

ISIS has held 100,000 civilians as 'human shields' in Mosul's Old City: UN

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United Nations: The United Nations on Friday said that the Islamic State jihadists may be holding more than 1,00,000 Iraqi civilians as human shield in the Old City of Mosul.

The UN refugee agency's representative in Iraq Bruno Geddo said that IS had been capturing civilians in battles outside of Mosul and had been forcing them into the Old City, one of the last parts of the city in their grip.

"More than 100,000 civilians may still be held in the Old City," Geddo was quoted by AFP as saying.

"We know that ISIS moved them with them as they left... locations where the fighting was going on. These civilians are basically held as human shields in the Old City," he added.

Geddo said that the civilians are living in an "increasingly worsening situation of penury and panic", as they have "virtually no food, water or electricity left in the area".

Snipers meanwhile try to kill anyone trying to leave the area under jihadist control, he said, adding that the few who manage to escape are "deeply traumatised."

Since the battle to retake Mosul began nine months ago, an estimated 862,000 people have been displaced from the city, although 195,000 have since returned, mainly to the liberated east of the city.

That means 667,000 people remain displaced, nearly all of them from western Mosul, and are living in 13 camps set up by UNHCR or with host families.

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