
PRESS RELEASE

Internal Displacement at Record High – Report

Geneva/London, 17 May 2010 – In 2009 the world witnessed more people displaced within their country by conflict and violence than at any point since the mid-1990s. An alarming total of 27.1 million were internally displaced at the end of the year, says a report launched today in London by John Holmes, the UN's Emergency Relief Coordinator and Elisabeth Rasmusson, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) Secretary General. According to the report *Internal Displacement: Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2009* by NRC's Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the number of IDPs continued to rise last year, predominantly due to long-running internal conflicts.

"The massive population movements and shocking violence are a sad reminder of the price that civilians pay in armed conflict," said Elisabeth Rasmusson. "Millions of people were newly displaced by conflicts in which combatants did not meet their obligations to protect civilians."

6.8 million people were newly displaced in 2009, many more than in previous years, the report shows. While there were no new conflicts, the main triggers of forced displacement were long-term internal conflicts. In Pakistan, some three million people fled the army's massive offensives against the Taliban and other armed groups. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo a million people were newly displaced as a result of military operations supported by UN peacekeepers and subsequent reprisal attacks by armed groups. There were also massive new displacements in Sudan (particularly in southern Sudan), Somalia, Colombia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

Many IDPs returned to their home areas after fighting had died down; around five million people reportedly returned during 2009. However, according to Rasmusson, "They were often forced or had no option but to go back, and they returned to find their homes and assets destroyed and their home areas still unsafe."

"States must meet their obligations to protect people displaced on their territory," said Rasmusson. "Their international partners must play their part in making sure that humanitarian aid is provided, and that the recovery of the people and communities affected is ensured and sustained for the long term."

In many countries where fighting had long ended agreements on contested territory couldn't be reached and people remained trapped in displacement, according to the report. In 21 countries people were born and grew to adulthood in displacement.

The report *Internal Displacement: Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2009* 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 the more than 50 displacement situations which IDMC monitors.

*The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) was established by the Norwegian Refugee Council in 1998, upon the request of the United Nations. It is a leading source of information and analysis on internal displacement caused by conflict and violence worldwide. The press release and the report *Internal Displacement: Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2009* are available at the IDMC website www.internal-displacement.org*

For more information, please contact:
Kate Half, Head of NRC Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Geneva,
Tel. (41) 795 518 257 / kate.half@nrc.ch
Siri Elverland, NRC Press Adviser; Oslo
Tel (47) 93 21 82 19 / siri.elverland@nrc.no