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New report released in New York today:

## **INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT AT RECORD HIGH**

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**International efforts have failed to reduce the scale of internal displacement caused by conflict. According to IDMC's report *Internal Displacement: Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2008*, an estimated 26 million people were still displaced within their countries, the same number as in 2007 and the highest since the early 1990s.**

- "In the context of conflict prevention, forced displacement remains a major challenge, as does the protection of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)" said UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres at the launch of the report at the International Peace Institute in New York.

- In a world where people are increasingly forced to move due to conflict, environmental degradation, and natural disasters related to climate change, the need for proper information and analysis remains essential, according to Guterres.

4.6 million people were newly displaced in 2008. The biggest new displacement in the world was in the Philippines, where 600,000 people fled fighting between the government and rebel groups. There were also massive new displacements in Sudan, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, Columbia, Sri Lanka and India. The largest internally displaced populations are found in Sudan (4.9 million), Colombia (up to 4.3 million) and Iraq (2.8 million).

- "We all share the responsibility to assist and show our solidarity with the world's IDPs", NRC Secretary-General Elisabeth Rasmusson said.

- "Millions of IDPs are forced to survive in appalling conditions, in informal settlements alongside local communities, or hiding in urban slums or forests from the groups who displaced them."

The majority of IDPs across the world remains trapped in protracted displacement. They face many obstacles in rebuilding their lives and they are increasingly neglected and marginalised. According to John Holmes, the UN's Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, "The number of internally displaced will rise significantly due to anticipated increases in the intensity and frequency of natural disasters. That is why we need to focus urgently on finding appropriate solutions for IDPs to end their displacement and their dependence on relief assistance."

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The report ***Internal Displacement: Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2008*** is available for download at the IDMC website [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org).

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## Notes for editors:

The number of IDPs in **Africa** fell in 2008 by nine per cent to 11.6 million. Nonetheless, Sudan remained the country with most IDPs in the world, at 4.9 million. The number of IDPs in Somalia rose to 1.3 million as conflict continued to ravage the country through the year. In Kenya and DR Congo, new outbreaks of conflict or violence caused massive waves of displacement. On a positive note, the number of IDPs in Uganda fell below the million mark as people continued to return home after years in camps.

The internally displaced population in the **Americas** grew by seven per cent, due to continuing displacement in Colombia. New displacement in Colombia accelerated in 2008, and it remained the second largest IDP population in the world at up to 4.3 million.

In the **Middle East**, the number of IDPs grew by 11 per cent as the number of IDPs in Iraq rose to 2.8 million. Despite some improvements in security, only a very small percentage of displaced people in Iraq could return to their homes.

The region showing the biggest increase was **South and South-East Asia**, where the figure rose by 13 per cent to 3.5 million. The biggest new displacement in the world was in the Philippines, where 600,000 people fled fighting between government forces and rebel groups in the southern region of Mindanao. There were also massive new displacements in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India.

In **Europe and Central Asia** there are still 2.5 million IDPS, the same as in 2007.

Internal displacement threatens different people in different ways. In 2008 displaced women and girls were particularly exposed to rape and sexual violence, domestic violence and exploitation. Women suffered in other ways: as an example, in several countries, displaced widows were unable to claim back property which had belonged to their husband before their displacement.

Displaced children are extremely vulnerable. In many countries, they were forced to work or they could not go to school. Displaced children were at risk of forcible recruitment in at least 13 countries last year, particularly in situations where IDP camps had been infiltrated by armed groups.

Minorities are frequently the targets of attacks by government forces or other groups, and members of minority groups were internally displaced in at least 36 countries in 2008. Members of ethnic minorities face discrimination when they are displaced, which makes their lives even harder.