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# WORLD CONGRESS ON ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES



With the support of



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## **PROPOSED ACTION PLAN TO PROTECT ALL PERSONS FROM ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE**

Enforced disappearance remains widespread across the world, with devastating repercussions on entire societies. Following decades of mobilization to prevent and eradicate this heinous human rights violation, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (the Convention) was adopted in 2006 thanks to the tireless joint efforts of States, associations of victims, human rights non-governmental organizations and experts.

Over the past 15 years, the number of States parties to the Convention has increased from 20 to 76. However, universal ratification and implementation is far from achieved and enforced disappearance is far from being eradicated. The importance of the ratification and implementation of the Convention has been recognized by the United Nations General Assembly as “a significant contribution to ending impunity and to promoting and protecting all human rights for all”.<sup>1</sup>

### **Structure and proposed actions**

The World Congress on Enforced Disappearances Action Plan aims to propose concrete actions to actors engaged in the promotion of the Convention and its objectives i.e., to prevent, punish and eradicate enforced disappearance and to guarantee victims’ rights as per relevant international standards.

A list of activities and actions is proposed in relation to each of the eight areas of the Action Plan for its implementation. These actions were suggested during consultations with States and other stakeholders: victims, civil society organizations, national human rights institutions, international and regional organizations, experts.

Participants to the Congress are encouraged to submit voluntary commitments (pledges),<sup>2</sup> individually or jointly, to contribute to the protection of all persons from enforced disappearance.

### **Guiding principles**

The proposed Action Plan is guided by the following principles:

1. The proposed Action Plan and its implementation are in line with agreed language in relevant international and regional standards, in particular the right not to be subjected to enforced disappearance.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution 78/207 adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2023, International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, para. 1.

<sup>2</sup> See model pledges available on the [WCED website](#).

<sup>3</sup> These include, at the universal level: Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, United Nations Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Geneva Conventions and the Protocol Additional thereto.



2. Combating enforced disappearance and promoting international instruments and standards is the responsibility of all – governments, victims, civil society organisations, regional and international human rights organizations and mechanisms, national human rights institutions, experts, etc.
3. Victims should always be at the centre of relevant strategies and actions.
4. Concerted efforts and coordinated action are essential to ensure successful strategies and actions.

## Follow-up

Effective implementation of the proposed Action Plan requires coordinated action by actors involved in the fight against enforced disappearances. The co-organizers of the World Congress on Enforced Disappearances pledge to review the implementation of the proposed Action Plan on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on 20 December 2026.

## 1 Strengthening legal and institutional frameworks to fight against impunity and ensure accountability

Adequate legal and institutional framework are essential to prevent enforced disappearances, protect all persons from enforced disappearance, fight against impunity and ensure accountability at the national, regional and global level.

### *Proposed actions for pledges:*

- 1.1 Ratify or accede to all relevant instruments, including the Convention
- 1.2 Recognize the competence of Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED) to examine individual and inter-State communications (pursuant to articles 31 and 32 of the Convention)
- 1.3 Develop a plan to effectively implement the Convention,<sup>4</sup> and take concrete measures such as:
  - 1.3.1 Criminalize enforced disappearance in national legislation as an autonomous crime, in line with international standards
  - 1.3.2 Adopt legislation to recognize the status of “disappeared person” and provide family members with a “certificate of absence”
- 1.4 Enhance international cooperation in connection with the search of disappeared persons and criminal proceedings at domestic and international levels
- 1.5 Enhance international cooperation to assist victims of enforced disappearances

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At the regional level: Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights), American Convention on Human Rights, Inter-American Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons, African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, Guidelines on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in Africa.

<sup>4</sup> See the concrete steps recommended for a roadmap to implement the Convention at the national level in the OHCHR Practical Guide on [Becoming a Party to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance](#), p. 24.



## 2 Strengthening search processes

Search processes are at the heart of the search for truth and justice regarding enforced disappearances cases, including in migration contexts.

