data about Tuz Khurmatu, attention should be paid to one issue. It is known that a very small number of families migrated from Tuz Khurmatu center. Families migrated from Tuz Khurmatu are mostly from regions populated by Sunni Arabs and Sunni Turkmens such as Suleymanbeg, Bastamli, Yangijah. For this reason, it is known that Hashd al-Shaabi that controls the region between Kirkuk and Baghdad prevents the residents of this region from returning home. It is known that the Shi'ite Turkmens in Tuz Khurmatu object the return of Turkmens of Bastamli and Yangijah on the basis of the belief that they supported ISIS

in the past. Iraqi government is also not in favor of return of the people of this region in order to prevent creation of a sectarian tension.

Nevertheless, it is observed that 62% of the migrated population has returned to Anbar, which is the last region recaptured from ISIS. However, due to the destruction during the war against ISIS, Anbar needs a serious restoration. On the other hand, the fear from ISIS still exists in Anbar and the people of Anbar live in fear of return of ISIS.

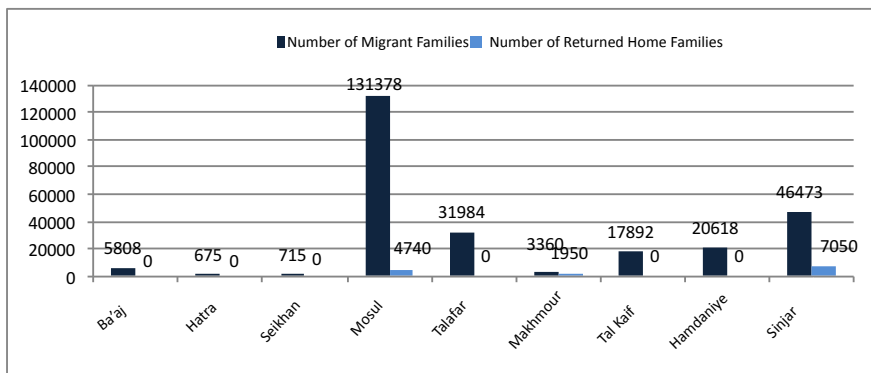
In other respects, since the data belong to March 2017, the figures regarding Mosul do not clearly reflect the situation in Mosul because Mosul operation finished on 9 July 2017. For this reason, the data obtained belong to the period when Mosul operation was going on and they belong to the east side of Mosul for the east side of Mosul was purged at the time of the study. However, in the current situation it is not wrong to say that the situation in entire Mosul is the same.

However, it is also observed that there were no returns to the districts in the outer circle of east side of Mosul like Sheikhan, Tal Kaif, Hamdaniyah although they were

recaptured much earlier than Mosul from ISIS. In these regions known as Saheel Neynova inhabited by minorities, both ISIS and war against ISIS created a huge destruction in living quarters and therefore people could not return. On the other hand, it is observed that there are returns to Qayyarah, Sinjar and Makhmur on the south of Mosul. However, it is stated that the people of Sinjar are anxious about coming back due to the conflict environment in the district not only because of attacks of ISIS but also because of a possible conflict between PKK and KDP. In addition to this, the great destruction created by ISIS attacks also affected Sinjar negatively. At the same time, PKK's existence in Sinjar also creates a threat for the return of people. Hence, there is need for restructuring for the people to be able to come back.

Looking specifically at the migration situation in Mosul, the greatest migration movement occurred in center of Mosul. Together with the center where ISIS had a strong presence, the migrations from Sinjar and Talafar drew attention when looking at the situation in the districts of Mosul. In the graph below, data regarding migration from Mosul and the returnee families are provided.

