

# HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - 48<sup>th</sup> SESSION

## Interactive Dialogue with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances

[Mr. Henrikas Mickevicius - Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances:](#)

- *Report of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances:* [A/HRC/48/57](#)

In its latest annual report, the Working Group highlighted the transmission of **651 new cases of enforced disappearance to 30 States**, including **86 cases transmitted under the urgent action procedure, to 19 States**. Although high, these figures are not a full representation of the magnitude of the enforced disappearances in the world today. Most probably, **someone is being disappeared as we speak**. We could make a comparison with the devastating pandemic we are currently facing. When one variant of the virus seems to be neutralized, another one appears. In the same way, **enforced disappearances continue to happen, taking new shapes and forms**.

The thematic section of the Working Group's report refers to **enforced disappearances in the context of transnational transfers**. The Working Group documented cases in which States resorted to **transnational transfers that led to enforced disappearances** with the participation or acquiescence of other States, in an attempt to capture their nationals or third country nationals. With a view to facilitating these operations, a number of States have sought to sign **bilateral security agreements**, often containing broad and **vague references to combating terrorism and transnational crime**.

During the reporting period, the Working Group regrettably **did not carry out any country visits**, mostly because of the **COVID pandemic** and hopes to be able to resume this fundamental activity soon, as it is essential to duly fulfil its monitoring mandate, and call on States that have received from the Working Group a request for a visit to respond favourably.

The Working Group is also presenting as addendum ([A/HRC/48/57/Add.1](#)) the follow-up to the recommendations made by the Working Group following its visit to the **Gambia**, from 12 to 19 June 2017 (A/HRC/39/46/Add.1) and **Albania**, from 5 to 12 December 2016 (A/HRC/36/39/Add.1).

If the comparison between enforced disappearances and the COVID virus can stand, then what would be the **vaccine that we need**? First of all, we need **commitment and determination, from all of us**. The Working Group have seen in some cases that results may be obtained when concerted action is taken. However, these are always too few compared to the **amount of cases that are unresolved**.

Behind these numerous cases, there are human beings who become victims of **one of the most heinous human rights violations**. In this sense, we must bear in mind that the notion of "victim" of goes beyond him or herself and **encompasses his or her family**, as well as any person who has suffered harm as the direct result of this crime, and, to an extent **concerns society as a whole**.

What has been done so far is obviously **not enough** to effectively address this offence to human dignity. In this daily struggle, **States' cooperation with the Working Group** is key to prevent, combat and eradicate enforced disappearances. We call on the international community to come together and strengthen the efforts to tackle this scourge.

One step in this direction would be, as we emphasize in all possible occasions, for all States to **ratify or accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance** and to recognise the **competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances** to receive and examine individual and inter-state communications.



**INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE** (Watch the full recording of the meeting on [UN WebTV](#))

**Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (48 statements)**

Lithuania on behalf of Nordic-Baltic Countries, Egypt on behalf of the Group of Arab States, European Union, Argentina on behalf of Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay, Greece, Liechtenstein, Japan, Armenia, Iraq, France, Egypt, Albania, Venezuela, Kenya, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of North Korea, United States, Russian Federation, Morocco, Peru, Nepal, Namibia, Belgium, China, Cyprus, Croatia, Portugal, Libya, Pakistan, Sudan, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Serbia, Yemen, United Kingdom, Azerbaijan, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Tanzania, Lesotho, Colombia, Belarus, Tunisia, Gambia, Ethiopia, Indonesia. Regional Organization: Organization of American States.

Many delegations commended the Working Group for its important work undertaken and for its report. Most of the States were concerned by the **alarming number of extraterritorial transfers leading to enforced disappearances**. They commended the Working Group for its thematic focus on international transfers. Several delegations urged **all States to cooperate** with the Working Group and to ratify the **Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance**.

Several States were concerned by the use of **Special Procedures as a tool of interference** to advance political agenda of third parties. They reminded the Working Group to **verify claims they receive** and to strictly abide by the **code of conduct** (Egypt on behalf of the Group of Arab States, Venezuela, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Morocco, China, Mauritania, Belarus).

**Greece** denounced the cases of extraterritorial enforced disappearances carried out by **Turkey**. **Japan** asked the **Democratic People's Republic of Korea** to release all the Japanese citizens it abducted. **Armenia** denounced the oppression and enforced disappearances operated by **Azerbaijan**. **Iraq** mentioned the mass graves discovered on its territory and the difficulty to identify the victims. **China** mentioned the enforced disappearances taking place during military invasion of the **United States**. **Cyprus** demanded access to **Turkish military** archives regarding cases of enforced disappearances. **Croatia** is still searching for 1858 of its citizens disappeared during the 1990's Homeland War. **Pakistan** condemned enforced disappearances perpetrated in **Kashmir** by India. **Ukraine** denounced enforced disappearances carried out by **Russian Occupation Authorities** on its occupied territories. **Afghanistan** mentioned the enforced disappearances carried out by **Taliban**. **Yemen** denounced the **Houthis** for targeting civilians. **Azerbaijan** exposed enforced disappearances perpetrated by **Armenian** forces.

**10 NGOs took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue:**

Asian Legal Resource Center, Ingenieurs du Monde, Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Il Cenacolo, Peace Brigades International, Syrian center for Media and Freedom of Expression, Families of Victims of Voluntary Disappearances, Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Organization for Poverty Alleviation and Development.

*Ingenieurs du monde* denounced the enforced disappearances perpetrated by **China** in **Xinjiang** and the situation of **Uyghurs** detained in camps. *Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights* also highlighted the situation in **Xinjiang** and mentioned the repression of defenders in **Tibet**. Both organizations reiterated that it has been 13 years since the Working Group requested a **visit to China**, still unanswered. *Christian Solidarity Worldwide* mentioned the case of a lawyer **abducted in China**.

*Peace Brigades International* exposed cases of enforced disappearances and reprisals in **Mexico, Honduras, Colombia** and **Guatemala**. *Comisión Mexicana* also raised the case of **Mexico**.

The *Syrian center for Media and Freedom of Expression* denounced the enforced disappearances taking place in **Syria** in total impunity. The NGO *Families of Victims of Voluntary Disappearances* denounced the enforced disappearances perpetrated in total impunity in **Philippines** in the context of the war against drugs and terrorism initiated by the regime. *Il Cenacolo* mentioned cases of enforced disappearances of **Sahraoui** persons and camps in the Tindouf region of **Algeria**. The *Organization for Poverty Alleviation and Development* exposed the situation in **Afghanistan**.