

**Community dialogue|
Zlilia (Sinjar district, Ninewa Governorate)**

Thursday 21 August 2025

Methodology and Objective

The Returns Working Group (RWG), in collaboration with the Ninewa Governorate Office, organized a comprehensive community dialogue session in Zlilia to address the challenges facing the village and explore opportunities for its recovery. The session brought together representatives from the local community and relevant authorities to discuss the critical issues affecting the area. Participants highlighted several pressing challenges, including widespread housing destruction, the absence of a functioning water network, unreliable electricity supply, inadequate educational facilities, and the decline of agricultural activities. The dialogue aimed to achieve two main objectives: first, to identify the community’s key priorities for rebuilding infrastructure, revitalizing livelihoods, and restoring essential social services; and second, to assess the capacity of local authorities, NGOs, and government departments to support infrastructure rehabilitation, provide assistance for agriculture and livestock, and enhance basic services such as water, healthcare, education, electricity, as well as compensation and support from the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD).



Zlilia after 2014



Zlilia before 2014

Participant List

Name	Position
Community Representatives	
Jindi Darwish Nawaf	Community leader of Zlilia
Barkat Khdir Nafaw	Community member
Khiry Khalaf Nawaf	Community member
Saeed Nawaf Khalaf	Community member

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Farman Faris khdir	Community member
Elias Khdir Nawaf	Community member
Edo Khdir Nawaf	Community member
Darwish nawaf Khalaf	Community member
Qolo Rash Nawaf	Community member
Ra'ad Rash Nawaf	Community member
Abas Khdir Mato	Community member
Tahssin Saido Khdir	Community member
UN/NGOs	
Saud Ziad Ezdin	IOM
Dilshad Khdir Abdi	
Mahsan Murad Edo	
Sufyan Wahhed Mandoo	RWG-DS coordination

Background

Zlilia is a small community located about 10 kilometers east of the Sinjar district, near the Sinjar Cement Factory in Ninewa Governorate. Historically, it was inhabited primarily by Yazidi families. Before the ISIS attacks on 3 August 2014, Zlilia was a well-established village consisting of around 50 houses and hosting approximately 53 families. Most of the houses were made from clay, which made them highly vulnerable to environmental damage, while the few concrete houses that existed were completely destroyed during the conflict. On 7 July 2017, around 53 families, estimated at 290 individuals, returned to Sinjar. However, only 20 families (about 110 individuals) currently reside in Zlilia, while 23 families (124 individuals) have relocated to Tal Banat village and 10 families (56 individuals) are now living in Sinjar Markaz. The widespread destruction caused during the ISIS offensive left most homes uninhabitable, aggravated by the fragility of clay structures, the destruction of concrete houses, environmental erosion, and the absence of basic infrastructure. The community also endured tragic human losses, as about 70 individuals from Zlilia and nearby villages were killed and buried in a mass grave in the area. Several of the families who have returned include survivors of ISIS captivity and atrocities, which has left long-lasting psychological and social impacts on the community.

Access to basic services

The overall infrastructure in Zlilia remains severely underdeveloped and continues to hinder the return and reintegration of displaced families. Essential services such as electricity, water, education, healthcare, roads, and housing are either absent or in very poor condition, creating difficult living conditions for the families who have returned.

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Electricity

Electricity supply in Zlilia is unreliable and incomplete. Many houses are still not connected to the main electricity network, and the existing lines suffer from frequent breakdowns. There is an urgent need to extend the electricity network to cover all houses and to install additional transformers to stabilize the power supply. Without this, residents continue to experience long outages and inconsistent access to electricity, which affects their daily lives and limits any potential for economic activity.

Water Supply

Access to water is another major challenge for the community. Zlilia does not have a public water network, and the government-operated wells that once supplied the village were destroyed during the ISIS attacks in August 2014. As a result, residents are forced to rely on private water tankers, paying about 30,000 Iraqi Dinars per month, which puts a heavy financial burden on families who already have limited income. Some households attempt to use deep wells, but the water is highly saline and unsafe for drinking, leaving the community without a sustainable or safe source of potable water.