**Graph 2.** Families migrated from Nineveh (Mosul) Province and Returnee Families as of March 2017



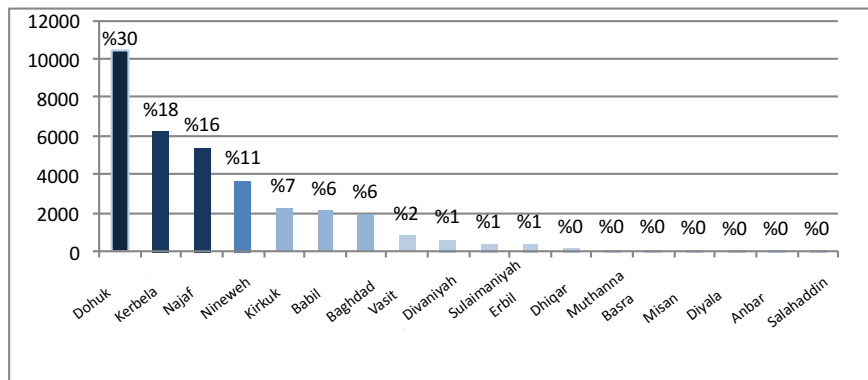
As seen in the Graph 2, the second greatest migration movement among the districts of Mosul happened in Talafar. According to the data in Graph 2, the number of families migrated from Talafar is 31984. However, in the table below showing the provinces that people of Talafar migrated

to, the number of families migrated from Talafar to other provinces of Iraq is given as 34528. This figure shows only those who displaced inside Iraq and does not include the number of Talafar people who migrated to Turkey and other countries.

**Table 4.** The situation of migrants from Talafar and the distribution of Turkmen migrants from Talafar in other province of Iraq as of February 2017

Province	Number of Migrant Families	Province	Number of Migrant Families
Erbil	353	Dohuk	10386
Anbar	11	Diyala	23
Basra	95	Dhiqar	121
Suleimaniyah	397	Salahaddin	9
Divaniye	628	Karbala	6216
Muthanna	107	Kirkuk	2253
Najaf	5401	Meysan	52
Babel	2070	Nineveh	3689
Baghdad	1916	Wasit	807
Final Total		34528	

