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SENIOR EXECUTIVE INTELLIGENCE BRIEF
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Iraq: NGOs Lack Capacity for Relief Efforts [redacted]

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International nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have only a small presence in Iraq, particularly in the central and southern regions, and are not yet in a position to respond to a potential humanitarian crisis. Funding shortfalls, inadequate data on humanitarian conditions, lack of coordination mechanism, and access problems will limit the effectiveness of NGO relief efforts during the initial, critical phase of an emergency.

- The UN relies on NGOs as implementing partners for its programs, and governments typically channel a significant portion of their humanitarian funding through NGOs.
- NGOs have shown a higher tolerance for risk than UN agencies and have more flexibility to deploy during the conflict and immediate postconflict phases of relief operations.

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Although many NGOs operated in Iraq after the Gulf war, the difficult operating environment, chronic underfunding, and US and UN sanctions prompted most agencies to withdraw or reduce the scale of their activities since the mid-1990s. Only a few of the larger, more capable international NGOs--such as CARE, Save the Children Fund, and Caritas--are still in Iraq and most run relatively small-scale programs focused on health care, education, and infrastructure rehabilitation. [redacted]

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Many NGOs are trying to reestablish a presence in Iraq and neighboring countries. During the past several months, NGOs have been drawing up contingency plans, conducting assessment missions, setting up coordination mechanisms, establishing bases of operation, and prepositioning supplies and personnel. [redacted]

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- NGO officials say their capacity in Iraq and neighboring countries is significantly below the level that existed at the start of humanitarian emergencies in Afghanistan and Kosovo, where aid agencies could build on extensive preexisting programs in the country or region. [redacted]

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