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## Press Release

### **UN Committee must address plight of displaced women and girls in Kenya**

Geneva, 26 July 2007 – The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women must urge the Kenyan government to adopt strong measures to protect and promote the rights of the displaced women and girls, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) said today.

In 1984, Kenya ratified the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, and tomorrow (Friday), the Committee will review the government's report on its implementation of the Convention at UN headquarters in New York. Worryingly, the government report provides no information on women and girls displaced within Kenya due to violence, forced evictions, or human rights abuses.

In a [shadow report](#) submitted to the Committee, NRC/IDMC highlights the conditions faced by internally displaced women and girls. "Roughly 400,000 people have been forcibly displaced in Kenya, and the lives and rights of the women and girls among them are particularly affected," said NRC Secretary-General Tomas Colin Archer.

Inter-ethnic competition for political influence and economic resources has been forcing people in Kenya to flee their homes and land since the 1990s. With general elections approaching, violent clashes are becoming much more frequent. In the Mt. Elgon region of western Kenya, they recently caused the displacement of 66,000 people, representing 30 per cent of the total district population. Gender-based violence contributed to this displacement; in Mt. Elgon as in other parts of Kenya, documented cases of rape and sexual abuse have been perpetrated with impunity against women by both civilians and government security personnel.

A number of IDP situations in Kenya have been protracted, leaving displaced women and their families with practically no opportunities to build a livelihood. Women are often forced to engage in illegal trading to ensure survival, leaving them exposed to abuse by officials. Kenya also hosts large numbers of refugees, most of them from Somalia. These refugee women and girls are particularly vulnerable to entrenched social and cultural attitudes and practices which may stop them enjoying a number of basic rights.

Awareness of IDPs in Kenya is low, and neither the government nor the UN has a comprehensive response strategy to address their humanitarian needs. "With violence on the rise, it's time to seriously address the IDP situation in Kenya," Archer added. "The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women can lead the way by drawing attention to IDPs and their rights, and by promoting a response which ensures that all IDPs, including women and girls, are adequately protected and assisted."

For more information see the full IDMC report at [www.internal-displacement.org/countries/kenya](http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/kenya), or contact Jesse Bernstein at the IDMC in Geneva: tel. (mobile): (41)-78-915-0978.

*The Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, established by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the leading international body monitoring internal displacement worldwide. Regularly updated information on all situations of conflict-induced displacement is available from the IDMC's website, [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org).*