**Graph 3.** Proportional distribution of Turkmen migrants from Talafar to the provinces as of February 2017

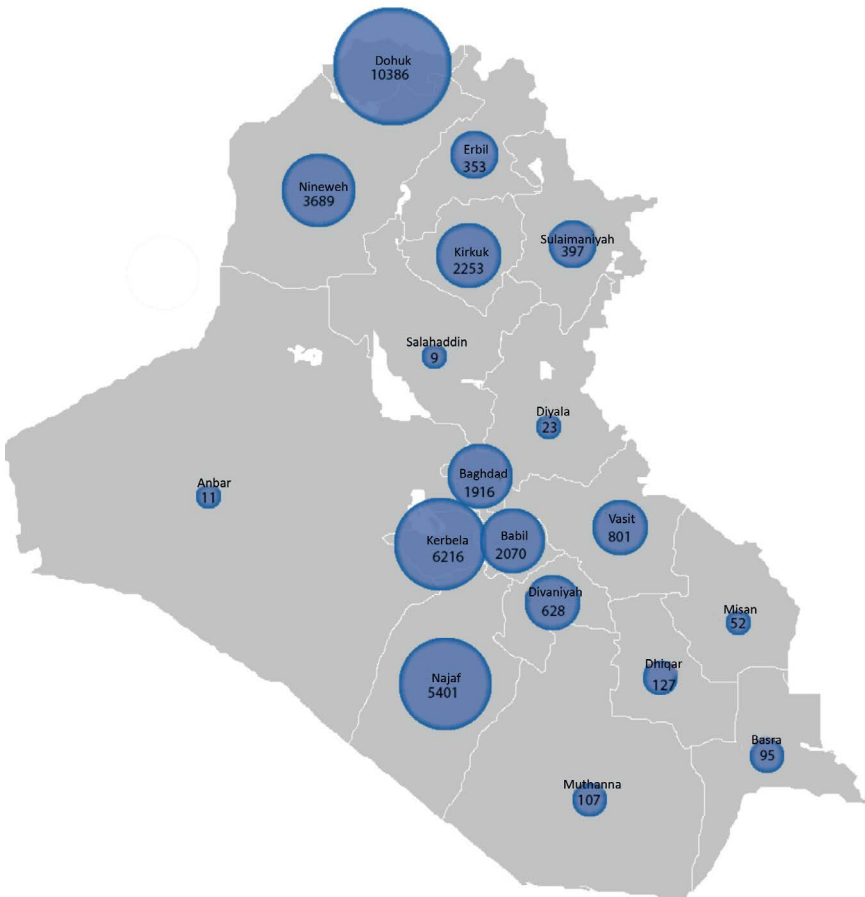




As it is seen in Table 4 and Graph 3, almost one thirds of the migrants from Talafar migrated to Dohuk. It is known that a majority of people of Talafar living in Dohuk are Sunni Turkmens. After Dohuk, Turkmens of Talafar migrated to Karbala and Najaf at most. Especially a small town of Najaf located between Karbala and Najaf, Haydaria, is the region where Turkmens from Talafar populate densely. Almost all the Turkmens from Talafar who have migrated to Karbala and Najaf are Shi'ite Turkmens. Most Shi'ite Turkmens from Talafar resides in Hosseiniyes (Shi'ite mosques) located between Karbala and Najaf.

In addition to this, there are Turkmens who migrated from Shi'ite Turkmens villages of Sharikhan, Sallamiya, Qaraqoyun to Karbala and Najaf. Turkmens migration from Talafar to Karbala and Najaf occurred immediately after the ISIS attacks in June 2014 and there was not any major migration movement afterwards but individually families changed places from time to time. In this sense, it is possible to say that the Turkmens population who migrated from Talafar to southern Iraq remained stable.

**Map 1.** Provinces where Migrant Families from Talafar Reside



Besides Karbala and Najaf, there is a significant population of Turkmen from Talafar in Mosul, Kirkuk, Baghdad and Babel. It is stated that majority of Turkmen from Talafar who went to Mosul escaped from Talafar after the air strikes of coalition forces and after the Talafar operation which was given a start by Hashd al-Shaabi on 1 November 2016.

On the other hand, almost half of the Turkmen families from Talafar in Kirkuk live in the Yahyava refugee camp. Almost all of the Turkmen living in the camp are Sunni. There are also Shi'ite Turkmen among the Turkmen from Talafar living in Kirkuk. In addition to this, majority of Turkmen migrated to Baghdad from Talafar are Shi'is. However, different than the Turkmen migrated to southern Iraq from Talafar, those migrated to Baghdad live dispersedly.

The primary reason for Turkmen from Talafar to prefer Dohuk as their first choice is the geographic proximity of Dohuk and Talafar. Talafar has a common frontier with Dohuk. Also, Turkmen of Talafar had close relations with Dohuk for shopping, health services etc. even before 2014. In fact, Turkmen of Talafar living in Dohuk are quickly integrated to the social life.

In the interviews, it is seen that even Sunni Turkmen from Talafar have a great anger against ISIS. For Turkmen, ISIS is stated clearly as an enemy and as the greatest reason for emergence of sectarian tension in Talafar.

Some Turkmen from Talafar state that the only use of ISIS' entering into Talafar is its revealing all the truths in Talafar. It is stated that ISIS has wiped out all the secrecy in Talafar and the return of those who has and will give harm to Talafar will be impossible in the period after ISIS.

At this point, it is accurate to say that there are different views about return among

the Turkmen in Talafar. It is possible to say that Sunni Turkmen are not optimistic about returning to Talafar in the short term. They state that in order to be able to return to Talafar, the public services should be provided in Talafar and also a protection guarantee should be provided for the Sunni Turkmen. This is because the existence of ISIS has increased the sectarian tension. For this reason, in case of return to Talafar, there are serious doubts that revenge acts might occur.

It is also possible to say that Sunni Turkmen who are eager to return will not act hastily. Sunni Turkmen are integrated into the system and social life and established their living conditions first in KRG and then in Turkey, and for this reason they are not hasty about immediate return to Talafar. Yet, those who want to return will wait for administrative, social and political life to be in good order. At least, they will decide according to which one of the two mentioned scenarios will come true; namely, Talafar's becoming a province and Talafar's becoming a region together with Mosul.

