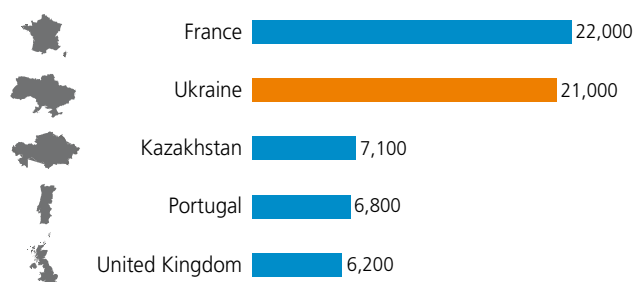


EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA



DISASTERS 0.4%
CONFLICT 0.2%
OF THE GLOBAL
TOTAL

5 COUNTRIES WITH MOST NEW DISPLACEMENT (conflict and disasters)



Three-quarters of the displacement recorded in Europe and Central Asia in 2017 was associated with disasters. Natural hazards including floods, wildfires and landslides, displaced 22,000 people in **France**, 7,100 in **Kazakhstan**, 6,800 in **Portugal**, 6,200 in the **UK**, 5,900 in **Russia**, 4,700 in **Tajikistan**, 3,500 in **Albania**, 3,300 in **Kyrgyzstan**, 2,100 in **Italy** and 2,100 in **Spain**. The most intensive natural hazard recorded was a wildfire in September that forced as many as 10,000 people to leave their homes on the French island of Corsica.

Accurate figures for displacement associated with conflict are difficult to come by. Ceasefire violations along the contact line in **Ukraine** led to 21,000 new displacements in 2017, but a number of issues prevent the accurate profiling of the country's IDPs. These include a lack of access to non-government controlled areas and an overly bureaucratic registration process. Figures are thought to be inflated in some regions and underreported in others (see spotlight, p.47).

Displacement associated with conflict in **Turkey** continues to be an extremely sensitive topic. The government has banned local and international media access to Kurdish areas, creating an information blackout. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) requested access to conduct an assessment in 2016, but to no avail. The organisation nonetheless interviewed victims of the conflict in the Kurdish areas and assessed that around 200,000 people were newly displaced in 2016.²²³

No new information exists on the fate of these people nor is data available for new displacements in 2017. We have, however, used open source satellite imagery of three towns – Sirnak, Idil and Yüksekova, where clashes had occurred and curfews were instated – to identify housing destruction associated with the conflict and estimated that at least 5,300 people had been displaced in those towns in 2016. More detailed satellite imagery for other towns and time periods can provide a more accurate number of the damages and the people that were displaced as a consequence. Additionally, the unknown number of families occupying damaged structures make the figure a gross underestimate.

Other governments in the region have stopped reporting on displacement or claim there is none on their territory. Our figures for **Cyprus** include old case-loads of IDPs, but the authorities in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus have provided no new information since declaring displacement over in 1975. In Russia, the government has not reported any IDPs despite ongoing skirmishes in Chechnya.

There are also two situations of unresolved conflict and protracted displacement in the region: in Nagorno-Karabakh, where **Azerbaijan** and **Armenia** dispute control of the territory; and in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, **Georgia's** two breakaway republics. The Georgian government shares its annual report on IDPs with IDMC, and 289,000 people were still recorded as displaced as of the end of 2017. A ceasefire over Nagorno-Karabakh

was negotiated in 1994 and kept conflict at bay until tensions escalated last year. No number of new displacements is available, but there was thought to be considerable damage to property and housing in the areas around the contact line.²²⁴ The total number of people displaced in **Azerbaijan**, primarily by the conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, is 393,000.

A number of regional policies and programmes that relate directly or indirectly to displacement have been put in place. The EU's action plan for DRR for 2015 to 2030 sets out policy actions required to put the Sendai framework into practice.²²⁵ Among its recommendations, the European Commission recognised the importance of addressing IDPs' specific needs when establishing urban resilience policies in order to fulfil Sendai's "understanding disaster risk" priority.²²⁶

The EU funds various programmes to improve disaster preparedness and response, including the Central Asia Centre for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction (CACESDRR), which **Kazakhstan** and **Kyrgyzstan** inaugurated in 2016. Its goals are to improve the coordination of regional-level preparedness initiatives, DRR capacities, contingency planning, monitoring and the sharing of early-warning information.²²⁷ The PPRD East 2 programme, which began in 2010, aims to improve the protection of people affected by disasters in **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova** and **Ukraine**.²²⁸

