

## Gradual return: Reclaiming land and rebuilding lives in Ain Talawi

Ain Talawi is a village in the Sinjar district in Nineveh, located approximately 1.5 kilometers north of the main road linking the Sinjar and Tal Afar districts. It is a rural area surrounded by agricultural lands, with a small river running through its territory, which is currently dry. The village is estimated to have previously been inhabited by 80 families. In 2014, ISIL took control of a large area in Nineveh, including the village of Ain Talawi. Subsequent military operations to defeat ISIL resulted in significant damage to buildings and houses and left numerous ERW, which endangered lives, hindered the return of displaced people to their homes, and impeded the use of agricultural land.

UNMAS Iraq, as part of its mandate to enable the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and in coordination with the Directorate for Mine Action, implemented EO clearance operations in the village between 2022 and 2023. The hazardous area covered over 1.5 million square meters, consisting of the entire village and the surrounding farmland.

In December 2024, as part of the PAIA activities, the UNMAS Iraq team visited the site to assess the impact of the work and meet with beneficiaries. The team observed signs of reconstruction within the village, with several new buildings constructed. Ducks, geese, and chickens were seen on the streets, indicating the return of some residents. The farmland surrounding the village was fully cultivated, and at the time of the visit, villagers were installing irrigation pipes for their recently plowed fields. These developments were seen as positive steps toward the gradual return of displaced families.

Falah Abd Al-Qadir Ameen, the Mukhtar of the village, was among those interviewed by the UNMAS Iraq team. Mr. Ameen and a group of farmers were preparing their fields to plant wheat and barley for the first time in years.

**“The people of Ain Talawi are eager to return to their lands,” Mr. Ameen said “Agriculture is our main source of income, and clearing explosive hazards is essential for our safe return.”**



*Interview with beneficiaries in Ain Talawi, Sinjar, December 2024*



*Grazing sheep in a cleared area in Ain Talawi, Sinjar, December 2024*

UNMAS Iraq, supported by generous donors, will continue its life-saving activities in Sinjar to reduce the risks of explosive devices, strengthen stability efforts, and enhance the local economy.