It is possible to say that some of the Turkmen of Talafar living in KRG never thinks about returning to Talafar. Relatively stable, secure and socially comfortable life in KRG attracts Sunni Turkmen of Talafar.

It is also seen that tribal bonds among the Talafar people has begun to weaken. One of the primary reasons in weakening tribal bonds is the belief that tribal leaders bring damage to Talafar instead of being beneficial. Also, another reason is disintegration of tribal structures with the impact of migration from Talafar. It has been observed since three years that the tight tribal bonds have begun to weaken among the people living outside Talafar and multiple leaderships instead of a single leadership have begun to be formed in any tribe.

However, communication continues to be strong among the Turkmens from Talafar who migrated to southern Iraq. This communication helps the Turkmens to preserve their unity and national identity. On the other side, migration created a serious world-weariness for the Turkmens. Although they do not have any difficulties regarding job and participation to social life, it has been stated by many people that Turkmens cannot get along with the people in southern Iraq. Also, the fact the Turkmens' life conditions and quality of their lives are in lower level when compared to their conditions before they migrate make Turkmens determinate about return. Turkmens think that they are different from the people in southern Iraq in terms of tradition, culture, moral and humanitarian values. They also think that even the Shi'a identity do not play a unifying role. Furthermore, Turkmens think that they are being excluded due to the Arab nationalist understanding of the southern Iraqi people. It is accurate to say that this situation has a positive impact on the preservation and strengthening of the Turkmen national identity.

The optimistic attitude regarding return to Talafar is also valid for a future consensus between Shi'as and Sunnis in Talafar. It is being argued that there is not any problem between Shi'as and Sunnis in Talafar and the problem is created by al-Qaeda and ISIS. In this sense, the at-

tempts for consensus and peace among Talafar people is likely to reach a positive result. A consensus among Talafar people will be important for returns and stability in Talafar.

It will not be wrong to say that the rise of national identity among Turkmens migrated to southern Iraq contributes to their expectations from Turkey. This expectation also includes improvement in the current conditions of migrants and the contribution to the rebuilding of Talafar in the process after its recapture from ISIS. At this point, it is accurate to say Turkey's improvement of relations with Iraq and joint projects regarding Talafar will contribute to Talafar's stability and will facilitate return of Turkmens to Talafar. Turkmens also give support to increase of cooperation between Turkey and Iraq.

The dominant idea is that a joint force that will be established in Talafar will definitely contribute to the protection of Talafar. Besides, it has been thought that a joint political structuring after the return of Talafar people to Talafar will support peace, stability and integration in Talafar. At this point Turkmens of Talafar say that primary destabilizing factor in Talafar is the foreign intervention to Talafar and they claim that a consensus in Talafar will prevent future foreign interventions to Talafar. Thus, both future PKK threat and KRG's attempts to takeover Talafar can be resisted.

### 3. THE SITUATION OF MIGRANTS FROM TALAFAR LIVING IN TURKEY

As it has been stated before, although majority of Turkmen of Talafar are displaced inside Iraq, there has been a massive Turkmen migration from Talafar to Turkey. It is known that a majority of Turkmen used irregular ways while migrating to Turkey. For this reason, clear statistics regarding the Turkmen of Talafar living in Turkey is not available. However, as a result of studies conducted by some civil society organizations in Turkey, it is known that over 70 thousand Turkmen from Talafar are living in Turkey. This population did not come to Turkey as a result of a mass migration movement but through a continuous migration from Talafar to Turkey. In the current situation a great majority of Turkmen from Talafar (approximately 75-80%) live in Ankara. Turkmen from Talafar also densely live in the cities like Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa. However, Turkmen from Talafar are living in many cities of Turkey dispersedly. Also, it is known that some Turkmen from Talafar settled down in a migrant camp set for Syrians in Kahramanmaraş.