Education

The education infrastructure in Zlilia was completely destroyed during the conflict. Before 2014, a residential house was used as a Kurdish primary school, but it was demolished during the ISIS attacks. Today, the 20 families who remain in Zlilia have about 25 school-aged children, yet there are no educational facilities in the village itself. Sixteen students attend Tal Banat Primary School, located eight kilometers away, while nine others travel ten kilometers to Sinjar Center Primary School. There is no school transportation available, forcing parents to find private vehicles on the streets, which increases financial pressure on households and exposes children to risks on the road. The village Mukhtar has formally requested the Ninewa administration to build a new school in Zlilia, and the proposal has reportedly reached its final stages of approval.

Health Services

Health services are completely absent in Zlilia. The village never had a health center or medical post before 2014, and none has been established since families began to return. As a result, residents must travel ten kilometers to Sinjar General Hospital to access even the most basic medical care, including treatment for minor illnesses, chronic diseases, and emergency cases. This lack of nearby healthcare places residents at significant risk and makes it difficult to

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respond quickly to medical emergencies, especially for children, the elderly, and individuals with chronic health conditions.

Municipality and Roads

Roads and municipal services are also in very poor condition. The three-kilometer road linking Zlilia to the main road is unpaved but still accessible, while all internal roads inside the village are unpaved and become difficult to navigate during seasonal rains. The road leading to the village cemetery is in similarly poor condition. In addition, rubble from destroyed houses has not yet been cleared, and families have repeatedly requested the municipality to support rubble removal to allow reconstruction and improve safety inside the village.

MoMD Assistance

Assistance from the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) has also been very limited. So far, only eight families have received return grants of 1.5 million Iraqi Dinars each, while 45 families are still waiting for their grants to be disbursed. This lack of financial support has made it impossible for many families to rebuild their houses or restart their livelihoods, prolonging their displacement and worsening their economic vulnerability.

Access to Housing, Land and Property

Housing conditions in Zlilia remain one of the biggest obstacles to return. Out of the original homes, 25 are still either destroyed or in urgent need of rehabilitation. Only ten houses have been newly built or rehabilitated since the return of some families. Eleven houses are fully destroyed, and four are partially standing but require major repairs before they can be inhabited again. The lack of adequate housing continues to prevent many displaced families from returning to Zlilia.

Compensation

Efforts to provide financial compensation to affected families have been very limited and inconsistent. Only a few families have received compensation, and even those who did received only about 30 percent of the actual cost needed to rebuild their homes. In most cases, families were given only 2 to 3 million Iraqi Dinars, which is far from enough to reconstruct the traditional clay houses that were destroyed. Out of the 53 original families from Zlilia, only four have received compensation while the remaining 49 are still waiting, despite having already submitted their claims. This lack of compensation has left most families unable to rebuild their homes and has slowed the process of return and recovery.

Economic Situation

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The economic situation in Zlilia has deteriorated severely since the conflict. Agriculture, which was historically the main source of income for residents, has nearly collapsed due to the lack of government support. Farmers have no access to seeds, fertilizers, tools, or agricultural extension services, leaving them unable to cultivate their land or resume production. Livestock farming, which was also a vital part of the local economy, is facing similar challenges. The government does not provide subsidized animal feed, which is essential for maintaining healthy herds, and increasing desertification has reduced grazing areas, weakened animals, and decreased productivity. As a result, both agriculture and livestock farming have declined sharply, eliminating most income-generating opportunities for families and pushing them deeper into poverty.

Challenges

Zlilia faces several serious challenges that have slowed recovery and resettlement efforts. One of the most critical issues is the near total absence of government support, particularly in the sectors that were historically the backbone of the local economy, such as agriculture and livestock farming. The lack of public investment or development initiatives has left residents without the resources they need to rebuild their lives or restore their livelihoods. Employment opportunities are also extremely limited, which makes it difficult for families to generate income and achieve self-reliance. Furthermore, the absence of basic services—including safe drinking water, reliable electricity, healthcare, and education—has created major barriers to durable return. These conditions continue to discourage displaced families from coming back and have made life very difficult for those who have already returned.