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Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Missing persons

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In the present report, the Secretary-General addresses the measures taken to implement General Assembly resolution [77/220](#). The report contains details on the applicable international legal and institutional framework, legislative and preventive measures adopted to prevent individuals from going missing, measures taken to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons, the situation of missing children, criminal investigations and prosecutions in cases of missing persons, the forensic recovery and identification of remains of missing persons and the legal status of missing persons and support for families. The report concludes with recommendations for States and other stakeholders.

* [A/79/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [77/220](#), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Human Rights Council at its relevant session and to the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session a comprehensive report on the implementation of the resolution, including relevant practical recommendations. The present report, prepared in accordance with that resolution, covers the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2024. Contributions were sought from Member States, international and regional organizations, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations.¹

2. In resolution [77/220](#), the General Assembly focused primarily on the issue of missing persons in connection with international or non-international armed conflict. Persons go missing in many other circumstances, such as situations of violence, insecurity, organized crime and disaster, and as a result of enforced disappearance or migration. As underlined in the contributions received for the present report and the public sources reviewed, the nature of the initiatives taken to address the issue of missing persons is not necessarily determined by the cause of their disappearance or the context in which they go missing, but by the need to address the fact that their whereabouts are unknown. The present report contains information received regarding measures to address the issue of missing persons in contexts other than armed conflict, to the extent that such information is relevant for missing persons in connection with armed conflict.

II. International legal and institutional framework

3. In previous reports on missing persons, the Secretary-General set out the international legal framework applicable to the issue of missing persons, drawing on applicable international human rights law and international humanitarian law.² The framework includes the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, to which there were 75 States parties as at 30 June 2024. Since the previous report, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Finland, Maldives, the Republic of Korea, South Africa and Thailand have joined the Convention, while Colombia and Luxembourg have made declarations recognizing the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances to examine individual complaints. Luxembourg also recognized the Committee's competence to examine inter-State communications.

4. In its resolution [77/249](#), the General Assembly took note once again of the draft articles on the prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity presented by the International Law Commission and decided that the Sixth Committee, at the seventy-ninth session of the General Assembly, would further examine the draft articles and the recommendation of the Commission and take a decision on that

¹ Contributions were received from Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Iraq, Italy, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lithuania, Mexico, Mozambique, Montenegro, Serbia, Spain, Switzerland and Uruguay, as well as from the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Council of Europe, the Association of Reintegration of Crimea, the Border Violence Monitoring Network, the Comisión de Derechos Humanos de la Ciudad de México, Data Cívica Mexico, the Defensoría del Pueblo de Ecuador, Human Rights Centre ZMINA, the Mafgoud (Missing) Initiative and the Wadaitohom Wain (Where are they!) Campaign, the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, Swisspeace, and the Truth and Justice Charter.

² [A/67/267](#), paras. 4–7, [A/69/293](#), paras. 4–6, [A/71/299](#), para. 3, [A/73/385](#), para. 3, [A/75/306](#), para. 3, and [A/77/245](#), para. 3.

matter.³ The definition of crimes against humanity in those draft articles includes the enforced disappearance of persons⁴ as one of the acts constituting crimes against humanity when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack.⁵

5. At its seventy-third session, in 2022, the International Law Commission adopted, on first reading, the draft articles on the immunity of State officials from foreign criminal jurisdiction.⁶ Draft article 7 provides that immunity *ratione materiae* from the exercise of foreign criminal jurisdiction shall not apply in respect of certain crimes under international law, including crimes against humanity and enforced disappearance.

6. In 2022, the Secretary-General published a report on missing people in the Syrian Arab Republic,⁷ pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/228. In the report, the Secretary-General highlighted good practices, gaps and challenges with regard to clarifying the fate and whereabouts of missing persons in the country, including the identification of human remains, and supporting victims, survivors and their families. Building on existing efforts, the Secretary-General identified a set of interconnected solutions that, in combination, offered a coherent framework both to respond to existing gaps and challenges and to improve ways to address the issue of missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic and provide support to families. Echoing earlier recommendations, including from the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and Syrian family associations, the Secretary-General recommended considering the establishment, through the Assembly, of a new international body. In its resolution 77/301, the Assembly decided to establish, under the auspices of the United Nations, the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic to clarify the fate and whereabouts of all missing persons in the country and to provide adequate support to victims, survivors and the families of those missing, in close cooperation and complementarity with all relevant actors. The Assembly called upon all States as well as all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the Independent Institution, in line with their obligations under international law, and requested the United Nations system as a whole to cooperate fully with the Independent Institution.⁸

7. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 77/301, the Secretary-General, with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and in consultation with all relevant international and Syrian actors, including victims, survivors and families, developed the terms of reference of the Independent Institution (annexed to the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 77/301).⁹ In this consultative process, led by OHCHR, there was also discussion on how to ensure the full and meaningful representation and participation of victims in the design and work of the Independent Institution. OHCHR made the necessary arrangements to set up the Institution, which started operations in April 2024.

8. The Human Rights Council continued to address the issue of enforced disappearances and extended the mandate of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances for a further three years.¹⁰ The Council also created or extended mandates of several country-specific investigative mechanisms that have

³ General Assembly resolution 77/249, paras. 2 and 7.

⁴ For differences in definition compared with human rights instruments, see A/74/10, paras. 44–46.

⁵ A/74/10, para. 44, draft art. 2 (1) (i).

⁶ A/77/10.

⁷ A/76/890.

⁸ General Assembly resolution 77/301, paras. 2 and 7–9.

⁹ A/78/627, annex I.

