



International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

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Committee on Enforced Disappearances Thirtieth session

Summary record (partial)* of the 558th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 9 March 2026, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Albán-Alencastro

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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 10 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chair** declared open the thirtieth session of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances.

2. **Mr. Korkeakivi** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that the Committee had registered two new requests for urgent action in the past two weeks alone, one related to the disappearance of a 30-year-old woman with her two young children, the other to the case of a 91-year-old man whose disappearance closely followed the disappearance of one of his sons, apparently to repress the political involvement of a relative. Since the start of the year, it had registered 29 new requests and, in 2025, 260, bringing the total number registered to date to 2,239. In addition, in 2025, it had sent 149 follow-up communications related to 620 registered urgent action requests.

3. While the volume of urgent action requests demonstrated that enforced disappearance remained a daily reality worldwide, the associated work was having to be done with very limited resources. That situation was not expected to change in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, while the Committee was buckling under the weight of its work, it seemed safe to say that, in the broader context of enforced disappearances around the World, the number of cases submitted was likely to represent only a small fraction of those that might potentially be submitted. Twenty years since the adoption of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, that heinous crime continued to occur in all regions, often in new and evolving contexts, making full implementation an absolute priority. At the same time, it was important to appreciate the impact of the urgent action procedure and the significance of the Committee's work: since the procedure's entry into operation, 546 cases have been closed after the disappeared persons had been located, 427 of them alive.

4. The current year would mark the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention. Unfortunately, the anniversary would take place in a context of growing precariousness for human rights and unprecedented constraints for treaty bodies. Meeting time had been cut by more than 30% in 2025 and the outlook remained grim in 2026. And while for most treaty bodies the liquidity crisis had coincided with continuing decreases in the number of State party reports submitted, the Committee on Enforced Disappearances had been a rare exception to the trend and continued to receive a rising number of reports and additional information. While that increase would normally have prompted a corresponding increase in meeting time, the financial situation had prevented any such increase and, to date, the possibility of treaty bodies' organizing a second session of meetings that year remained in doubt. As that situation clearly posed difficulties for State parties, victims, civil society actors and other stakeholders, OHCHR would share updates as soon as they became available.

5. The High Commissioner for Human Rights had warned that, if the trend of dwindling resources continued, the system could reach breaking point. He had therefore called not only for increased resources but also for innovative ideas and solutions. He would continue to engage with treaty bodies, Member States and civil society to advance such proposals. Meanwhile, OHCHR was doing its utmost to support the Committee and all other treaty bodies and remained committed to building global partnerships to promote human rights. To that end, the High Commissioner had launched the Global Alliance for Human Rights, a wide-ranging long-term initiative designed to place human rights at the heart of political leadership, public debate and daily life and bring Governments, civil society, artists, scientists, businesses, philanthropists and the entire United Nations system together to defend human rights and inspire collective action.

6. The twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention was an occasion to join forces and, in that connection, he was honoured to announce the anniversary campaign, which, guided by the slogan "Victims first. Action now", would underscore that enforced disappearance could be prevented and that States and other stakeholders had clear responsibilities and the tools to act. Throughout 2026, the campaign would mobilize interested partners to raise awareness, share action, strengthen protection and encourage all

those around the world who were committed to eradicating enforced disappearances to promote universal ratification and full implementation of the Convention and translate commitment into meaningful action.

7. Despite the challenges, in the current session, the Committee would press ahead with a heavy programme of work. It would hold dialogues with Ecuador, Iraq, Malawi and Samoa, adopt list of issues for Denmark, Cabo Verde and the Republic of Korea, consider list of priority issues for Kazakhstan and Lithuania and adopt a periodic report on urgent actions. It would continue its deliberations on the procedure initiated in respect of Mexico under article 34 of the Convention as well as discussions on the draft general comment on women, girls and enforced disappearances and the planned joint statements on enforced disappearance in the context of transnational repression and on sexual orientation and gender identity. OHCHR appreciated the commitment shown and efforts made by all in those challenging circumstances.

