(ACLED, October 2019). By November, violence around the protests had escalated and the prime minister had resigned and by December, around 400 people had died (ACLED, December 2019).

The protests and uncertain security affected humanitarian operations. Intermittent curfews were imposed in Baghdad and the southern governorates, resulting in missions being delayed or cancelled. In Ninewa UN agencies and NGOs were unable to carry out relief activities in camps because of delays in getting approvals and access letters (OCHA, November 2019).

By October, there were still over 1.4 million IDPs across 18 governorates (IOM, November 2019). Out of 1.2 million people displaced outside of camps, more than two-thirds had not returned to their areas of origin for over three years (OCHA, November 2019). The remaining IDPs in camps include people who are not welcome to return due to unproven affiliations to extremist groups – they often face challenges in accessing assistance (ACAPS, October 2019).

However, some 4.4 million IDPs have returned since 2015 across eight governorates, usually to experience severe hardship (IOM, November 2019). Considerable secondary displacement has resulted from forced and premature returns and forced or coerced departures from camps and informal settlements in Ninewa, Salah Al-Din, Al-Anbar, Kirkuk and Diyala governorates (OCHA, November 2019).

In August, the Government of Iraq consolidated and closed several IDP camps with the aim of all displaced people returning home by the end of 2020. Between August and October, on average 222 households left camps every day, many moving to non-camp settings, but 3,300 families transferred to other camps (IOM, October 2019). Many IDPs in out-of-camp locations are cut off from assistance (HNO, November 2019).

In October 2019, a military offensive by Turkey against Kurdish forces in north-east Syria compounded existing insecurity and uncertainty on Iraq’s western border (OCHA, November 2019). Around 19,000 Syrians crossed the border to Iraq between mid-October and December 2019 (IOM, January 2020).

Insecurity and displacement continued to constrain farmers’ access to agricultural lands, while agricultural inputs and machinery remained expensive and in short supply (FAO-GIEWS, April 2019), worsening medium-term food security prospects. Even though the agricultural sector is small, it still plays a role in Iraq’s economy (FAO, January 2020).

**Economic shocks**

Iraq’s economy is slowly recovering, with GDP expected to grow 5 percent in 2019 mainly due to higher oil prices and better security (WB, October 2019). But progress on reconstruction and development is slow and much of the infrastructure damaged or destroyed (OCHA, November 2019).