

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Strictly embargoed to 19<sup>th</sup> April 2012, 13:00 CET**

**Conflicts worldwide uproot millions; six-fold increase in Middle East**

As the world focuses on the people unable to escape the violence in Syria, a new report released today by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) sheds light on the threats facing millions of people worldwide caught up in situations of internal displacement which follow such conflicts.

*The Global Overview 2011, People Displaced by Conflict and Violence* indicates that a total of 26.4 million people were internally displaced in the world at the end of 2011. 3.5 million people were newly displaced during the year, 20 per cent more than in 2010; 830,000 of them fled the impact of the Arab Spring uprisings, an almost six-fold increase from the 177,000 newly displaced in 2010.

“While the Arab Spring uprisings caused significant surges in internal displacement” says Kate Halff, Head of IDMC, “events in other regions, such as the spread of the armed conflict in Afghanistan and the activities of drug cartels and paramilitary gangs in Colombia, all added to this figure, while famine and conflict added to the already extreme vulnerabilities of millions of displaced people in Somalia”.

**Displacement resulting from national power struggles**

In Libya, half a million people were internally displaced as a result of the conflict. By the end of the year, at least 154,000 people remained displaced, with many of those associated with Qadhafi’s regime unable to return home as they faced on-going reprisal attacks. Meanwhile, over 156,000 people were newly displaced in Syria and at least 175,000 in Yemen.

In Somalia and Afghanistan, the long-drawn-out armed conflicts led to ever more internal displacement. In Afghanistan, the number of new displacements was 80 per cent higher than in the year before as the fighting spread to new regions. In Somalia, where 16 per cent of the total population live as IDPs, those already displaced by the conflict were unable to resist the impact of the drought and famine which hit the Horn of Africa, and many starved to death. In Côte d'Ivoire, up to a million people were internally displaced at the start of the year by fighting between supporters of the rival candidates in the presidential elections of late 2010.

Both in Sudan and in the newly independent South Sudan, hundreds of thousands of people were internally displaced by the two countries’ armed forces fighting rival militias. Meanwhile in Abyei, which is contested between Sudan and South Sudan, 110,000 people were displaced by fighting between forces of the two states.

**Internal displacement caused by generalised violence**

Many countries in which armed conflict had ended remained unstable, and as a result people continued to be forced to flee from criminal violence. In Colombia, the country with the largest number of IDPs in the world, criminal networks which were former parties to the country’s conflict were the main drivers of displacement. Between 3.9 and 5.3 million Colombians were internally displaced at the end of 2011, and armed groups involved in drug trafficking were responsible for the highest number of large-scale new displacements.

The conflict between Ugandan armed forces and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) ended six years ago but in 2011, the LRA continued to cause displacement by attacking civilians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and the Central African Republic. An estimated 440,000 people are currently internally displaced or living as refugees owing to LRA attacks.

## **Displacement decreasing in Africa**

The good news in 2011 came from Africa. Here, the number of IDPs decreased from 11.1 million to 9.7 million, with significant returns taking place in Cote d'Ivoire, Chad and Uganda, for example. With a total of 1.5 million African IDPs returned home by the end of 2011, this decrease in internal displacement follows a downward trend from 2004.

Further to this, African governments have shown a real motivation to address internal displacement, by signing the African Union's Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (known as the Kampala Convention). When it enters into force – and with governments continuing to ratify, it could do so in 2012 – the Kampala Convention will be the first legal instrument to bind governments across a continent to protect people from arbitrary displacement, provide protection and assistance to IDPs during displacement, and seek durable solutions for them.

## **The future for Syria**

In Iraq, which was recently headline news in the way that Syria is today, levels of violence had fallen by the end of 2011 but well over two million people were trapped in protracted internal displacement. Their prospects were limited because the government was still unable to ensure a stable society with effective protection of all citizens.

“While the future remains uncertain for the escalating numbers of IDPs in Syria” says Halff, “what the past has told us is that they, alongside the millions newly displaced across the world in 2011, face similar risks of protracted and even repeated displacement if governments, and their international partners, cannot ensure a stable environment for them.”

### **Notes for editors:**

The report *The Global Overview 2011, People Displaced by Conflict and Violence* is the leading annual summary of the humanitarian and human rights situations of people internally displaced by conflict and violence. It offers detailed figures and global, regional and national analysis of 59 displacement situations which IDMC monitors.

For quotes and interviews, contact

Clare Spurrell,  
Head of Communications, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre  
clare.spurrell@nrc.ch Tel: +41 22 795 07 47 Mob: +41 793 79 89 52

### **About IDMC**

*The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) ([www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)) was established by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in 1998, upon the request of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). Monitoring internal displacement caused by conflict, violence, human rights violations and natural disasters in over 50 countries, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) is widely respected as the leading source of information and analysis on internal displacement throughout the world. Visit: [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org) for more information*