Turkmen living in Turkey do not encounter a major problem other than general problems that stem from migration. It is possible to say that majority of Turkmen from Talafar living in Turkey have been integrated into social life. At this point, it is seen that Turkmen from Talafar accommodate themselves to Turkey easily.

Although there are some complaints regarding the situation of Turkmen from Talafar living in Turkey, in general they feel gratitude and trust to Turkey. There are criticisms such as Turkey did not open its Iraqi border to Turkmen and Turkmen are not being offered the same opportunities with the Syrians. However, the high standard of life and the favor that

the Turkish people show to Turkmen increased feelings of gratitude. For this reason, they want Turkey to be active and stabilizing in recapturing Talafar and return of Turkmen to Talafar.

Majority of Turkmen from Talafar living in Turkey are hopeless about returning to Talafar and establishment of peace in Talafar. Besides lack of confidence towards Iraqi State, sectarian policies of security forces in other regions recaptured from ISIS and the ongoing fear towards ISIS/al-Qaeda should be highlighted as effective reasons. In the interviews conducted by Talafar people living in Turkey, it is stated that a great majority of Turkmen from Talafar living in Turkey still fear from ISIS and the idea of ISIS will not leave them in peace even if they return to Talafar.

In addition, even Talafar will be cleared from ISIS, there is hesitation for return because of the fact that the restoration period will last long and there may be disruptions in public services. Also, the disruptions in indemnity payments by Iraqi government in regions that were previously recaptured from ISIS like Ramadi, Diyala and Tikrit led Turkmen of Talafar to take a dim view of returns.

It is thought that government employees or students may return to Talafar in the first place, but most of young Turkmen people will opt for staying in Turkey. Especially the Turkmen youth get used to social life in Turkey due to their integration into social life and high welfare level. As a matter of fact, some young people are determinate to stay in Turkey even their families return to Talafar. Even though issues like security, instability, economic problems are resolved, most Turkmen young people from Talafar feel dubious

about returning to Talafar. It is being stated that even though they cannot stay in Turkey, most Turkmen young people from Talafar may apply for asylum to different states through United Nations instead of returning to Talafar, and some young people have already gone to third countries in this way.

Hopelessness prevails among Turkmen in the matter of ensuring stability in Talafar due to sectarian problems among themselves and problems with other groups. For this reason, there are ideas about the solution of the Talafar issue such as the solution to Talafar issue has exceeded Iraqi borders and there should be a regional and even international solution. There are those who think that a consensus between Turkey and Iran can solve Talafar issue, and those who state that Talafar issue cannot be resolved without US involvement. There is even support to ideas like a United Nations force supported by Turkey can solve Talafar issue as in the case of ending the civil war among Kurds in the 1990s.

At this point it is seen that the internal structure in Talafar has collapsed and the tribal system peculiar to Talafar is not working. There is a common dominant view that tribal representation in Talafar failed to solve problems and this system has not brought benefit to Talafar until today. For this reason, the tribal leaders are not appreciated any more as they were in the past. Moreover, the extending families led splits in tribes; the migration from Talafar after ISIS led collapse of tribal structure, and the tribal system in Talafar has been disrupted. It is believed that tribes

cannot solve issues of Talafar since multiple voices has begun to be raised from every tribe.

Moreover, Talafar people lost their confidence in politicians. Majority of interviewees believe that politicians has deepened the cleavages in Talafar. For this reason, if there will be a return to Talafar, work should be done to bring the Turkmen national identity forward, and if a political structure is to be established, it should be built on national foundations bearing a Talafarian identity. Otherwise, Turkmen from Talafar think that even when the problems of Talafar are resolved, the old issues may repeat themselves and new problems may emerge in the process.

There are serious doubts regarding establishment of order, justice, balance, security and stability in Talafar on the grounds of distrust towards Iraqi government and that Iraqi government may behave unjustly despite a possible declaration of an amnesty.