¹⁰ Human Rights Council resolution 54/14, para. 8.

addressed concerns of disappearances, such as those relating to Ethiopia (until October 2023), Iran (Islamic Republic of), Libya (until April 2023), Nicaragua, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).¹¹

9. The Secretary-General continued to address the issue of missing persons in his report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict and recommended, *inter alia*, that States and non-State armed groups, as appropriate, put in place legal, policy and institutional frameworks that account for protected persons in their custody and ensure the effective search for and identification of missing persons and the proper management of the dead.¹²

10. Within the reporting period, the Committee on Enforced Disappearances adopted concluding observations in respect of 14 States parties to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.¹³ It also issued a report on its visit to Iraq.¹⁴ The Committee adopted its general comment No. 1 (2023) on enforced disappearances in the context of migration, including migration due to international or non-international armed conflict,¹⁵ and a statement on non-State actors in the context of the Convention.¹⁶ OHCHR published a practical guide on becoming a party to the Convention¹⁷ and a revised factsheet on enforced disappearances.¹⁸

11. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has published several guidance documents relating to missing persons, including “Guidance notes: national mechanisms for missing persons”,¹⁹ “Forensic human identification process: an integrated approach”²⁰ and an updated legal factsheet on missing persons and their families.²¹

12. In regional developments, in 2022, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States adopted a resolution on the promotion and protection of human rights, urging States to adopt measures, *inter alia*, to prevent and investigate disappearances of all persons and to determine the whereabouts and fate of missing persons with the goal of providing a prompt response to their family members.²² The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, jointly with the Committee on Enforced Disappearances and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, called upon States to adopt measures to prevent the risks and adverse effects faced by relatives of disappeared persons and respond to these from a gender perspective.²³ In 2023, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights recognized and highlighted

¹¹ See www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/list-hrc-mandat.

¹² S/2023/345, para. 90 (d).

¹³ CED/C/CZE/CO/1, CED/C/MLI/CO/1, CED/C/URY/OAI/1, CED/C/CRI/CO/1, CED/C/ZMB/COAR/1, CED/C/ARG/OAI/1, CED/C/DEU/OAI/1, CED/C/MRT/CO/1, CED/C/NGA/CO/1, CED/C/MEX/OAI/2, CED/C/NLD/OAI/1, CED/C/KHM/CO/1, CED/C/BFA/OAI/1 and CED/C/HND/OAI/1.

¹⁴ CED/C/IRQ/VR/1 (Findings) and CED/C/IRQ/VR/1 (Recommendations).

¹⁵ CED/C/GC/1.

¹⁶ CED/C/10.

¹⁷ Available at www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/Becoming-a-Party-Practical-Guide.pdf.

¹⁸ Available at www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/Fact-sheet6-Rev4.pdf.

¹⁹ Available at <https://shop.icrc.org/national-mechanisms-for-missing-persons-a-toolbox-pdf-en.html>.

²⁰ Available at <https://shop.icrc.org/the-forensic-human-identification-process-an-integrated-approach-pdf-en.html>.

²¹ Available at www.icrc.org/en/document/legal-fact-sheet-missing-persons-and-their-families-updated.

²² Organization of American States, document AG/RES.2991 (LII-O/22).

²³ See www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media_center/preleases/2022/191.asp.

the leadership of women in the search for missing persons and defence of human rights in situations of forced and involuntary disappearance of persons.²⁴

III. Measures to prevent persons from going missing

13. In its resolution 77/220, the General Assembly called upon States that are parties to an armed conflict to take all appropriate measures to prevent persons from going missing in connection with the armed conflict. Developing and implementing measures pre-emptively, including during peacetime, is key to their effectiveness.

A. Enacting national legislation

14. Adopting domestic legal frameworks consistent with international human rights law and international humanitarian law contributes to preventing disappearances. It also contributes to ascertaining the fate of missing persons, ensuring the comprehensive collection, protection and proper management of information and providing victims' families with appropriate support.

15. Human rights treaty bodies made recommendations for domestic legal frameworks, including on the criminalization of enforced disappearance, with penalties that are commensurate with the gravity of the offence,²⁵ and for ensuring that provisions on amnesties or statutes of limitations do not foster impunity for enforced disappearances.²⁶

16. States continued to adopt legislation regarding missing persons and their families. For instance, Colombia enacted a law in September 2023 establishing an alert mechanism and other prevention, protection and reparation measures for children, young people, adolescents and women victims of disappearance.²⁷ In Thailand, the Act on Prevention and Suppression of Torture and Enforced Disappearance came into effect in February 2023.

B. Other preventive measures

17. In addition to legislation, States can adopt a range of other measures to prevent persons from going missing. United Nations human rights mechanisms made recommendations to States on the establishment of central registers of persons deprived of liberty to ensure accurate record-keeping, including on transfers, as an important safeguard against enforced disappearance.²⁸

18. In its resolution 78/217, the General Assembly continued to call upon States to cooperate internationally to save lives and prevent migrant deaths and injuries through individual or joint search and rescue operations, and the standardized collection and exchange of relevant information. In his 2023 report on the human rights of migrants, the Secretary-General urged States to assume individual and collective responsibility to save lives and prevent the deaths and disappearance of

²⁴ See www.oas.org/en/IACHR/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2023/038.asp.

²⁵ For example, [CED/C/ZMB/COAR/1](#), para. 12, [CED/C/CZE/CO/1](#), para. 18, [CED/C/MRT/CO/1](#), para. 18, and [CCPR/C/VEN/CO/5](#), para. 24 (a).

²⁶ For example, [CAT/C/ESP/CO/7](#), para. 36, [CED/C/MLI/CO/1](#), paras. 19 and 25, and [CED/C/IRQ/VR/1 \(Recommendations\)](#), para. 30.

²⁷ Colombia, Law 2326 of 2023.

²⁸ [CED/C/IRQ/VR/1 \(Recommendations\)](#), paras. 67–68, [A/HRC/54/22/Add.2](#), para. 76 (gg), [CAT/C/PSE/CO/1](#), para. 21 (b), [CCPR/C/COL/CO/8](#), para. 23, and [CED/C/MRT/CO/1](#), para. 42 (d)–(e).

migrants. He called upon States to ensure that all returns, including in the context of readmissions, fully complied with international human rights obligations.²⁹ In its general comment No. 1 (2023), the Committee on Enforced Disappearances appealed to States parties to take urgent measures to prevent and respond to that phenomenon and examined preventive measures such as the prohibition of the secret detention of migrants, data collection, the adoption of non-criminalizing policies, respect for non-refoulement and the prohibition of pushbacks or any form of collective expulsion that did not allow for an individual assessment.³⁰

19. ICRC reported on the work of the Bureau of its Central Tracing Agency for the international armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, which transmits information on protected persons received from respective national information bureaux to the party concerned, for onward transmission to families. From March 2022 to April 2024, it also provided news about the fate of nearly 8,700 protected persons to their relatives. Accounting for protected persons helps to prevent persons from going missing. According to records of the Bureau, as of April 2024, at least 26,900 people remained missing.

