
More than 1 Million Refugees Enter Europe in 2015

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More than 1 million migrants and refugees have crossed into Europe either by land or by sea this year, a fourfold increase from last year, according to figures released Tuesday by the International Organization for Migration.

The vast majority of those entering Europe have come from Africa and the Middle East, escaping war, poverty and persecution. More than 455,000 are from Syria and over 186,000 from Afghanistan.

According to the Geneva-based intergovernmental organization, the million mark was crossed Monday. More than 800,000 people crossed the Mediterranean from Turkey and into Greece alone. The vast majority of are now located in six countries: Greece, Bulgaria, Italy, Spain, Malta and Cyprus.

Speaking to the press last week on International Migrants Day, IOM spokesman Joal Millman said the flow of migrants into the continent in December was “extraordinary.”

“We also want to point out that these very high flows for December in Mediterranean are proving to be what we feared—very lethal,” said Millman.

According to the IOM, nearly 3,700 people have died this year while crossing the Mediterranean, most of whom (2,889) were on the route from northern Africa to Italy.

European leaders are still squabbling over how to address the migrant crisis and have given themselves a deadline of June 2016 to find a coordinated plan. One of the proposals on the table is a quota system whereby each European country must agree to receive 160,000 migrants and refugees.

However, that plan has been met with resistance by some countries, particularly Slovakia and Hungary.

