April 2018

Dear Colleagues,

We are writing to invite you to attend a Symposium on Internal Displacement organized by Georgetown University’s Institute for the Study of International Migration (ISIM) and The Exodus Institute to be held on 22 May 2018 in Washington, DC.

Of the 65.5 million people who are currently forcibly displaced in the world, almost two-thirds – 40.3 million – are internally displaced persons (IDPs). The number of IDPs has increased significantly in the past 20 years. As they remain closer to the violence that displaced them, IDPs often face significant difficulties in finding security and receiving assistance. Access by international agencies is often problematic as governments in places like Syria and Myanmar restrict the operations of aid agencies in conflict settings. Under international law, it is the responsibility of national governments to protect and assist those displaced within their borders – even when those governments have directly or indirectly caused their displacement.

Twenty years ago – in April 1998 -- the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement were presented to the United Nations as the prevailing normative framework for responding to IDPs. They have since gained widespread recognition among States, including through their incorporation into the laws and policies of more than 40 countries and are a beacon for those wanting to uphold the rights of IDPs. On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Guiding Principles, it is thus a timely opportunity to assess the achievements of the past two decades as well as current and future challenges to ensure that the 40+ million IDPs in the world receive the protection and assistance they need and the solutions they have long awaited.

We hope that you will be able to join us; if so, please RSVP at https://bit.ly/2qWB2VK

The agenda for the Symposium is attached to this invitation; note that the public symposium will be livestreamed and subsequently available for viewing later.

For more information about the conference venue, please click here: http://www.accguhotelandconferencecenter.com/. If you have any other questions, please email us at isim@georgetown.edu

Best regards,

Elizabeth Ferris
Research Professor
Interim Director, Institute for the Study of International Migration

Katharine M. Donato
Donald G. Herzberg Chair in International Migration (on sabbatical)
Director, Institute for the Study of International Migration
Agenda for Symposium on Internal Displacement

8.45 am Welcome and Opening Remarks: Al Trenk, Exodus Institute and Katharine Donato, Director, Institute for the Study of International Migration

9.00-10.30 Panel 1. Taking Stock, Where We Are


Alexandra Bilak, Director, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre: What We Know, Don’t Know, and Should Know about IDPs.


Hansjoerg Strohmeyer, Director of Policy, Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: The Challenge of Reducing the Number of IDPs in the World.


Q & A

11.00-12.30 Panel 2. New Challenges

David Cantor, Professor, University College-London, Gang Violence as a Driver of Internal Displacement in Latin America.

Walter Kälin, Envoy of the Platform on Disaster Displacement: Climate Change, Disasters and Displacement.

Elizabeth Eyster, Senior Protection Officer, UNHCR: UNHCR’s View of Future Operational Engagement with IDPs.

Kerry Maze, Senior Crisis Migration Analyst, IOM. IOM’s View of Future Operational Engagement with IDPs.