20. In a joint statement to the Security Council in 2024, the Global Alliance for the Missing highlighted the importance of the dignified treatment of the dead to help prevent persons from going missing.³¹ The Global Alliance now comprises 13 members: Argentina, Azerbaijan, Colombia, Croatia, Estonia, Gambia, Kuwait, Mexico, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Republic of Korea and Switzerland.

21. The Office of the Inspector General Colombia stated that 59 migrants had disappeared at sea between August and December 2022 and called upon State institutions and private companies to step up efforts to prevent actions by smugglers.³² Mexico reported that its mechanism for the protection of human rights defenders and journalists might play a role in preventing disappearances and counted 2,265 beneficiaries as of December 2023. A process to strengthen the mechanism that included the Government and civil society was ongoing.³³ Spain reported that its strategic plan on missing persons for the period 2022–2024 included preventive measures such as updating protocols for security forces, awareness-raising campaigns and the promotion of collaborations with public and private entities.

IV. Measures to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons

22. In resolution 77/220, the General Assembly reaffirmed the right of families to know the fate of their relatives reported missing in connection with armed conflict. It called upon States that were parties to an armed conflict to take all necessary measures, in a timely manner, to determine the identity and fate of persons reported missing in connection with armed conflict, without any adverse distinction, and, to the greatest extent possible, to provide their family members, through appropriate channels, with all relevant information on their fate, including their whereabouts or, if they are dead, the circumstances and cause of their death.

²⁹ A/HRC/54/81, para. 83 (j)–(k).

³⁰ CED/C/GC/1, paras. 12 and 16–36.

³¹ See <https://missingpersons.icrc.org/node/1610>.

³² See www.procuraduria.gov.co/Pages/alerta-procuraduria-10-meses-han-desaparecido-59-migrantes-irregulares-archipielago-san-andres.aspx.

³³ See www.gob.mx/defensorasyperiodistas/documentos/el-mecanismo-de-proteccion-federal-avanza-en-el-cumplimiento-de-recomendaciones-realizadas-por-onu-dh.

23. During the reporting period, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women reiterated that all entities responsible for searching for women victims of enforced disappearances had an obligation to conduct searches with a gender perspective.³⁴ The Human Rights Committee issued recommendations on the provision of training to security forces and civilian and military intelligence services in the investigation and resolution of cases of enforced disappearances and on the provision of information to victims regarding investigations.³⁵ The Committee on Enforced Disappearances made recommendations to establish a comprehensive search and investigation strategy for cases of disappearance and recalled that the obligation to search for and locate a person was triggered as soon as the competent authorities became aware, by any means, or had indications that a person had been subjected to enforced disappearance.³⁶

24. In its report on new technologies and enforced disappearances,³⁷ presented to the Human Rights Council, the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances examined how new technologies had been used against relatives of disappeared persons, their representatives and human rights defenders. It also examined the possible positive uses of new technologies to facilitate the search for disappeared persons, as well as to obtain and secure evidence of the commission of enforced disappearance, and made several recommendations.

25. In a report to the Human Rights Council, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recommended that States ensure the use of casualty recording to support the identification of missing persons.³⁸

A. Tracing and restoration of family links

26. The Family Links Network, coordinated by the Central Tracing Agency of ICRC and comprising national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies and ICRC delegations worldwide, continued to support authorities on the issue of the separated, missing and dead and provide assistance to their families. ICRC continued its tracing activities and maintained dialogue with relevant authorities and armed groups. In 2022 and 2023, ICRC distributed more than 223,000 Red Cross messages and facilitated contact with families in more than 3,9 million cases. In 2022 and 2023, ICRC brought about 1,773 family reunifications, including 1,720 involving minors, in 59 countries.

27. In January 2024, ICRC and UNICEF signed a global data-sharing framework agreement, *inter alia*, to facilitate activities for restoring family links and clarifying the fate of missing persons. A similar framework agreement was signed by ICRC with the World Food Programme in March 2023.

28. ICRC reported that the escalation of hostilities in Karabakh in September 2023 had disrupted family links and resulted in an increased number of missing persons. As of December 2023, ICRC estimated that there were approximately 5,000 persons missing due to armed conflict since the beginning of the 1990s, including the 2020 and 2023 escalation (the latter of which included the victims of a fuel explosion in September 2023). The timely transfer of the wounded, sick and dead by the authorities as well as the timely re-establishment of family links by ICRC contributed to limiting the number of missing persons and addressing the needs of their families.

³⁴ CEDAW/C/83/D/153/2020, para. 7.9; see also para. 9 (a) (iii) and 9 (b) (iii).

³⁵ For example, CCPR/C/VEN/CO/5, para. 24 (c), and (e), and CCPR/C/EGY/CO/5, para. 26 (a).

³⁶ For example, CED/C/IRQ/VR/1, paras. 11–14, and CED/C/MRT/CO/1, paras. 53–54.

³⁷ A/HRC/54/22/Add.5.

³⁸ A/HRC/53/48, para. 85 (e).

29. In July 2022, ICRC in Egypt initiated a process to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons through improved search mechanisms and strengthened cross-border and transregional approaches. It was focused on migrants who had fled their country of origin because of armed conflict or other situations of violence in Africa and the Middle East and had lost contact with their relatives in the country of origin, on the way to Egypt, within Egypt or along the route towards Europe. As a result, between July 2022 and 21 February 2024, a total of 241 missing persons from six different nationalities were successfully located in 17 different countries, and contact was restored. Some 33 individuals were reunited with their family members in Cairo.

30. The escalation in hostilities in Gaza and Israel resulted in large numbers of missing persons. Between 7 October 2023 and 7 May 2024, ICRC registered over 8,000 persons who had gone unaccounted for across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Thousands of human remains in Gaza will need to be recovered, identified and returned to their families.

31. In Brazil, national general guidelines on search processes carried out by the police were issued by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security in December 2023. Brazil also reported that a national registry for missing persons had been under development since November 2022.

