

11,000 PEOPLE A DAY INTERNALLY DISPLACED BY DISASTERS ACROSS THE AMERICAS IN 2017

People fled their homes from Canada to Chile to escape hurricanes, floods, earthquakes and wildfires. Conflict and violence also continued to drive displacement in countries like El Salvador, Colombia and Mexico.

16 May 2018, London - 4.5 million people were forced to leave their homes as a result of disasters that hit the Americas in 2017, according to a new report from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

Key findings from the Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID 2018) show that displacement associated with disasters in the Americas accounted for 24 per cent of the global figure of 18.8 million, second only to East Asia and Pacific. This was largely due to the Atlantic hurricane season.

"Disasters know no borders and affect all income levels, as demonstrated again last year," said Alexandra Bilak, Director of IDMC. "However, the impacts of disasters on those displaced are unevenly distributed, and concentrate mainly in low and middle income countries which have less capacity to recover."

Hurricane Irma was the disaster that caused the most displacement worldwide, displacing around 2 million people. Hurricanes Harvey displaced 848,000 and Maria around 146,000. Around 20 countries and territories, most of them small island developing states in the Caribbean, suffered the worst impacts.

Major wildfires triggered 204,000 evacuations in southern California. The Canadian province of British Columbia experienced the worst wildfires in its history. Central Mexico was hit by a 7.1 magnitude earthquake that displaced 104,000 people, and floods caused displacement in Argentina, Bolivia, Canada, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and the US. The flooding in Peru was the worst in 20 years, displacing around 295,000 people.

"The staggering number of people forced to flee from their homes due to conflict and violence must serve as an eye opener to us all," said Jan Egeland, NRC's Secretary General. "We are getting better at providing emergency aid, but we need to put a lot more effort into preventing displacement, protecting people, and finding long-term solutions."

There were 456,000 new displacements attributed to conflict and violence. El Salvador appeared to be worst affected with around 296,000, followed by Colombia with 139,000. The number of people internally displaced in Venezuela is unknown, but more than 500,000 are thought to have fled across the border into Colombia during the year.

Drug-related criminal and gang violence is rife in the Northern Triangle of Central America; El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, but internal displacement has tended to be invisible and figures for Guatemala and Honduras are hard to come by.

"Internal displacement often heralds the start of broader crises. While we have seen some useful policy progress since the adoption of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement 20 years ago, it is nowhere near enough to cope with, much less reduce, the scale of the problem", said Bilak.

Bilak added, “without renewed action, we risk failing millions of internally displaced people worldwide, and holding back the development of the countries which host them. It’s time for an honest conversation on the most effective ways to turn the tide on this global crisis. This conversation must be led by affected countries and receive full support from the international community.”

NOTES TO EDITORS:

About IDMC:

[IDMC](#) is the leading source of information and analysis on internal displacement globally. We are part of the [Norwegian Refugee Council](#), an independent, non-governmental humanitarian organisation.

IDMC was set up in 1998 at the request of the international community to fill an important knowledge gap on the global scale and patterns of internal displacement. Since then, tens of millions of people become internally displaced each year as a result of conflict, violence and disasters. While the numbers are rising and the needs of millions go unaddressed, internal displacement continues to receive insufficient political attention and commitment.

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Visit <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2018/> to access GRID 2018 and a media pack, containing all global and regional press releases, translations in French, Spanish and Arabic, a highlights document with facts and figures, and b-roll.

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