*Proposed actions for pledges:*

- 2.1 Ensure family members' participation in search and investigation processes
- 2.2 Develop domestic technical (forensic) capacities
- 2.3 Develop international and regional cooperation in the field of forensic capacities
- 2.4 Support families in forensic investigations processes
- 2.5 Provide the means necessary to ensure efficient search processes
- 2.6 Establish a nationwide register of disappeared persons
- 2.7 Establish domestic, regional and international interconnected databases of verifiable statistics on the number of forcibly disappeared persons
- 2.8 Ensure unimpeded access to information, including archives
- 2.9 Enhance coordination and cooperation between search processes and/or search and investigation processes at the national, regional and international level.

## 3 Empowering victims

Ensuring victim-centered approaches and adequate multifaceted support when designing strategies and actions to combat enforced disappearance is crucial to their relevance and efficiency. When dealing with enforced disappearance, victim means not only the disappeared person, but also any person who has suffered harm as the direct result of an enforced disappearance.

*Proposed actions for pledges:*

- 3.1 Put families at the centre of the effort to eradicate enforced disappearances
- 3.2 Adopt a gender-based perspective when addressing enforced disappearance
- 3.3 Ensure that the rights of persons in vulnerable situations are fully integrated in strategies and action for the prevention of and protection from enforced disappearance
- 3.4 Strengthen and support the creation of victim-led solidarity networks
- 3.5 Support the creation of a permanent platform for victims' families and civil society organizations to exchange experiences, receive psychological and legal support
- 3.6 Provide legal support to victims and promote access to legal remedies at the domestic, regional and international levels
- 3.7 Provide socio-economic and psychosocial support that takes into account the specificity of human rights violations related to enforced disappearance and its disproportionate impact on women, children, and other groups in situation of vulnerability.
- 3.8 Provide support to victims and set up public policies and campaigns to counter social stigmas and discrimination
- 3.9 Strengthen documentation and reporting capacity of victims and organizations who support them
- 3.10 Set up and implement programmes of integral reparations including fair and adequate compensation, restitution, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition



- 3.11 Support the creation of a welfare fund for the rehabilitation of victims and their families and providing reparations
- 3.12 Support the creation of a solidarity fund for family member to travel, meet and support each other
- 3.13 Commemorate the International Day of Victims of Enforced Disappearance on 30th August
- 3.14 Commemorate the International Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims on 24th March.

## 4 Ensuring the protection of victims and those who work on enforced disappearances

The protection of victims,<sup>5</sup> officials, legal professionals, human rights defenders and journalists involved in search and investigation efforts, is essential to ensure victim support, documentation and reporting of enforced disappearance cases and to provide critical information on enforced disappearance.

*Proposed actions for pledges:*

- 4.1 Strengthen the legal framework at domestic level by adopting laws focused on the protection of family members, human rights defenders, civil society actors, journalists and anyone working on the issue of enforced disappearances, whenever relevant
- 4.2 Establish strong mechanisms to protect victims, including family members, and those who assist them, including witnesses in relevant processes from reprisals, and ensure that cases of aggression and intimidation are investigated and that the perpetrators are punished
- 4.3 Prevent and punish actions that criminalize, intimidate, persecute or stigmatize disappeared persons, their families or the people who support them, including in migration contexts
- 4.4 Ensure access of persons deprived of liberty to a lawyer
- 4.5 Support the mandate of international mechanisms set up to protect against reprisals.

## 5 Raising awareness, training and education about enforced disappearances and existing mechanisms

Raising awareness, training activities and education are essential to inform all concerned actors and strengthen their capacities to address enforced disappearance effectively.

*Proposed actions for pledges:*

- 5.1 Organize specific trainings on enforced disappearance for relevant professionals and civil society organizations (explain what enforced disappearance is, its scope and effects)

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<sup>5</sup> See San José Guidelines against Intimidations or Reprisals on the protection of individuals and groups at risk of or facing intimidation or reprisals for seeking to cooperate or cooperating with United Nations human rights treaty bodies, endorsed by all United Nations treaty bodies.