32. In 2023, Chile launched a national plan for the location and identification of persons who had disappeared during the dictatorship.³⁹ Croatia reported that, in cooperation with ICRC and the International Commission on Missing Persons, it had resolved numerous cases of missing persons and that, as at 8 March 2024, the search continued for the 1,797 remaining cases. Serbia reported that the national strategy for the prosecution of war crimes for the period 2021–2026 and the revised prosecutorial strategy on war crimes investigations and prosecutions included measures to improve mechanisms for discovering the fate of missing persons. Switzerland reported on its efforts at the international level to support measures to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons.

33. The Committee on Enforced Disappearances continued its work under the urgent action procedure, and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances under its humanitarian mandate, providing the States concerned with specific recommendations on the search and investigation processes necessary to clarify the fate and whereabouts of disappeared people.

B. Coordination mechanisms

34. Parties to armed conflicts and States that have been parties to armed conflicts may agree to take measures under the auspices of a neutral intermediary. Such measures include setting up coordination mechanisms to exchange information; providing mutual assistance in locating and identifying missing persons and in recovering, identifying and returning human remains; and enabling family members to be informed about progress in determining the fate or whereabouts of missing persons.

35. The coordination mechanism comprising Georgian, Russian and South Ossetian participants for persons unaccounted for in connection with the armed conflicts of the 1990s, August 2008 and their aftermath remained active and met three more times during the reporting period. ICRC reported that 78 sets of human remains had been exhumed between 2010 and March 2024, of which 15 had been identified and handed

³⁹ See www.gob.cl/noticias/plan-nacional-busqueda-verdad-justicia-victimas-detenedos-desaparecidos-dictadura-decreto-presidente-boric.

over to their families. It further reported that, as of May 2024, 118 persons remained unaccounted for in relation to those armed conflicts.

36. Under the framework of the coordination mechanism comprising Georgian and Abkhaz participants on persons unaccounted for from the armed conflict of 1992–1993, the remains of 273 total persons were identified and handed over to their families between 2010 and 2024, including 69 during the reporting period. ICRC reported that, as of May 2024, 1,870 persons remained unaccounted for in relation to the armed conflict. The coordination mechanism had met three times during the reporting period, resuming in early 2023 after a delay of several years.

37. The Tripartite Committee mechanism between Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq and ICRC, established to clarify the fate and whereabouts of soldiers who went missing during the war between Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Iraq from 1980 to 1988, continued its work. Between June 2022 and May 2024, 309 sets of Iranian human remains and 55 sets of Iraqi human remains were repatriated to their respective countries as part of the implementation of the 2013 joint memorandum of understanding.

38. The working group on persons unaccounted for in relation to the events in Kosovo⁴⁰ (1998–1999) met after almost three years in January 2024. The sub-working group on forensics issues continued to meet regularly to exchange and analyse available information with the Pristina and Belgrade delegations, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and ICRC until June 2023. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo provided ICRC with access to its archives and, as at 1 February 2024, 4,450 out of over 6,000 cases had been closed with positive results, including almost 1,400 persons located alive.

39. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Missing Persons Institute continued to coordinate the efforts of all involved national and international actors in clarifying the fate and whereabouts of persons who went missing due to the armed conflict of 1991–1996. According to ICRC records, as at 9 February 2024, 16,125 cases out of 22,423 had been closed with positive results, including 662 missing persons located alive.

40. On 3 November 2023, the Missing Persons Group comprised of domestic institutions covering missing persons from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia, with the technical assistance of the International Commission on Missing Persons, launched a public regional database of active missing persons cases from conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia allowing the public to search records, provide information on missing persons and report cases.⁴¹ Montenegro reported that the Missing Persons Group had met in August 2022 and January 2023 and that the first Forum for the Families established by the Group had taken place in September 2022. Montenegro also reported having signed rules and procedures with Serbia for the implementation of the protocol of cooperation between their respective Commissions for Missing Persons.

41. The working group between Croatia and Serbia met most recently in January 2023. ICRC reported that it had been providing both Croatia and Serbia with archive-related material, including in the form of raw documents and analytical reports for the purpose of identifying human remains.

42. Between January 2022 and May 2024, one case of a missing person submitted by Kuwait was officially closed by the Tripartite Commission mechanism, which was

⁴⁰ All references to Kosovo should be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

⁴¹ See www.icmp.int/news/western-balkans-governments-launch-unique-public-database-of-missing-persons-cases. The database is available at https://oic.icmp.int/index.php?w=reg_lista_pub_ter_in&l=en.

set up to clarify the fate of missing persons in relation to the 1990–1991 armed conflict between Iraq and Kuwait. ICRC continued to engage with all parties on matters such as forensic best practices and requests for, inter alia, aerial and satellite imagery and coordinates to identify possible burial sites.

43. In June 2023, Colombia and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) signed a joint declaration on cooperation efforts for the search of missing persons in the border areas of Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). A first bilateral technical meeting took place in July 2023 to discuss joint efforts for the search for and recovery and identification of deceased persons from the Colombian non-international armed conflicts who might be in Venezuelan territory.

44. Through cooperation between ICRC and authorities in South Africa and Zimbabwe to strengthen coordination among State agencies, 205 unidentified bodies were identified during the reporting period as Zimbabwean migrants who had gone missing in South Africa.

45. In its resolution 2723 (2024), the Security Council commended the ongoing work of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus and called upon all parties to enhance their cooperation with the Committee's work, in particular through providing full access without delay to all areas and responding in a timely manner to requests for archival information on possible burial sites.⁴² As at 12 June 2024, the Committee had exhumed or received the remains of 1,200 persons on both sides of the island. Of 2,002 missing persons, 1,047 had been identified and their remains returned to their families.⁴³

46. In its general comment No. 1 (2023), the Committee on Enforced Disappearances stated that States parties should ensure effective inter-institutional cooperation and coordination at the national level and among institutions from countries of origin, transit, destination and return and should strive to create standardized protocols for search and investigation in cases of disappeared migrants across States.⁴⁴

C. National institutions

47. National institutions, such as national commissions on missing persons, as well as national information bureaux and grave registration services, can play a crucial role in clarifying the fate of missing persons and providing support to families of the missing.

