



Relatives and civil society groups working for the rights of victims of enforced disappearances need to be protected from threats and reprisals and supported in their work, UN independent human rights experts have said in a joint call on the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances on 30 August.*

"Families of the disappeared and non-governmental organizations are sometimes the only voices in their countries calling for truth, justice and reparation for the victims and highlighting the plight of the disappeared both nationally and internationally," said the experts from the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances and the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

"Given their fundamental role, many of them are vulnerable to intimidation and face obstacles in their fight to prevent and tackle enforced disappearances," the experts added.

Testimony from a group of relatives working to discover what happened to their loved ones

highlights the risks. "Shortly after submitting our cases to the Working Group, police officers started visiting our homes asking us why we had 'sued' the Government," the relatives said.

"We are calling on States to take or strengthen measures to protect relatives and civil society groups working on issues related to enforced disappearances and prevent and punish any act of intimidation, persecution or reprisal," the experts said.

Cutbacks in donations also hamper the work of some NGOs and families' associations fighting for justice and supporting relatives of the disappeared.

The Committee and the Working Group said: "We are concerned that some civil society organizations working in this area are facing serious constraints in carrying out their activities and others are struggling to survive due to a weakening of the support they receive, including financial."

A lack of funds can have devastating effects, particularly for local NGOs which try to provide support for families.

"We sometimes have to travel several days to reach the homes of the relatives of enforced disappearance who have been harassed. Transport and communication are very expensive. If we cannot be in contact with them, how can we protect these families?" one civil society group said.

"Today, we again pay tribute to relatives, civil society organizations and all those women and men who untiringly toil for the rights of the victims of enforced disappearance and to eradicate this heinous practice," the members of the Working Group and the Committee said.

"We call upon States and donors to renew their commitment to the fight against enforced disappearances, in particular by providing adequate support to these key individuals and groups who work so hard and so courageously," they concluded.

Additional links:

- [Watch the experts on the UN Human Rights YouTube Channel](#)
- [30 August was declared International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances and first observed in 2011](#)

- The Committee on Enforced Disappearances is a body of 10 international independent experts that monitors implementation by States parties to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. The Convention came into force in December 2010. The Chair of the Committee is Mr. Emmanuel Decaux (France), and other Expert-members are Mr. Mohammed Al-Obaidi (Iraq), Mr. Mamadou Badio Camara (Senegal), Mr. Santiago Corcuera (Mexico), Mr. Alvaro Garcé García Y Santos (Uruguay), Mr. Luciano Hazan (Argentina), Mr. Rainer Huhle (Germany), Ms. Suela Janina (Albania), Mr. Juan José López Ortega (Spain) and Mr. Kimio Yakushiji (Japan).

For more information, [visit this link](#)

- The UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances was established in 1980 to assist families in determining the fate or whereabouts of disappeared relatives. It works closely with Governments concerned to ensure individual cases are investigated. The Working Group, composed of five independent experts, continues to address cases of disappearances until they are resolved. To date, it has examined some 55,000 cases, of which some 10,000 have been solved. The Working Group is comprised of five independent experts from all regions of the world. The Chair-Rapporteur is Mr. Olivier de Frouville (France) and the Vice-Chair Rapporteur is Mr. Osman El-Hajjé (Lebanon). The other members are Mr. Ariel Dulitzky (Argentina), Ms. Jasminka Dzumhur (Bosnia and Herzegovina), and Mr. Jeremy Sarkin (South Africa).

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Families and NGOs fighting for victims' rights need protection and support

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