



International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

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Committee on Enforced Disappearances

Twentieth session

Summary record (partial)* of the 337th meeting

Held via videoconference on Monday, 12 April 2021, at 12.30 p.m. Central European Summer Time

Chair: Mr. Ayat

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 12.30 p.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chair** declared open the twentieth session of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances.
2. **Mr. Salama** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that, during the year since he had opened the eighteenth session of the Committee – the first-ever session of a United Nations treaty body to be held entirely online – the Committee had done commendable work towards eradicating and preventing enforced disappearance. Together with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, it had issued key guidelines on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and enforced disappearance. The Committee had also met online with partners, such as the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, to discuss possible areas of cooperation. It had continued its work under the urgent action procedure, having registered 44 new requests since the previous session. The fact that the Committee had registered 1,013 requests for urgent action since the start of its mandate attested to the trust that victims placed in it.
3. The Committee was to be commended on its decision to continue conducting its dialogues with States parties remotely while in-person meetings remained impossible owing to the pandemic. The Committee would thus continue to provide invaluable protection and advice, despite very difficult circumstances. It was also to be commended on its efforts to promote universal ratification of the Convention, which was especially urgent in view of the ever-growing number of victims of enforced disappearance. He trusted that the Committee would continue to build on the momentum that had been generated by efforts such as the December 2020 social media campaign to encourage more States to ratify the Convention and the joint webinar with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and the International Coalition against Enforced Disappearances, held in March 2021.
4. Turning to the prevailing financial and liquidity crisis facing the United Nations, he wished to point out that, regrettably, the General Assembly had not approved the requested staff resources to support the increased workload of the treaty bodies. However, OHCHR would continue to do its utmost to support the work of the Committee and to look for solutions. Lastly, he wished to recall the Secretary-General's recent opening statement to the Human Rights Council, in which he had reaffirmed his commitment to the Council, and his recent statement concerning "The highest aspiration: a call to action on human rights", in which he had appealed to all Member States to ensure that OHCHR and the treaty bodies had the resources necessary to fulfil their mandates.
5. **The Chair** said that the current session was the third to be held online. Given that the Committee's interactions had, for the most part, been virtual, it had been obliged to review its working methods on a regular basis in order to adapt them to the exceptional situation in which it was operating. Moreover, it had done so without always having had the necessary human and financial resources at its disposal. Despite such limitations, the Committee would not be reduced to silence or inaction. However, the temporary situation in which it currently found itself should never be allowed to become the norm.
6. In the meantime, Committee members and the secretariat were continuing to do their utmost to facilitate the Committee's work. Victims of enforced disappearance, States, civil society and other relevant stakeholders could always count on the Committee and its unwavering commitment to its mandate. By way of example, the Committee had responded to numerous requests for training and technical assistance from Member States and had continued to cooperate with regional and international human rights mechanisms during the intersessional period. The cooperation and commitment of all actors was indispensable for the eradication and prevention of enforced disappearance everywhere.
7. Unfortunately, the measures taken to date to promote the ratification of the Convention had proved insufficient. Since the Committee's nineteenth session, there had been no new ratifications of the Convention and the number of cases of enforced disappearance had increased considerably. He therefore welcomed the steps taken by the Government of Sudan towards the ratification of the Convention in February 2021.

Furthermore, he wished to invite all States that had not yet done so to demonstrate their commitment to the eradication of enforced disappearance by ratifying the Convention.

8. Lastly, he wished to recall that, every month, new cases were being registered under the urgent action procedure. Of the 1,013 cases registered by the Committee since 2012, only 90 had been closed after the disappeared person had been found. Such figures were simply terrifying in the light of the fact that behind each request for urgent action there was a missing person and members of his or her family and community who were suffering for entirely unjustified reasons.

Solemn declaration by the newly elected members of the Committee

9. In accordance with rule 11 of the Committee's rules of procedure, **Mr. Diop** made the following solemn declaration:

"I solemnly declare that I shall perform my duties and exercise my powers as a member of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances independently, objectively, honourably, faithfully, impartially and conscientiously."

Adoption of the agenda (CED/C/20/1)

10. *The agenda was adopted.*

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 1.05 p.m.