



International Migrants Day 2015: Let Your Light Shine

December 18—Today marks the 15th anniversary of International Migrants Day, declared in 2000 by the United Nations as a day to take special note of people who are on the move across the globe.

“As an issue, migration defined 2015. I have often described our time as a perfect storm of humanitarian emergencies which factor in today’s unprecedented human mobility. Almost one out of every seven human beings on the planet, more than one billion people that is, is in some way a migrant,” said IOM’s Director General, William Lacy Swing.

2015 has witnessed mass movements of people unseen since WWII. The Middle East and North Africa has continued to be an area of origin and transit for millions of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and to a lesser extent an area of destination.

This summer, the effects of the Syria crisis were felt in Europe as hundreds of thousands of people, pushed to the limits of survival, took their chances with smugglers and the sea to attempt to reach a new, more secure life in Europe.

However, as the world’s attention was focused on Syria, conflicts continued to rage in Libya, Iraq and Yemen, causing continued insecurity for migrants and host populations alike. Displacement continued to increase, and long-established migratory trends, such as movements of people from the Horn of Africa to Yemen, were disrupted and in some cases reversed.

Lack of avenues for regular migration has pushed more and more people into attempting risky trips. Smugglers, traffickers, inclement weather, insufficiently provisioned or outfitted transportation and insecure countries of transit combine to make irregular migration a dangerous proposition.

According to IOM’s [Missing Migrants](#) project, in 2015, over 5,000 migrants were recorded to have perished during their journeys, with over 3,600 dead attempting to cross the Mediterranean. The crossing to Europe is the single most hazardous border crossing in the world.

To ensure that the deaths of migrants do not go unnoticed and forgotten, IOM is holding candlelight vigils in missions across the globe to commemorate those who have lost their lives.

“On this International Migrants Day, I call on individuals to let their light shine—to light a candle to commemorate the deaths of those who have died attempting to reach a better life, and figuratively to advocate for a migrant-positive, inclusive dialogue,” said Ambassador Swing.

In the Middle East and North Africa, missions in Sudan and Egypt are holding events at local universities today which will culminate in candlelight vigils, while the mission in Iraq is holding a vigil walk up to the citadel in the center of Erbil. IOM Jordan held a vigil yesterday in conjunction with evacuated staff from IOM Yemen, and IOM Kuwait organized an event in con-

junction with representatives of UN agencies in Kuwait. IOM Morocco held a conference for members of the media to address how migration is portrayed.

In addition the candle light vigils, IOM has an ongoing anti-xenophobia campaign called “I am a Migrant”. The aim of this initiative is to provide migrants a platform to tell their experiences of movement firsthand and provide a countering voice to the anti-migration sentiment that has been gaining traction.

In addition to viewing migrants’ stories on the [web-site](#), the public can use the hashtag #iamamigrant to tell their stories and contribute to the discussion on International Migrants Day and beyond.



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IOM missions across MENA hold events to celebrate International Migrants Day. Below and clockwise from top left, staff from IOM Jordan and Yemen let their light shine, IOM Kuwait and UN Agencies hold a candlelight vigil, and IOM Sudan holds an event at Ahfad University in Khartoum. ©IOM 2015.



Above: Ethics, public opinion and terminology were at the center of discussion at a conference on media and migration held in Rabat, Morocco yesterday. The seminar stemmed from understanding the crucial role of media in the treatment of topics related to migration, and raising awareness among members of the media in order to have a more human presentation and analysis of topics relevant to migration and migrants. ©IOM 2015