48. Armenia reported that an inter-agency commission on issues of prisoners of war, hostages and missing persons had been established in October 2022 to assist in the search for missing persons and communicate with family members and relevant authorities and organizations.⁴⁵

49. As of May 2024, the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing of Colombia⁴⁶ had documented 32,988 tracing requests, registered 8,493 sites with human remains and established a preliminary total number of 111,640 persons deemed missing in relation to the conflict period up to 1 December 2016, which is the period covered by its mandate. The Unit also approved the national search plan for missing persons, 29 regional search plans and different guidelines and protocols. The national development plan for the period 2022–2026 of Colombia included the

⁴² Security Council resolution 2723 (2024), para. 11.

⁴³ S/2024/527, paras. 52 and 53.

⁴⁴ CED/C/GC/1, para. 41.

⁴⁵ Armenia, Decree of the Prime-Minister N1236-A.

⁴⁶ See <https://unidadbusqueda.gov.co/>.

creation of a national system for the search for persons reported missing in the context of the armed conflict, under the leadership of the Unit and in coordination with the Ministry of Justice.⁴⁷ Its regulatory decree was enacted in April 2024.⁴⁸ Since 1 December 2016, ICRC has continued to document new cases, registering 423 further cases between 1 July 2022 and 19 February 2024.

50. In Iraq, ICRC continued to provide technical support to the Medico-Legal Directorate of the Ministry of Health, expanding from the central level to the main governorates and preparing to obtain International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9001 certification. Further engagement with the Higher Institute of Security and Administrative Development of the Ministry of Interior resulted in the establishment of a training programme in emergency preparedness and response in mass fatalities and the prevention of disappearances.

51. In Lebanon, since 2021, ICRC supported the operationalization of the National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared, including through awareness-raising, support for the families of the missing, and consolidation of the Commission's internal structure. ICRC provided technical advice to the Commission on matters such as data protection and management, and forensics.

52. In Nepal, a bill to amend the Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act 2071 (2014) following a Supreme Court ruling that several provisions were unconstitutional and in conflict with international standards was tabled in Parliament in March 2023 and remained under consideration at the time of writing. The Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission received more than 3,000 and 63,000 complaints, respectively. The ICRC continued to advocate the creation of a mechanism to provide individualized answers for families searching for missing persons.

53. In Papua New Guinea, a revised missing persons policy in relation to the Bougainville Conflict was endorsed by the Bougainville Executive Council in April 2023. Accordingly, in June 2023, the Autonomous Bougainville Government inaugurated its Office of Missing Persons to address cases in connection with the conflict on the territory of Bougainville and other Papua New Guinea provinces from 1988 to 1998.

54. In Ukraine, a unified register of persons missing under special circumstances was established within the Ministry of Internal Affairs in May 2023 to collect and centralize information about missing persons in connection with the armed conflict, including information relevant for their search and identification.

D. Accountability

55. In its resolution 77/220, the General Assembly noted that accountability, including the promotion of truth, justice, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence, was one of the key components in addressing the issue of missing persons. United Nations human rights mechanisms, including international commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions, have regularly addressed issues related to accountability.

⁴⁷ Colombia, Law 2294 of 2023, art. 198. See also www.hchr.org.co/wp/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/02-28-2024-Annual-report-Colombia-HRC_55_23_English-unofficial-translation270224.pdf, para. 49.

⁴⁸ Colombia, Decree 0532 of 21 April 2024. Available at https://unidadbusqueda.gov.co/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/DECRETO_0532_ABRIL_29_2024.pdf.

56. The Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan continued to document cases of enforced disappearances, as well as abductions of women and children, and the persistent failure to hold perpetrators accountable.⁴⁹ The Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya continued to document widespread cases of enforced disappearances and abductions. It called upon the authorities of Libya to develop a comprehensive, inclusive, victim-centred and detailed road map on transitional justice and accountability for Libya.⁵⁰

57. In its reports on Sri Lanka, OHCHR examined the lack of accountability for past enforced disappearances and made recommendations to the Government, including on the elements of a comprehensive strategy on transitional justice.⁵¹ OHCHR also published a report on enforced disappearance and abductions by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, reflecting the perspectives of victims on justice and accountability.⁵²

58. The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant collected evidence on enforced disappearances.⁵³ The Security Council extended the mandate of the Investigative Team until 17 September 2024.⁵⁴

59. Since the previous report (A/77/245), from 9 May 2022 to 30 June 2024, the Committee on Enforced Disappearances registered 363 new requests for urgent actions under article 30 of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, including 181 related to disappearances in Mexico and 43 in Iraq. During that period, 23 urgent actions were closed or discontinued once the disappeared person had been located alive, which brings to a total of 502 the number of located individuals, including 456 alive, since the beginning of the implementation of the procedure in 2012.⁵⁵

60. In relation to human rights violations resulting in individuals going missing, including enforced disappearances, human rights treaty bodies made findings and recommendations to States parties regarding the establishment of accountability mechanisms and truth and reconciliation commissions, and reparations to victims.⁵⁶

61. The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances continued to communicate with States and others on issues related to enforced disappearances. From 13 May 2022 to 10 May 2024, the Working Group transmitted 2,019 cases to 36 States and 107 cases tantamount to enforced disappearances to six de facto authorities. From its inception until 10 May 2024, the Working Group had transmitted a total of 61,743 cases, of which 48,613 were still under active consideration. During the reporting period, the Working Group adopted reports on its visits to Cyprus, Honduras and Uruguay.⁵⁷

⁴⁹ See A/HRC/52/CRP.3, available at www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session52/A_HRC_52_CRP.3.pdf; A/HRC/54/CRP.6, available at www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/cohrsouthsudan/A_HRC_54_CRP.6_0.pdf; and A/HRC/55/26.

⁵⁰ See A/HRC/52/CRP.8, available at www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session50/A_HRC_52_CRP.8-EN.docx; and A/HRC/52/83.

⁵¹ A/HRC/51/5, para. 71 (d). See also www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/accountability-enforced-disappearances-sri-lanka-ohchr-report.

⁵² Available at www.ohchr.org/en/documents/reports/these-wounds-do-not-heal-enforced-disappearance-and-abductions-democratic-peoples.

⁵³ See S/2023/882, S/2023/367 and S/2022/836.

⁵⁴ Security Council resolution 2697 (2023), para. 2.

⁵⁵ See CED/C/23/2, CED/C/24/3, CED/C/25/2 and CED/C/26/2.

