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Africa hardest hit by internal displacement in 2016, according to new report

Monday, 22 May 2017 (Geneva/New York)

In 2016, conflict and violence displaced more people in Sub-Saharan Africa than in the Middle East, according to a report released today by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

Of the 6.9 million new internal displacements by conflict in 2016, 2.6 million took place in Sub-Saharan Africa, and 2.1 million in the Middle East and North Africa, according to the Global Report on Internal Displacement. The Democratic Republic of the Congo was the country worst affected, with a spike of 922,000 new displacements during the year. Next were Syria (824,000), Iraq (659,000), Afghanistan (653,000), Nigeria (501,000) and Yemen (478,000).

“Certain countries drop off the international agenda only to re-emerge a few years later with significant numbers of new displacements,” said Alexandra Bilak, Director of IDMC. “This was the case for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which highlights how the failure to address the underlying causes of conflict and crisis results in cyclical patterns of displacement.”

Globally, conflict, violence and disasters caused 31.1 million new instances of internal displacement in 2016. Disasters displaced three times more people than conflicts. Most of the 24.2 million new disaster displacements recorded during the year were linked to weather hazards such as floods, storms, wildfires and severe winter conditions. Disaster displacement occurs mostly in low and lower-middle income countries, and is expected to increase in the future with the impacts of climate change and more extreme weather.

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’s Secretary General Jan Egeland said: “In 2016, one person every second was forced to flee their home inside their own country. Internally displaced people now outnumber refugees by two to one. It is therefore urgent to put internal displacement back on the global agenda.”

In Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia and South Sudan, it is sometimes difficult to make a clear distinction between conflict and disasters as the main trigger for displacement, as the phenomenon there is so multi-causal. Droughts, poor access to basic services and infrastructure, lack of livelihoods, hunger and ongoing conflict converge in a toxic mix that leaves people no other option but to flee.

This year, IDMC’s Global Report examines the complex links between internal displacement and cross-border movement, highlighting, for example, the situation of many South Sudanese crossing in and out of the country in search of protection. The report also shows how unsafe returns could lead to more internal displacement in the future: in 2016, 67,000 Somali refugees returned from Kenya to a country still struggling with a food security crisis and the impacts of armed conflict.

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. 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.

## FOR INTERVIEWS PLEASE CONTACT:

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| Ms Sian Bowen  Head of Communications  Email: [sian.bowen@idmc.ch](mailto:sian.bowen@idmc.ch)  Office Tel: +41 22 552 3612  Mobile: + 41 78 630 16 78  Rosemarie North (Geneva)  Reporting Coordinator  Email: [rosemarie.north@idmc.ch](mailto:rosemarie.north@idmc.ch)  Tel +41 22 552 3674  Mobile: + 41 78 669 3222 | Ms Francesca Da Ros  Communications Coordinator  Email : [francesca.da.ros@idmc.ch](mailto:francesca.da.ros@idmc.ch)  Office Tel: + 41 22 552 3645  Mobile: + 41 78 806 83 08 |

## 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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