- 5.2 Inform about existing mechanisms to address enforced disappearance at the national, regional and global level, based on existing tools<sup>6</sup>
- 5.3 Build and strengthen victims' and CSO capacity to engage with existing mechanisms
- 5.4 Address misconceptions (i.e., enforced disappearance is not a practice of the past or circumscribed to a particular region; States do not need to align their legislation with the Convention prior to ratification, etc.)
- 5.5 Clarify the distinction between persons victims of enforced disappearances and the broader category of missing persons
- 5.6 Advocate for non States parties to ratify the Convention, for example by organizing bilateral and regional encounters to explain the benefits of becoming a State party and address misconceptions, and recommending that non States parties ratify the Convention in the context of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)
- 5.7 Advocate for States to recognize the competence of the Committee to examine communications
- 5.8 Monitor, investigate, document, and report on cases of enforced disappearances to raise awareness about the issue of enforced disappearances and address the common misconceptions attached to it, and develop advocacy tools
- 5.9 Organize learning exchanges to share good practices in relation to ratification of the Convention
- 5.10 Organize learning exchanges to share good practices in relation to the implementation of instruments and standards related to enforced disappearances, including the Convention
- 5.11 Consult and involve civil society, including victims and their families, and the NHRI in relevant processes (including ratification and domestication of the Convention)
- 5.12 Organize international or regional training sessions of training of judges, lawyers and law enforcement officers on the crime of enforced disappearance and relevant instruments
- 5.13 Coordinate advocacy actions through regional and international networks
- 5.14 To raise awareness in schools and universities, include in curricula the teaching and dissemination of, and research into, topics related to the disappearance of persons, from a multidisciplinary standpoint, that include an accurate account of violations that occurred
- 5.15 Raise awareness of Parliamentarians through dedicated training on the issue of enforced disappearance and the importance of ratifying and domesticating the Convention
- 5.16 Raise awareness of journalists and the media through dedicated training on enforced disappearance and the sensitivity of reporting on related issues
- 5.17 Support artistic and cultural initiatives to inspire action.

## 6 Engaging young people

Youth engagement is essential to raise awareness about enforced disappearance and to further dynamize the mobilization.

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<sup>6</sup> Such as [Leaflet: the WGEID and the CED in a nutshell](#), [Reporting under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance: Training package](#), [Reporting a disappearance to the WGEID](#).



*Proposed actions for pledges:*

- 6.1 Engage young people in the fight against enforced disappearance
- 6.2 Support the creation of a global alliance of young people against enforced disappearance.

## 7 Fostering memorialization and reparation to combat impunity

Guarantees of non-recurrence require a society that actively remembers past atrocities and injustices. Collective memory and reparation are crucial for healing and preventing the recurrence of human rights violations.<sup>7</sup>

*Proposed actions for pledges:*

- 7.1 Take concrete action to emphasize the importance of acknowledging the past and recognizing past injustices
- 7.2 Take concrete action to emphasize the importance of sharing and storytelling, key to healing but also to non-recurrence
- 7.3 Establish and implement programmes of integral reparations including fair and adequate compensation, restitution, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition
- 7.4 Provide family members and researchers with unimpeded access to information, including archives
- 7.5 Name streets, schools, public spaces after disappeared persons and “champions” of the fight against enforced disappearance
- 7.6 Preserve memory: turn places of detention into museum, memory places.
- 7.7 Include the issue of enforced disappearance in schools and university curricula, including an accurate account of the violations that occurred in international human rights law and international humanitarian law educational material at all levels
- 7.8 Support artistic initiatives to raise awareness and prevent recurrence
- 7.9 Disseminate the outcome of inquiries performed by truth commissions, where relevant.

## 8 Enhancing cooperation and partnerships

Collaborating to share knowledge, experiences and best practices and engaging in mutual cooperation and capacity-building is essential to efficient and successful strategies and actions.

*Proposed actions for pledges:*

- 8.1 Strengthen technical assistance activities to promote ratification and implementation of the Convention to ensure that it is available to concerned States upon request
- 8.2 Strengthen intergovernmental cooperation and learning exchanges to promote ratification and implementation of the Convention

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<sup>7</sup> See Set of principles for the protection and promotion of human rights through action to combat impunity and Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law.



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- 8.3 Strengthen cooperation between and among regional and international bodies to address enforced disappearance, including to provide mutual legal assistance and assistance to victims in transnational contexts
- 8.4 Strengthen and support the creation of victim-led solidarity networks
- 8.5 Support the creation of a permanent platform for victims' families and civil society organizations to exchange experiences, receive psychological and legal support.
- 8.6 Support the creation of a global alliance of young people against enforced disappearance
- 8.7 Support the mandate of regional and international mechanisms established to fight against enforced disappearance.