
Press Release

Global internal displacement crisis grew in 2007 - survey

GENEVA, 17 April 2008 – The global internal displacement crisis continued to worsen in 2007, according to an annual survey released today by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). In 2007, the estimated number of people displaced within their countries by armed conflicts and violence passed the 26 million mark, the highest global total since the early 1990s.

Although international attention to the plight of internally displaced people (IDPs) continued to grow, there was no breakthrough in reducing their number or measurably improving their situation. Displacement, in the words of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, remained “arguably the most significant humanitarian challenge that we face”.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres said the latest survey made sober reading and highlighted the need for international solidarity in tackling the continuing problem of internal displacement. “The world is currently facing a range of new threats and challenges, from instability sparked by rising food and fuel prices to the inability or unwillingness of some governments to provide their own uprooted people with adequate protection and assistance. This survey illustrates the scope of the problem and should be a call to action for all of us in the international community.”

IDPs in over 50 countries, and particularly the women and children among them, were too frequently victims of the gravest human rights abuses. They faced continuing attacks as well as hunger, disease and the effects of inadequate shelter. “Despite being responsible for the wellbeing of citizens within their territory, many national governments in 2007 were still unwilling or unable to prevent people being forced from their homes, or provide adequate protection and assistance to those who had been displaced,” said NRC Secretary-General Elisabeth Rasmusson.

People fled their homes in 2007 mainly to escape long-standing internal conflicts. The numbers of IDPs rose sharply in Iraq (where there were almost 2.5 million IDPs by the end of 2007), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1.4 million IDPs) and Somalia (1 million), while the massive internally displaced populations of Sudan (5.8 million) and Colombia (up to 4 million) continued to grow.

At the same time, millions of people continued to endure protracted situations of internal displacement with few prospects of returning home or resettling elsewhere, even in countries where conflict had ended and rebuilding had begun. Often they continued to face violence in their areas of origin, for example where the demobilisation of former combatants had not been effectively completed.

“The challenges and obstacles to providing assistance and protection are numerous, and we have yet to address them coherently through diplomatic engagement, humanitarian assistance and development programmes,” Rasmusson said. “Our knowledge of, interest in and response to people trapped in protracted displacement situations is far from impressive.”

Notes for Editors:

The Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, established by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the leading international body monitoring internal displacement worldwide.

The report *Internal Displacement: Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2007* is available at the IDMC website www.internal-displacement.org.

For more information contact Edmund Jennings, NRC Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Geneva. Tel. (41) 22 799 0718; mobile (41) 79 8171 748.