8. **The Chair** said that the thirtieth session of the Committee was a moment of deep significance as the twentieth anniversary of the Convention's adoption called for candid reflection. The Convention had been established as a response to the suffering of countless victims and a tribute to their dignity and resilience and, since its adoption, huge advances had been made in the fight against that heinous crime. However, the Committee and the international human rights system in general were currently working in a context of profound crisis that could not be considered merely short-term and budgetary and administrative restrictions and uncertainty over work continuity were affecting the treaty bodies' ability to fulfil their mandates.

9. The concerns raised about that situation were being addressed with a spirit of cooperation and shared responsibility and it was important to acknowledge that OHCHR was endeavouring to sustain the functioning of the system despite the extraordinarily complex circumstances. However, the future of the treaty bodies system was dependent on the effective commitment of all actors, particularly States, the political bodies of the United Nations and the most senior authorities within the international human rights system. All parties involved must fulfil their obligations in a timely and efficient manner if the continuity, independence, legitimacy and, above all, the credibility of the system was to be guaranteed.

10. The current crisis had arisen not in isolation but in the midst of particularly dark times worldwide, marked by military aggression, irrationally prolonged conflicts, rising authoritarianism, brazen challenges to international law and attempts to delegitimize human rights, and, when rights were undermined and international monitoring mechanisms were sabotaged, humans were exposed to abuse and violence. Against that backdrop, it was essential to recall that, for all its imperfections, and despite being subject to political tensions and resource limitations, the international human rights system, as a rule-based system underpinned by shared responsibility and the conviction that protecting humanity should not be subordinated by force or the politics of power, remained the best mechanism for defending dignity. The Committee would thus continue to fulfil its mandate with independence and rigour so as to ensure that victims of enforced disappearance had a voice. Even if the current session proved to be its last – a possibility that could not be ignored – the Committee should make clear that it had not yielded in silence and had not faltered in its duty to protect victims, to uphold the primacy of law over force and to affirm the indispensable value of multilateralism and the international legal order.

11. *A short anniversary video that had been prepared by OHCHR to raise awareness of the Convention on social networks and was already available for public viewing was screened in the meeting room.*

Adoption of the agenda (CED/C/30/1)

12. *The agenda was adopted.*

Tribute to victims of enforced disappearance

13. **The Chair** said that he was honoured to welcome Ms. Ana Lucía and Ms. Beatriz Paiva to the meeting. The experiences of their family had resulted in the publication of a memoir entitled *Ainda Estou Aqui* (I'm Still Here), written by their brother, Marcelo Rubens Paiva, and, subsequently, the production of a film of the same name, directed by Walter Salas, which had won the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film in 2025. The book and the film recounted the struggle of Ms. Eunice Paiva and her children to address the enforced disappearance, in 1971, of Mr. Rubens Paiva, a former member of the Congress of Brazil.

14. **Ms. Beatriz Paiva** said that she wished to begin by paying tribute to her father, who had been a civil engineer as well as a politician. In his memory, a bust had been erected in front of the barracks in Rio de Janeiro where some of the worst atrocities committed against opponents of the military dictatorship in Brazil had been committed, including her father's brutal torture and murder. On the plaque beneath the bust, which had become a symbol of reparation visited by family, friends and comrades in arms, Mr. Paiva was remembered as a hero of the resistance and a defender of social justice and democracy.

15. Although Brazil had returned to democracy in 1985, many of the military officers responsible for the repression had never faced justice owing to an amnesty law concluded between the military and parliament. In addition, many of the perpetrators and witnesses had since died, and obtaining evidence was a challenge as so much information had been either hidden or destroyed. Many families thus still did not know where their loved ones were buried and were still unable to organize funerals.

16. It was only after President Lula da Silva had been returned to office for a third time and the film based on her brother's book had achieved great success that the Federal Supreme Court had reopened proceedings related to her father's disappearance and death. The Court had ruled that, since his body had not been located and the offence was therefore continuing in its effects, his case should be treated as a crime against humanity and the amnesty law was not applicable. Furthermore, a bill currently before parliament would establish more precisely whether enforced disappearance and the hiding of bodies should be considered grievous crimes exempt from limitation. Thus, after decades of impunity, a dark part of her family's history might finally be brought to light.

17. However, as evidenced by the events of 8 January, 2023, when sympathizers of former President Bolsonaro had invaded the premises of the Federal Supreme Court and the Congress, Brazilian democracy was constantly under threat and defending it in the face of rising right-wing extremism had become a daily struggle. Meanwhile, the story of her father, the hero Rubens Paiva, remained a story with a beginning and a middle but still no end or epilogue.

