UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 22 MAY 2017 0:01 EDT .

Two million internally displaced in Middle East and North Africa in 2016, says new report

Monday, 22 May 2017 (Geneva/New York)

Conflict and violence caused 2.1 million new internal displacements in the Middle East and North Africa in 2016, with the highest numbers in Syria (824,000), Iraq (659,000) and Yemen (478,000), according to a report released today by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

The Global Report on Internal Displacement is a grim reminder of how severe the protection needs of millions of people across the Middle East have become. It highlights that some families in Syria have been uprooted as many as 25 times over the six years of armed conflict. Increasingly desperate for safety, many have been forced to make the perilous journey abroad.

The report examines the complex links between internal displacement and cross-border movement, and highlights how unsafe returns could also lead to more internal displacement in the future.

IDMC Director Alexandra Bilak said: “Despite internal displacement being the starting point of many onward journeys, it has been overshadowed by the current global focus on refugees and migrants. We need to acknowledge that, without the right kind of support and protection, a person internally displaced today may become a refugee, an asylum seeker or an international migrant tomorrow.”

Yet more aid was spent last year on refugee resettlement within donor countries than in the countries where displacement crises originate.

Globally, conflict, violence and disasters caused 31.1 million new internal displacements in 2016. Most of the 24.2 million new disaster displacements recorded in 2016 were linked to weather hazards such as floods, storms, wildfires and severe winter conditions.

As of the end of 2016, a total of 40.3 million people were displaced within their own country as a result of conflict and violence, some of whom having been displaced for decades. NRC Secretary General Jan Egeland said: "Internally displaced people now outnumber refugees by two to one. It is therefore urgent to put internal displacement back on the global agenda.”

The Global Report on Internal Displacement shows that displacement will continue unless funding and political attention is directed to the underlying drivers of poverty, state fragility and global environmental change.

“To the extent that the Global Report on Internal Displacement holds up a mirror, the reflection it projects is one of international indifference, lack of accountability and states’ failure to protect their own people,” said Bilak.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

From 22 May 2017, the Global Report on Internal Displacement can be found at:

<http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2017>

Media registered with the [UN Correspondents Association](http://unca.com/) in New York are welcome to attend the launch of the IDMC 2017 Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID 2017) on 22 May 2017 at 11AM EDT.

Media based in Geneva are also invited to attend a second launch event on 30 May at the CCV in Geneva (for more information please contact [info@idmc.ch](mailto:info@idmc.ch))

**What is the difference between an IDP and a refugee?**

The main difference between IDPs and refugees is that internally displaced people remain within the borders of their own country. Refugees have crossed an international border in search of refuge, and this gives them legal refugee status which entitles them to certain rights and international protection. However an IDP is not a legal status because IDPs are still under the jurisdiction of their own government and may not claim any rights additional to those shared by their fellow citizens.

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## About us

[IDMC](http://www.internal-displacement.org/) was established by the [Norwegian Refugee Council](http://www.nrc.no/) in 1998. Monitoring internal displacement caused by conflict, violence, human rights violations and natural disasters worldwide, IDMC is widely respected as the leading source of information and analysis on internal displacement throughout the world.

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