⁵⁶ For example, CCPR/C/CYP/CO/5, para. 18, CCPR/C/LKA/CO/6, para. 13 (b)–(d), and CAT/C/COL/CO/6, paras. 20 and 21.

⁵⁷ See A/HRC/51/31/Add.1, A/HRC/54/22/Add.1 and A/HRC/54/22/Add.2.

62. In 2023, the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Chairperson of the Working Group on Death Penalty, Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Africa of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the representatives of Indonesia and Malaysia to the Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations jointly called upon all States to provide effective justice for all victims of enforced disappearances without delay, and proper accountability for perpetrators at all levels of the chain of command.⁵⁸

63. In Brazil, the Amnesty Commission created in 2002 with responsibility for reparation processes⁵⁹ remains active. The Special Commission on Political Deaths and Disappearances responsible for the search for and identification of the missing and processes of reparation to their families was closed in December 2022.⁶⁰ A request to reopen it was presented by the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship in 2023, and a decision by the President thereon was pending at the time of writing.

E. Archives

64. The collection, protection and management of information are essential for addressing the issue of missing persons. Archives remain critical to effectively ensuring the right to the truth. In its resolution 77/220, the General Assembly invited States, national institutions and, as appropriate, intergovernmental, international and non-governmental organizations to ensure the development and proper management of archives pertaining to missing persons and unidentified remains in connection with armed conflict, as well as access to those archives, in accordance with relevant applicable laws and regulations.

65. States and other stakeholders continued to cooperate with ICRC on the use of archives for the purpose of clarifying the fate and whereabouts of persons missing in connection with armed conflicts. ICRC reported that, to help clarify the fate of persons missing in relation to the conflicts in the Western Balkans, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and several States had provided relevant documentation to ICRC, while several States and international organizations had provided ICRC with direct access to their respective archives. From 2018 up until the end of the reporting period, ICRC completed searches in the archives of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals related to the names of 12,168 missing persons from conflicts in the former Yugoslavia.

66. Since 2022, ICRC has continued to support the Ministry of Defence of Iraq in the organization and inventory of more than 50,000 original paper files from archives containing data on deceased soldiers killed in action during the armed conflicts between Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Iraq and between Iraq and Kuwait.

V. Missing children

67. In its resolution 77/220, the General Assembly requested States to pay the utmost attention to cases of children reported missing in connection with armed

⁵⁸ See www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/08/enforced-disappearance-un-and-regional-human-rights-experts-call-justice.

⁵⁹ Brazil, Law 10.559 of 13 November 2002.

⁶⁰ See also www.oas.org/en/IACHR/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2023/004.asp.

conflict and to take appropriate measures to search for and identify those children and to reunite them with their families.

68. In his 2024 report on children and armed conflict covering the period from January to December 2023,⁶¹ the Secretary-General noted that the United Nations had verified the abduction of 4,356 children, which represented an increase of almost 10 per cent compared with the previous year.⁶²

69. Several mechanisms made recommendations on missing children. Human rights treaty bodies made recommendations to States parties in relation to the protection of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from disappearances.⁶³ The Committee on Enforced Disappearances, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and three special procedures mandate holders adopted a joint statement on illegal intercountry adoptions.⁶⁴ The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine recommended that Ukraine consider establishing a DNA registry that would aid in the identification and recovery of missing children.⁶⁵

70. Several States reported having established a dedicated alert system for missing children.⁶⁶ Argentina reported that, as of March 2024, the association “Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo”, jointly with the State, had clarified the identity of 137 people who had been taken from their families while they were children during the military dictatorship.

VI. Criminal investigation and prosecution

71. The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance places an obligation on each State party to take the necessary measures to ensure that enforced disappearance constitutes an offence under its criminal law and serves to reaffirm that the widespread or systematic practice of enforced disappearance constitutes a crime against humanity as defined in applicable international law.⁶⁷ States parties have an obligation to investigate enforced disappearances and take all necessary measures to hold perpetrators of enforced disappearances criminally responsible.⁶⁸ International humanitarian law further requires States to enact any legislation necessary to provide effective penal sanctions for persons committing, or ordering to be committed, any of the grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and Protocol I Additional thereto, and to investigate war crimes allegedly committed by their nationals or armed forces, or on their territory, and, if appropriate, prosecute the suspects.⁶⁹

72. Human rights treaty bodies issued observations and recommendations on the criminal investigation and prosecution of enforced disappearances and other

⁶¹ [A/78/842-S/2024/384](#), para. 6.

⁶² [A/77/895-S/2023/363](#), para. 4.

⁶³ For example, [CAT/C/CHE/CO/8](#), para. 32, and [CCPR/C/IRL/CO/5](#), para. 38 (d).

⁶⁴ [CED/C/9](#).

⁶⁵ [A/78/540](#), para. 111 (c).

⁶⁶ Brazil, Colombia, Serbia and Spain.

⁶⁷ Articles 4 and 5.

⁶⁸ Article 6. See also the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, arts. 4, 7 and 12, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 2.

⁶⁹ See e.g. the First Geneva Convention, arts. 49 and 50; the Second Geneva Convention, arts. 50 and 51; the Third Geneva Convention, arts. 129 and 130; the Fourth Geneva Convention, arts. 146 and 147; Protocol Additional I, art. 85; and the International Committee of the Red Cross, Customary International Humanitarian Law, rule 158 (<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule158>).

violations related to missing persons.⁷⁰ For instance, the Human Rights Committee recommended that States parties ensure that cases of enforced disappearances, among other violations, are promptly, effectively, independently and impartially investigated, without undue interference in or obstruction of judicial or investigative processes by political and military personnel, and that perpetrators, including persons in positions of command, are prosecuted and, if convicted, sanctioned.⁷¹

73. In several contexts, OHCHR addressed impunity for enforced disappearances and abductions and made recommendations to the international community to promote accountability for crimes under international law through judicial proceedings.⁷²

VII. Forensic recovery and identification of remains of missing persons

74. In its resolution [77/220](#), the General Assembly invited States, national institutions and, as appropriate, intergovernmental, international and non-governmental organizations to further their engagement in order to follow forensic best practices as they apply to preventing and resolving cases of missing persons in connection with armed conflict.