In terms of displacement associated with conflict, the Council of Europe adopted a recommendation on IDPs in line with the Guiding Principles, which proposes that governments consider the principle of human rights for all when formulating legislation and practices.²²⁹

Some national-level policies also exist. **Azerbaijan** has had a policy in place on the protection of people displaced by its conflict with **Armenia** since 1993. Amendments in 1999, 2007 and 2011 aimed to improve and widen the assistance provided to IDPs and train state officials in data collection. IDPs in Azerbaijan are entitled to a monthly allowance, temporary housing, a plot of land, tax privileges, free secondary school textbooks, heating fuel, utilities, local telephone calls, health services and higher education.²³⁰

Armenia, on the other hand, does not recognise internal displacement as an entitlement criterion, and IDPs there have received assistance via government

poverty alleviation and welfare programmes instead.²³¹ The last updated Armenian survey on IDP was in 2004, and no more recent information is available.

Georgian law protects people displaced by conflict and recognises displaced children as IDPs entitled to allowances and accommodation.²³²

The EU funds a project to improve IDPs' protection in Ukraine. It aims to promote sustainable long-term solutions to displacement by working with the government to align national legislation with EU standards, including the European Convention on Human Rights.²³³

While Europe and Central Asia suffer little new displacement, there are as many as 2,946,000 people still living in displacement as a result of conflicts that date back to the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia more than 20 years ago, and another 1,113,000 people in Turkey as a result of the government's decades-old conflict with Kurdish groups. Around 15 per cent of Europe's protracted IDPs still live in makeshift shelters or informal settlements with little access to basic services.²³⁴ They, and the unresolved conflicts that displaced them, tend to receive little public or media attention, nor do the relatively small-scale disasters that hit the region.

SPOTLIGHT

The difficulties of counting IDPs in **UKRAINE**



The conflict in Ukraine between the government and pro-Russia separatists in the eastern regions of Luhansk and Donetsk began in 2014 and remains unresolved, despite the Minsk I and II agreements signed in 2014 and 2015. The agreements provided for an immediate ceasefire and aimed to pave the way for the gradual return of the disputed territories to Ukrainian control, but fighting and shelling along the contact line continues to cause loss of life, displacement and damage to civilian infrastructure.

The Ukrainian government's policies and frameworks to guide its response to displacement acknowledge the protracted nature of the phenomenon and demonstrate its willingness to address it. Its most recent initiative was the adoption on 15 November of a strategy to integrate IDPs and facilitate durable solutions.²³⁵ Significant gaps remain, however, in the way the government defines, registers and subsequently responds to IDPs and their needs.

The Ministry of Social Policy (MoSP) currently has a national database of nearly 1.5 million IDPs, but the highly bureaucratic registration process means that the figure is likely to be an underestimate for some areas of the country, particularly those where IDPs' financial situation is less acute and they may feel that the scant state benefits they would receive by registering are not worth the time and effort.²³⁶ That said, the fact that registration determines IDPs' social benefits means it is likely to be an overestimate elsewhere, particularly in non-government controlled areas (NGCAs), where registering as an IDP is the only way to ensure people continue to receive what is rightfully theirs as Ukrainian citizens.

Given these difficulties, OCHA has made its own calculations for its humanitarian needs overview. It was able to estimate the number of IDPs in the national database living "more permanently in government-controlled areas" separate from those in NGCAs. This was done because it is unclear whether the latter are indeed IDPs or simply residents who had registered to access social benefits.²³⁷ OCHA identified 760,000 IDPs as living in government-controlled areas, a figure which it rounded up to 800,000 to account for those who are unregistered. According to various surveys, this applies to between five and nine per cent of the country's IDPs.²³⁸

The number of IDPs in NGCAs remains unknown. The de-facto authorities there have severely restricted humanitarian access, making it impossible to gauge the scale of displacement. The fact, however, that around 1.2 million residents a month crossed into government-controlled areas in 2017 to obtain personal documentation and pension payments, access medical care, education, food and other supplies or maintain social ties is an indication of how dire their situation is.²³⁹

There have been no accurate profiling exercises carried out for IDPs, which makes it difficult to respond appropriately to their assistance and protection needs, or to develop strategies for durable solutions. It is clear, however, that those directly affected by the conflict, primarily those who live along the contact line, remain highly vulnerable and are in need of emergency assistance including shelter, food and non-food items. Those living in protracted displacement in government-controlled areas away from the contact line would benefit from early-recovery and recovery assistance such as income-generating activities.