

**H**OSPITALS and clinics in areas of fighting in central Iraq are struggling to operate at full capacity due to cross-fire, electricity and fuel shortages, and an exodus of staff, officials say.

In addition, health services in Iraq's northern Kurdistan region, which is hosting hundreds of thousands of people fleeing the fighting between militants and government forces, are struggling to keep up with the needs of the displaced.

In early June, heavy shelling damaged two hospitals in the city of Mosul - one of the most affected by the fighting, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

Militants seized government buildings and the airport and raided the central bank in Mosul, which is suffering from a shortage of electricity and other power supplies.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) says that although hospitals are still treating injured people, some of them have either stopped functioning completely or are working at reduced capacity.

Several hospitals and clinics in the cities of Tikrit and Fallujah have also been damaged by the fighting, according to aid agencies. On 13 June, shelling badly damaged a Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) clinic in Tikrit.

Fuel shortages, due to both blocked roads and a militant takeover of the country's largest oil refinery, Baiji, are affecting staff mobility, restricting delivery of drugs and supplies and limiting the use of ambulances, the UN warned on 26 June.

Electricity shortages, which cannot be plugged by generators due to the lack of fuel, are also restricting clinics to operating on *limited schedules, in spite of the growing need for medical support amid escalating violence and injuries*, officials said.

Fighting between government forces, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) and other armed Sunni groups began months ago in western Anbar Province over perceived marginalization of Sunnis by the Shia-led government. In June, the fighting spread to Salaheddin, Nineveh and Kirkuk provinces, causing an estimated 500,000 people to flee in the past fortnight and bringing the total number of displaced to approximately 1.2 million people since the start of the year.

Teams from WHO, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and other local and international NGOs are delivering emergency kits and other core medical supplies to health centres in the violence-hit areas, but humanitarian access is limited due to the unpredictable security situation.

"The challenge is getting into the most affected areas, as well as the fact that displaced people are scattered all over and that makes it very difficult to allocate services," said Fabio Forgione, MSF head of mission in Iraq.

"Providing the most basic assistance and medical care is extremely challenging in such an

