

11 million people displaced within their countries in Middle East and North Africa

10 May 2019, Geneva – Continued instability and obstacles to returning home once conflict is over mean that 11 million people were living in internal displacement in the Middle East and North Africa as of the end of 2018, according to a new report from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

The Global Report on Internal Displacement also reveals that 2.1 million new displacements were recorded in the region between January and December 2018, mostly the result of ongoing and escalating insecurity in Syria, Yemen and Libya. Millions more previously displaced have been unable to return home because of safety concerns, destroyed homes and infrastructure, and a lack of basic services and ways to make a living.

“Resolving protracted conflict, investing in recovery and reconstruction efforts and reinvigorating local economies to reduce poverty will all be key to promoting long-term stability and development in the region,” said Alexandra Bilak, IDMC’s director.

Syria’s civil war entered its eighth year in 2018 and continued to generate some of the most significant displacement in the world. Government offensives to retake areas of Idlib and Dara’a governorates and the Damascus suburbs triggered the majority of the 1.6 million new displacements recorded.

Residents of Hodeidah in Yemen fled pre-emptively when fighting for control of the port escalated, and more than 250,000 new displacements were recorded across the country as a whole. At least 2.3 million people were estimated to be living in displacement as of the end of year, but the true figure is thought to be much higher.

Despite the official end of the conflict with ISIL in Iraq in 2017, 150,000 new displacements were recorded last year. More than a million people were reported to have gone back to their home areas, but it was unclear whether their return was sustainable. Widespread destruction, unexploded ordnance, and lack of water, electricity, healthcare and work make it likely that many will be displaced again. Hostilities also escalated in Libya, leading to 70,000 new displacements.

More than 200,000 new displacements associated with disasters were recorded in the region. Heavy rain in Syria uprooted people already displaced by the conflict when their camps were flooded. Two cyclones hit southern Yemen; flooding and drought triggered new displacement in Iraq and snow storms, earthquakes and flooding led to displacement in Iran.

Internal displacement is an increasingly urban phenomenon, and urban warfare triggered mass displacement across the region in 2018. The battle for Dara’a city led to the largest single displacement event of Syria’s civil war, and most of the displacement in Libya took place in the cities of Tripoli, Derna and Sebha.

Conflict, climate shocks and large-scale development projects also drive people from rural to urban areas. New ways of dealing with the issue are emerging in cities such as Mosul in Iraq, where local governments and communities have taken the lead.

“The fact that cities are hosting more and more internally displaced people represents a challenge for municipal authorities, but also an opportunity. Leveraging the positive role that local government can play in finding solutions to displacement will be key to addressing this challenge in the future,” said Alexandra Bilak.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Regional press releases:

Regional press releases detailing more specific displacement within geographical areas are available for sub-Saharan Africa, the Americas, Asia and Middle East and North Africa.

About IDMC:

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) is the world's authoritative source of data and analysis on internal displacement. Since its establishment in 1998, as part of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), IDMC has offered a rigorous, independent and trusted service to the international community. Their work informs policy and operational decisions that improve the lives of the millions of people living in internal displacement, or at risk of becoming displaced in the future.

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Live interviews can be arranged today with Alexandra Bilak, IDMC's Director and Jan Egeland, NRC's Secretary General.

Landing page:

From 10 May, visit www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2019 to read and download the full report and summary; explore stories of displaced people and access a media pack, containing global and regional press releases, biographies of spokespeople, photos and b-roll.

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