**Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances concludes its 133rd session**

**Warsaw, 10 May 2024**

The [United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances](https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/wg-disappearances/videos) concluded its 133rd session, which took place from 6 to 10 May in Warsaw, Poland.

During the session, the Working Group examined the 107 reported cases of enforced disappearances it had transmitted under its urgent action procedure since 3 February 2024 concerning, Burundi, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Pakistan, United Arab Emirates, Russian Federation and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

It also reviewed 481 cases, including newly reported cases under its standard procedure and updated information on previously transmitted cases, concerning Algeria, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bulgaria, China, Cyprus, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Mauritania, México, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Peru, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Türkiye, United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

In accordance with its [methods of work](https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/working-methods/ahrcwgeid1-revised-methods-work-working-group-enforced-or-involuntary), the Working Group continued to document acts tantamount to enforced disappearances perpetrated by non-state actors exercising government-like functions or *de facto* control over territory and population. In this context, the Working Group decided to transmit 65 cases to *de facto* authorities in northeast Syria, Palestine (State of) and Yemen.

During the session, the Working Group reviewed and adopted general allegations. The experts also adopted follow-up reports on previous country visits to the [Kyrgyzstan](https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2F45%2F13%2FAdd.2&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False) and [Tajikistan](https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2F45%2F13%2FAdd.1&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False) which will be presented at the Human Rights Council in September 2024, and progressed in the consideration of its thematic study on elections and enforced disappearances, and the report of its visit to the African Union human rights and legal organs and other regional bodies conducted in October 2023. Furthermore, the Working Group discussed its next report on enforced disappearances in the context of the defense of land, natural resources, and the environment.

The Working Group held meetings with representatives of the Government of Poland, Ecuador and Armenia. It also held in person and online meetings with civil society organizations and families of forcibly disappeared persons from Armenia, Belarus, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Israel, Palestine (State of) and Ukraine.

The Working Group met with around 200 Ukrainian relatives recounting their tireless search for their disappeared loved ones from the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant, Mariupol, Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kharkiv regions. The families informed the Working Group on hundreds of other disappeared persons. Thanks to the testimonies heard, the experts could put human faces to only a relatively few from the thousands of cases it has registered through its humanitarian mandate. The accounts of their daily struggle reflect the scale and devastating effects of enforced disappearance on families and society as a whole. The Working Group carefully registered their concerns on poor conditions of detention of prisoners of war and other human rights and humanitarian law violations the victims are subjected to while being forcibly disappeared, the alleged lack of response by the Russian Federation about the fate and whereabouts of the victims in most of the cases, and the alleged violation of the international humanitarian law. The Working Group wishes to express its admiration for the courage and strength demonstrated in the face of countless obstacles and unspeakable suffering and confirms its commitment to assisting these families, represented mostly by women in ascertaining the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones.

In collaboration with the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, the Working Group held a public panel discussion on the topic, “Disappearing prisoners in Belarus”. The event featured the United Nations [Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Belarus](https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-belarus), Ms. Anaïs Marin, representatives of families of disappeared persons, civil society and lawyers as panellists to discuss issues of many detainees disappeared in Belarusian prisons and the implications on prisoners and their families. On the sidelines of the event, Politzek.me presented a multimedia project dedicated to Belarusian political prisoners, which showcased through a VR experience a real prison cell.

The Working Group expresses its appreciation and gratitude to the Government of Poland for its cooperation with hosting its session and for its organization, including the official visit to [Katyń Museum](http://www.muzeumkatynskie.pl/pl/5368/o_muzeum.html), devoted to prisoners of war that have been forcibly disappeared by the Soviet Union in 1940. This situation exemplified the longstanding effects enforced disappearances have on families over decades and generations.

The experts welcomed the announcement from the Minister of Justice, H.E. Mr. Adam Bodnar, who, on the occasion of a meeting with the Working Group, confirmed Poland’s intention to ratify in 2024 the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, after being signatories since 2013.

The decisions made by the Working Group during the 133rd session will be reflected in its next [post-sessional report](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Disappearances/Pages/Sessions.aspx).

The Working Group will hold its [134th session](https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/wg-disappearances/sessions-working-group) from 16 to 25 September 2024 in Geneva.

ENDS

*The* [*Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances*](https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/wg-disappearances) *is comprised of five independent experts from all regions of the world. The Chair-Rapporteur is* ***Aua Baldé*** *(Guinea-Bissau) and the Vice-Chair is* ***Gabriella Citroni*** *(Italy); other members are* ***Grażyna Baranowska*** *(Poland);* ***Ana Lorena Delgadillo Pérez*** *(Mexico); and* ***Angkhana Neelapaijit*** *(Thailand).*

*The Working Group was established by the then UN Commission on Human Rights in 1980 to assist families in determining the fate and whereabouts of disappeared relatives. It endeavours to establish a channel of communication between the families and the Governments concerned, to ensure that individual cases are investigated, with the objective of clarifying the whereabouts of persons who, having disappeared, are placed outside the protection of the law. It also provides assistance in the implementation by States of the* [*UN Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance*](https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-protection-all-persons-enforced-disappearance)*.*

*The Working Groups are part of what is known as the* [*Special Procedures*](https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures-human-rights-council) *of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council’s independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms. Special Procedures mandate-holders are independent human rights experts appointed by the Human Rights Council to address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. They are not UN staff and are independent from any government or organization. They serve in their individual capacity and do not receive a salary for their work.*

*Learn* [*how to submit a case*](https://vimeo.com/359262861/6b0b6281da) *to the Working Group.*

*Learn* [*more about the work*](https://vimeo.com/showcase/6609050/video/389269013) *of the Working Group.*

*For more information and media requests, please contact Koat Aleer:* *koat.aleer@un.org* *or* *hrc-wg-eid@un.org*

*Follow news related to the UN’s independent human rights experts on X:* [*@UN\_SPExperts*](https://twitter.com/UN_SPExperts)*.*

*Concerned about the world we live in?*

*Then****STAND UP for someone’s rights today.***

*#Standup4humanrights*

*and visit the web page at*[*http://www.standup4humanrights.org*](http://www.standup4humanrights.org/)