

Record number of internally displaced people globally in 2014

Niles Williamson
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According to a report issued by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) on Wednesday, a record 38 million people in 60 countries were displaced by ongoing conflicts from their homes within the borders of their own country through the end of 2014. They comprise the vast majority of the more than 50 million classified as refugees.

The report, “Global Overview 2015,” notes that the number of people internally displaced is equivalent to the combined populations of New York City, London and Beijing. The report marks the third straight year in which the IDMC has tallied a record number of internally displaced people.

The report blames rising wealth inequality for increasing conflict around the globe as marginalized religious, ethnic and tribal minorities seek independence and control over territory. They single out Islamic jihadist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Boko Haram and Al Shabaab whose actions and the response by Western imperialism have caused millions to flee their homes.

11 million people were newly displaced as the result of violent conflict in the course of 2014, with an average of 30,000 people fleeing their homes every day. Iraq, South Sudan, Syria, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Nigeria account for 60 percent of new displacements.

Iraq showed the greatest new dislocation with 2.2 million people escaping from areas seized by ISIS. The Islamic fundamentalist organization launched an offensive in June last year in which it seized control of large swathes of northwestern Iraq including the major cities of Mosul and Tikrit. The United States responded by launching a new air campaign in Iraq and dispatching thousands of special forces which are assisting the Iraqi military in a counterassault.

A total of at least 3.2 million people are currently internally displaced in Iraq, a legacy of the American invasion and occupation of the country between 2003 and 2011.

In neighboring Syria, where the US and its allies have stoked a civil war against President Bashar al-Assad, at least 1.1 million people were forced out of their homes last year. In total, 35 percent of Syria’s population, approximately 7.6 million people, have been displaced by ongoing fighting in the country’s four-year-old civil war. It is estimated that at least 30 percent of the housing stock registered in the 2014 census has been damaged or destroyed, making return for many impossible.

US imperialism and its allies bear the responsibility for the unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe in Syria as they have flooded the country with weaponry and provided military training to so-called moderate rebel forces, which include Islamist fighters now aligned with ISIS and the Al-Qaeda affiliated Al-Nusra Front.

Meanwhile, fighting in South Sudan’s ongoing civil war displaced at least 1.3 million people last year, 11 percent of the country’s total population. Competing factions of the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army have been fighting for control over the northeastern provinces which contain key oil fields since the end of 2013.

In the DRC at least a million people were displaced by fighting in the country’s eastern provinces. People fled in the aftermath of a series of massacres carried out by the rebel Allied Democratic Forces in the city of Beni that killed several hundred.

Nearly one million people were displaced in Nigeria last year where the Islamic fundamentalist organization Boko Haram has been involved in an insurgency since 2009. Suicide attacks and other assaults by Boko

Haram killed more than 10,000 people throughout northern Nigeria in 2014.

Ukraine was the only European country in which a significant number of people were newly displaced by fighting last year. More than 646,000 people were forced from their homes as a result of fighting in eastern Ukraine between government forces backed by the United States and Germany and pro-Russia separatists.

The conflict began after the US and Germany backed a fascist-led coup which ousted pro-Russian President Victor Yanukovich. The new pro-Western regime launched a bloody offensive which sought to suppress pro-Russian separatists in the eastern Donbas region opposed to the new government.

What the report makes clear is that every continent is affected by the growing numbers of people displaced due to ongoing armed conflicts.

There were at least 436,500 newly displaced people in North and South America in 2014, making a cumulative total of 7 million people. In Mexico more than 281,000 people have been displaced by fighting between the drug cartels and gang violence. More than 500,000 people in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras are currently displaced as the result of organized crime and gang violence.

Colombia accounted for 90 percent of the Americas' total displaced population. The 6,044,200 people counted as displaced in Colombia account for 12 percent of the country's total population. In addition to gang violence, many in Mexico, Colombia and Guatemala have been displaced by illegal and legal logging operations and cultivation of crops such as cocoa, poppies for opium, marijuana and palm oil.

Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for more than 10 million of the world's internally displaced peoples, and at least 4.5 million people newly displaced in 2014. The insurgency in Somalia headed by the Islamic jihadist group Al Shabaab has contributed to the more than 1 million displaced people in that country. Displaced people in Somalia suffer from the highest rate of severe malnutrition in the impoverished country.

At least 3.8 million people were newly displaced in the Middle East and North Africa in 2014, bringing the total to 11.9 million. In just the last four years alone, 7.8 million people have been forced out of their homes. The number of people forced to flee their homes in

Libya, destabilized by a US-NATO air assault in 2011, increased more than six-fold from 2013 to 400,000. The Middle East and North Africa now account for 31 percent of the world's internally displaced people, up from just 14 percent in 2011.

South Asia accounted for 1.4 million new displacements with a total of 4.1 million displaced by violence. In Pakistan the number of displaced people grew from 746,700 to 1.9 million. The US has carried out years of drone attacks and backs military operations against an Islamic insurgency in the country's northwestern FATA region. In neighboring Afghanistan, which has been subjected to continuous US military operations since 2001, the number of displaced people grew by more than 170,000 to 805,400.

In Southeast Asia, 95 percent of the 855,000 displaced people are in Burma, Indonesia and the Philippines. While the region saw 134,086 new displacements in 2014, it was the only region that experienced a decline in the overall total, mainly in Burma and the Philippines.



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