75. Azerbaijan reported that it was working to create DNA profiles based on 10,900 biological samples from close relatives of more than 3,500 missing persons' family members which had been collected in cooperation with ICRC since 2014. In Brazil, ICRC noted that, by November 2023, 279 missing persons had been identified since the launch in May 2021 of a national campaign to collect DNA from family members of missing persons for comparison with processed DNA from unidentified remains or from living persons of unknown identity. Brazil reported that it periodically provided genetic profiles from unidentified mortal remains to the global database of INTERPOL.

76. Colombia reported that, as at 31 January 2024, the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing had recovered the bodies of 1,256 missing persons, of which 1,170 had been handed over to the National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Forensic Sciences. The Institute had completed the analysis of 629 bodies, as a result of which 48 people reported missing had been identified. During the reporting period, ICRC reported that it had worked on 46 burial sites around the country, recovering 41 bodies from 29 of the sites. Colombia reported that, in compliance with an order of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to the Ministry of Transport, guidelines for the safeguarding and protection of unidentified bodies of alleged victims of the Colombian armed conflict in future works or infrastructure projects were drafted and compiled from the contributions of all the competent entities in the matter. Since 2018, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace had issued 18 precautionary measures on the preservation of places believed to contain bodies of victims.

⁷⁰ For example, [CED/C/HND/OAI/1](#), paras. 34–35, [CED/C/KHM/CO/1](#), paras. 25–42, [CEDAW/C/NIC/CO/7-10](#), para. 28 (e), [CAT/C/ETH/CO/2](#), paras. 14–15 (b), [CAT/C/SLV/CO/3](#), para. 13.

⁷¹ For example, [CCPR/C/USA/CO/5](#), para. 9, [CCPR/C/VEN/CO/5](#), paras. 24 (d), [CCPR/C/BDI/CO/3](#), para. 22(a), [CCPR/C/LKA/CO/6](#), para. 13 (a), and [CCPR/C/RUS/CO/8](#), paras. 6, 7 (c) and 39 (a).

⁷² For example, [A/HRC/51/5](#), para. 72 (d) and [A/HRC/55/61](#), para. 58 (a). See also www.ohchr.org/en/documents/reports/these-wounds-do-not-heal-enforced-disappearance-and-abductions-democratic-peoples, p. 52, and www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sri-lanka/report-accountability-enforced-disappearances-sri-lanka-may2024-en.pdf, para. 134 (c).

77. Cyprus reported that it had been conducting exhumations and identification of remains of missing persons in the areas under its effective control since 1999. In Iraq, ICRC noted that the Mass Grave Department of the Medico-Legal Directorate of the Ministry of Health and the Mass Grave Directorate of the Human Rights Directorate of the Martyrs Foundation had increased operations in 2023; 20 gravesites had been excavated, more than 900 forensic examinations of human remains conducted and 291 human remains identified and handed over to their respective families. In addition, nine national campaigns had been organized to register cases and collect forensic information from families of missing persons and information management systems were being implemented for case management. In its report on its visit to Iraq, the Committee on Enforced Disappearances underscored the urgent need for the State party to set up a national forensic databank, a national register of unidentified and unclaimed disappeared persons and a national register of mass and clandestine graves, which should be interoperable with other existing genetic profile banks in other countries.⁷³

78. ICRC noted that, in Lebanon, following the discovery of a mass grave in Mdukha in August 2023 connected to the Lebanese civil war, the National Commission on the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared established the first multidisciplinary committee that will support the exhumation and identification of the human remains, as outlined in Law 105 for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared. Since 2020, ICRC has been supporting the DNA laboratory of the Internal Security Forces of Lebanon to build its quality management system according to ISO/International Electrotechnical Commission standard 17025.

79. In its 2022 paper on Tarhunah, the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya stated that there could still be up to 100 undiscovered mass graves, identified three such possible locations and encouraged authorities to continue to search and exhume new mass graves.⁷⁴ In March 2024, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights was deeply alarmed by the discovery in Libya of a mass grave containing at least 65 bodies of migrants who had died while crossing the Libyan desert.⁷⁵

80. Spain reported that, in 2022 and 2023, of a total of 77 bodies or remains of possible migrants collected, 43 were identified and handed over to their relatives or buried. In the United States of America, local medico-legal authorities and forensic experts continued to recover, analyse and identify migrants who had died and/or gone missing while crossing the United States-Mexico border, amid higher numbers of migrant deaths.⁷⁶ ICRC noted that the Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner in southern Arizona recorded over 360 migrant deaths from 2022 to 2023, identified over half of those individuals to date and clarified their fate for their families.

81. ICRC continued to provide policy advice and technical assistance to strengthen national capacities, including of medico-legal systems, in many contexts, including through the promotion of forensics best practices and the publication and dissemination of guidelines.⁷⁷

⁷³ CED/C/IRQ/VR/1 (Recommendations), para. 50.

⁷⁴ A/HRC/50/CRP.3, paras. 142, 218 and 221 (b)-(c). Available at www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/regularsession/session50/2022-07-20/A-HRC-50-CRP-Tarhuna-E.pdf.

⁷⁵ See <https://achpr.au.int/en/news/press-releases/2024-03-27/discovery-mass-grave-containing-least-65-bodies-migrants-libya>.

⁷⁶ See www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/border-rescues-and-mortality-data and www.wola.org/2024/03/weekly-u-s-mexico-border-update-migrant-deaths-2024-budget-s-b-4.

⁷⁷ See www.icrc.org/en/publication/4470-recovery-human-remains-weapon-contaminated-settings and <https://shop.icrc.org/the-forensic-human-identification-process-an-integrated-approach-pdf-en.html>.

VIII. Legal status of missing persons and support for families

82. In its resolution 77/220, the General Assembly called upon States to take appropriate steps with regard to the legal situation of missing persons and the individual needs and accompaniment of their family members, with particular attention to the needs of women, children and older persons, in such fields as social welfare, psychological and psychosocial support, financial matters, family law and property rights.