From the point of Turkmen of Talafar living in Turkey, there are dissuasive points that make return a likely idea. Main problems are difficulties in legal actions that Turkmen of Talafar experience in order to stay in Turkey due to migrant policy of Turkey towards Iraqi people, and high cost of living in Turkey compared to Iraq. Especially the crowded Turkmen families have financial difficulties because of their long stay in Turkey. Therefore, it is possible to say that some Turkmen of Talafar will return to Iraq solely for economic reasons.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Migration created a serious world-weariness for the Turkmen. The level of Turkmen's living standards and quality in the places they migrated to are lower than their conditions before migration, and this makes them determinate about return. However, Sunni Turkmen are not optimistic about returning to Talafar in the short term. It is being stated that returning to Talafar necessitates public services and security for Sunni Turkmen. It is observed that Sunni Turkmen have been integrated to system and social life in KRG and in Turkey as migrants, organized their lives, and therefore they will not hurry for return. At this point, it is being stated that especially the Turkmen youth, even though they cannot stay in Turkey, will try to migrate to third countries via United Nations instead of returning to Talafar.

There are differences of opinion between Shi'ite and Sunni Turkmen about reconciliation in Talafar. Shi'ite Turkmen state that they do not have any problems with Sunni Turkmen. On the contrary, they have strong relationships by affinity, and therefore they are open to reconciliation with the Sunnis.

However, almost all the Turkmen of Talafar have a common attitude towards ISIS. Both Shi'ite and Sunni Turkmen state that the root cause of the problem in Talafar is ISIS. Both sides argue that the primary condition for reconciliation is that the perpetrators (members of ISIS, supporters of ISIS, aiders to ISIS) must be penalized. All sides are weary of fighting and therefore peace will be a natural and self-induced solution; otherwise none of the parties will be at ease.

There is a general view that reconciliation in Talafar can be reached by the Talafar people and peace and reconciliation will be difficult in case of a foreign intervention to Talafar. However, Iraqi government adopts a fair and equal approach towards the issue of peace and reconciliation, and demands guarantorship of an international actor like Turkey or United Nations. Nevertheless, there is a dominant view that establishment of a joint force that involves equal sharing in Talafar after ISIS will absolutely contribute to protection of Talafar.

It is being stated that they do not want either PKK or KRG to have control over Talafar or lay a claim on Talafar. They state that if such an attempt happen, Sunni and Shi'ite Talafar people will fight together to protect their land. There is consensus among Turkmen about PKK threat for themselves. It has been stated that PKK is a terrorist organization and it is impossible to accept PKK as a formation that only attacks Turkey.

Turkmen are not only against the intentions of PKK about Talafar but also those of KRG. In fact, Turkmen of Talafar think that the Kurds (especially KRG) have a hostile attitude towards them. It has still been remembered that after ISIS entered in Talafar, Turkmen who had to migrate was not given a pass to KRG and they had serious difficulties in checkpoints.

The political environment in Iraq is believed to incite disintegration in Talafar. There is a belief that especially the politicians benefit from the conflict situation in Talafar and they use it for political purposes.

Tribal bonds have also begun to weaken among Talafar people. One of the primary reasons in weakening tribal bonds is the belief that tribal leaders bring damage to Talafar instead of being beneficial. Moreover, disintegration of tribal structures with the impact of migration from Talafar can be pointed out as other main reason.

The cooperation between Turkey and Iraq is considered important by the Turkmens of Talafar. The cooperation between two countries is considered beneficial in the issues of return to Talafar, and maintaining justice and preserving balance after return to Talafar. There is a high level of confidence towards Turkey among majority of Turkmens of Talafar (no matter of

their sect). Especially Shi'ite Turkmens of Talafar have a distant relationship with Turkey; but it is possible to say that Iran's policies in Iraq that they experienced during their migration period in southern Iraq, the attitude of Iraqi government, and the negative approach of southern Iraqi people have risen their expectations from Turkey. In the recent period, visits by Turkey's Ambassador to Baghdad, Fatih Yıldız, to the Turkmen migrants in southern Iraqi provinces and aids from Turkish institutions such as Kızılay, AFAD, TIKA have been very helpful to reverse the negative perception of Turkey among the Shi'ite Turkmens.





