

Europe's 2015 Refugee Arrivals to Pass One Million Mark



Brussels, December 19 (RHC)-- The number of refugees entering Europe in 2015 has hit a new high to approach nearly a million, a global monitoring body says. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) said on Friday that nearly 991,000 refugees have arrived in Europe by land and sea so far this year, adding that the number could reach one million in the coming days.

IOM spokesman Joel Millman said some 4,300 people arrived on the Greek islands on Wednesday, including 3,000 on Lesbos Island. "We see that the flows are so strong even now this late in the year that perhaps by Tuesday, even before then, IOM estimates the 1-million-person mark will pass," Millman said, adding that the rising figure is "extraordinary" and a record.

Millman, who was speaking to reporters on International Migrants Day, said the body fears that weather conditions may cause more loss of lives as refugees take unbearable journeys on the Mediterranean.

"We also want to point out that these very high flows for December in Mediterranean are proving to be what we feared - very lethal," he said, adding that the IOM has recorded 706 deaths so far this year in the eastern Mediterranean, or Aegean, including 422 since October 16th, an average of seven a day.

Europe is grappling with its worst refugee crisis since World War II, as more and more people are escaping war and poverty in the Middle East and Africa. Many blame major European powers for the

unprecedented exodus, saying their policies have led to a surge in terrorism and war in those regions forcing more people out of their homes.

The United Nations said on Friday that the war on Syria and other protracted conflicts have displaced more than 60 million people around the world, itself a record.

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