A. Understanding the needs of families

83. The needs of families of missing persons are wide-ranging. For instance, in a 2024 report on Sri Lanka, OHCHR documented the psychological, social and economic impact of enforced disappearances on victims, including families, and highlighted victims' right to reparation.⁷⁸ In a 2024 report on returnees in the Syrian Arab Republic, OHCHR documented the particular challenges faced by women who returned without their missing husbands.⁷⁹

84. The Human Rights Committee issued recommendations for States parties to ensure that disappeared persons and their families are able to obtain full reparation as well as legal, medical, psychological and rehabilitation services and to be protected against threats, intimidation, harassment and any other reprisal.⁸⁰ In its general comment No. 1 (2023), the Committee on Enforced Disappearances recalled that States parties have an obligation to ensure that all victims of enforced disappearance have access to their rights to truth and justice, reparation and guarantees of non-repetition, including when such disappearance occurs in the context of migration. It further stated that specific attention should be given to ensuring the necessary psychosocial and logistical support for relatives of disappeared persons.⁸¹

85. ICRC continued to assess the needs of the families of missing persons on the basis of its guidelines for multidisciplinary family needs assessments, in cooperation with family associations, national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, governmental organizations and others. During the reporting period, ICRC concluded or updated family needs assessments in Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, El Salvador, Honduras, Jordan, Lebanon and the Niger. In 2023, the French Red Cross, with ICRC support, also initiated a family needs assessment in France with families of missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

B. Addressing the needs of families

86. During the reporting period, ICRC continued its accompaniment approach⁸² to strengthen the abilities of individuals and families to cope with the difficulties relating to the disappearance of their relatives and gradually regain social and emotional well-being. Accompaniment programmes were implemented by ICRC in Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Cameroon,

⁷⁸ See www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/accountability-enforced-disappearances-sri-lanka-ohchr-report, paras. 30–44.

⁷⁹ See www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/syrian-returnees-subjected-gross-human-rights-violations-and-abuses-un.

⁸⁰ For example, CCPR/C/CYP/CO/5, para. 18, CCPR/C/UGA/CO/2, para. 29 (d), CCPR/C/BRA/CO/3, para. 36 (b), CCPR/C/LKA/CO/6, para. 13 (b), CCPR/C/PAN/CO/4, para. 10, and CCPR/C/EGY/CO/5, para. 26 (d).

⁸¹ CED/C/GC/1, paras. 42, 44 and 46.

⁸² A/75/306, para. 92.

Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Nigeria, Peru, the Philippines, Serbia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). Similar programmes were executed by ICRC in Kosovo. In Georgia, the accompaniment programme was successfully handed over to the Georgian authorities in 2023, with ICRC playing an advisory role.

87. In Brazil, following ICRC recommendations, three States launched pilot programmes of multidisciplinary centres of reference for family members of missing persons in the ongoing context of disappearance. In the Philippines, ICRC engaged with the Marawi Compensation Board in advocating access to compensation for all victims of the conflict, including families of the missing, under the Marawi Compensation Act.

88. In November 2023, ICRC convened the third International Conference for Families of Missing Persons, which brought together 700 families from 44 contexts around the world. Families engaged directly with their peers on how to organize and engage more effectively with those responsible for providing answers. The Conference also provided a first opportunity of exchange between families and States members of the Global Alliance for the Missing. In June 2024, a Security Council Arrria-formula meeting on missing persons was hosted by Switzerland and co-sponsored by the Global Alliance.

C. Legal situation of missing persons

89. Domestic law should clarify the legal situation of missing persons, including through provisions for the person concerned to be declared absent or missing, so that the families of missing persons are able to receive social and financial benefits and can handle the affairs of the missing person without requiring the missing person to be declared formally deceased.⁸³

90. For instance, in its report on its visit to Iraq, the Committee on Enforced Disappearances stated, in relation to reparation and support to victims, that the requirement for a death certificate must be definitively removed from all procedures until the fate of the disappeared person has been fully clarified, and replaced with the issuance of declarations of absence by reason of disappearance.⁸⁴

91. Côte d'Ivoire adopted a law in November 2022 regarding the legal status of missing persons and related rights.⁸⁵ ICRC reported that, in Peru, the authorities were updating the legal requirements to facilitate the obtention of a certificate of absence by families of missing persons.

92. In November 2023, Israel passed a national law to provide financial compensation and other benefits for families of persons held hostage or missing, who will continue to receive the benefits for as long as their family members are considered missing or hostages.⁸⁶

IX. Conclusions and recommendations

93. States and other relevant stakeholders have continued to take action regarding missing persons, including through the adoption of laws, the

⁸³ See also [A/73/385](#), para. 69.

⁸⁴ [CED/C/IRQ/VR/1 \(Recommendations\)](#), para. 118.

⁸⁵ Côte d'Ivoire, Law No. 2022-885 of 23 November 2022.

⁸⁶ Israel, Compensation Law for Family Members of Missing or Abducted in Hostilities or War, 5774-2023.

implementation of measures to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons and to ensure the forensic recovery and identification of remains, and the adoption of measures to address the needs of the families of missing persons. The prevalence of missing persons, including children, and its impact on families remains of serious concern. Previous recommendations of the Secretary-General are reiterated.⁸⁷

94. States should enable the meaningful participation of and provide information to families of missing persons, without discrimination and wherever they reside, in all stages of the search, and in the investigation related to the disappearance of their loved ones. States should ensure the protection of families of missing persons and all individuals involved in the search, investigation and accountability processes, including human rights defenders, civil society organizations and lawyers, against threats and violence.

95. States should adopt measures regarding missing persons that take into account the specific needs of those missing and of their families. This requires, *inter alia*, acknowledging and addressing the differentiated impact on women and girls when they or their relatives go missing and recognizing the central role that they play in the search.

96. States should strengthen the capacity of medico-legal institutions to adequately document all unidentified deceased persons, ensure their dignified and traceable disposal and centralize relevant information for comparison against information on missing persons and their eventual identification and return to their families.

97. States should establish national information bureaux or equivalent entities in peacetime as part of a broader preparedness strategy to prevent persons from going missing in armed conflicts, by accounting for persons in their hands, so that their families are informed about their fate, in line with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

98. States are again encouraged to become parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, as well as the Protocols I and II Additional to the 1949 Geneva Conventions. States are also encouraged to incorporate their provisions into domestic law and to ensure their full implementation.

⁸⁷ [A/77/245](#), paras. 80–83, [A/75/306](#), paras. 98–101, and [A/73/385](#), paras. 77–79.