18. **Ms. Ana Lucía Paiva** said that, although 53 years had passed since her father's disappearance only recently had her family had the opportunity to speak openly about his case. At the age of 35, her father had been elected to parliament. Shortly thereafter, following the coup d'état, he had been forced to seek exile in the embassy of Yugoslavia, one of the few existing in Brasilia at that time. From there, he had been able to send a letter to his family and she wished to share its content with the Committee.

19. In the letter, he explained to his five children how the rich of the country had deliberately ignored the plight of the poor, how, as a member of Congress, he had begun work on reforms that would improve lives, how, in response, and wishing to keep all the resources for themselves, the rich had started spreading lies that had fuelled distrust and unease, and how those wishing to stop the reforms had overthrown the Government and begun arresting those on the side of progress. He remained optimistic that, when they returned from exile, those who favoured reform would make Brazil a good country where everyone had a decent life and his family would be proud of what he had been working to achieve.

20. When her father had returned from exile nine years later, he had joined the resistance, working secretly to help families to communicate with political exiles. Then he had been killed, and her family had been suffering ever since. For 40 years, they had had to make up stories to explain their father's absence as they had been too scared to say that he had been

disappeared for political reasons. Even among family members, his disappearance had not been spoken about for years. That was why it was now so important for her family, and for other victims and their families, to talk openly. The film had also been very important for Brazil as it was freeing up speech; after its screening, many Brazilians had approached her to share stories about their own families, including some who were only then beginning to realize that their grandfathers and uncles had been disappeared because of their political beliefs.

21. Her family knew the names and addresses of five of the officers who had murdered her father. Three of them were still alive. One of them, José Antônio Nogueira Belham, had been made an honorary marshal. Despite the evidence and documentation available, he had never been brought before the courts. Her family hoped that the bill currently before parliament would result in her fathers' killers finally being held to account.

22. **Ms. Villa Quintana**, thanking the sisters for sharing their pain and suffering, said that, despite such testimonies, in various parts of the world, under dictatorships and also in democratic contexts, people were still being disappeared and families continued to experience interminable fear and anguish, not knowing the whereabouts or fate of their loved ones yet determined to continue seeking the truth, as the Paiva family had done.

23. She wished to recognize the courage, resilience and strength of their mother, Eunice Paiva, who had become a tireless defender of human rights, in particular the rights of Indigenous Peoples, while striving to keep her family afloat and obtain justice for her husband. Twenty-five years after his disappearance, she had finally obtained a certificate of death and, in 2025, the National Council of Justice had ordered that the register should be amended to state clearly that he had died not of natural causes but as a result of violence on the part of the State in the context of the systematic persecution of persons identified as political dissidents during the dictatorship.

24. History showed that dictatorships did not last forever and that the victims of oppressive regimes were eventually able to raise their voices and share testimonies that paved the way to truth and justice. However, as evidenced by the Paivas' story, the perpetrators had not always paid for their crimes. Thus, those responsible for administering justice today, in Brazil and elsewhere in the world, had an important role to play. They must investigate the facts and hold the perpetrators to account.

25. Unfortunately, regressive trends were now becoming apparent in many parts of the World, with certain States pushing, in some cases successfully, for laws that allowed amnesty for serious human rights violations and statutes of limitation for crimes against humanity. Such decisions perpetuated impunity and denied the victims justice and reparation. Semantics also had a role in regressive practices, with objections to the recognition of gender considerations in laws and public policies again relegating women and girls to obscurity. Disappeared women and girls and women and girls searching for loved ones were at the centre of the Committee's agenda, and that was why its second general comment, currently under development, would recognize that enforced disappearance reinforced the structures that underpinned gender-based violence, subordination and social control.

26. As the twentieth anniversary of the Convention's adoption approached, 78 of the 193 States Members of the United Nations were parties. It was important to appeal to all States yet to ratify to join the fight to eradicate the crime, prevent impunity and oblivion and establish the truth. The sisters' testimonies demonstrated the depth of the wounds that enforced disappearance left and sent a message to the World that enforced disappearance must be a thing of the past and could not under any circumstances be justified.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 10.55 am.