



International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

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Committee on Enforced Disappearances

Twenty-fourth session

Summary record (partial)* of the 441st meeting**

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Friday, 31 March 2023, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Villa Quintana

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Closure of the session

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

** No summary records were issued for 434th to 440th meetings.

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The discussion covered in the summary record began at 5.30 p.m.

Closure of the session

1. **The Chair** said that the Committee's twenty-fourth session had coincided with the twentieth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq and the forty-seventh anniversary of the coup d'état in Argentina. Despite the many years that had passed, the persons who had been subjected to enforced disappearance in those contexts, and their families, continued to encounter significant obstacles in their fight for justice. Words must be translated into action in order to eradicate the horrendous crime of enforced disappearance, uphold the rights and freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and realize States' ambitions to prevent enforced disappearance and combat impunity. The recent ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance by Finland was a welcome development, and she wished to urge all States that had still not taken that step to follow suit.

2. During the session, the Committee had adopted the first draft of its general comment No. 1 on enforced disappearances in the context of migration, which would be open for consultation until July 2023. It had also adopted its statement on non-State actors in the context of the Convention, which would clarify the instrument's applicability in respect of acts committed by non-State actors, States' obligations in that regard and the implications for the Committee. States should disseminate those two documents widely. The Committee had also continued to work on an interpretative statement on "short-term" disappearances together with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and wished to issue a call for contributions from all relevant actors.

3. The Committee had considered the initial report submitted by Costa Rica under article 29 (1) of the Convention and the implementation of the Convention in Zambia in the absence of a report, and had adopted concluding observations in respect of both States parties. It had also met with high-level delegations from Argentina and Germany to discuss the additional information submitted by those States parties under article 29 (4), and had adopted lists of issues relating to the initial reports submitted by Benin, Malta and Norway under article 29 (1). The Committee had likewise adopted a report on follow-up to concluding observations by Brazil and Mongolia, its report on requests for urgent action, its annual report to the General Assembly, a decision on individual communication No. 4/2021 concerning Mexico and the provisional agenda for its twenty-fifth session in September 2023. It had also adopted the report on its visit to Iraq, which had taken place in November 2022.

4. *A video on the Committee's visit to Iraq was projected.*

5. **The Chair** said that the Committee, together with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, had published an updated fact sheet on those phenomena. The Committee was convinced of the need for close cooperation with the Working Group and with other special procedure mandate holders and treaty bodies. During the session, the Committee had held productive meetings with, *inter alia*, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Committee of the Red Cross, civil society organizations and victims' associations. The treaty body capacity-building programme of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights continued to assist States parties in preparing initial reports and reports containing additional information and in following up on the Committee's recommendations. It was important to enhance cooperation on the ground with representatives of the Office and other United Nations agencies, not only to improve information-sharing, but also to promote the Committee's work more widely and to strengthen relations with national actors and institutions.

6. The Committee had profound respect and admiration for every victim of enforced disappearance and wished to reiterate its commitment to assisting them in their fight for justice and to supporting States parties, which should make full use of the tools developed by the Committee to help prevent and eradicate the phenomenon. Those efforts were, however, hindered by the failure to achieve universal ratification of the Convention and universal recognition by States parties of the Committee's competence to receive and consider individual and inter-State communications under articles 31 and 32 of the Convention, respectively, despite the strenuous awareness-raising efforts being made to that end. She

hoped that the support necessary to allow future events to promote the ratification of the Convention to take place would be forthcoming. The Committee was working on a ratification guide, which should be promoted by States parties, governmental organizations and other actors.

7. The implementation of the Committee's recommendations posed another challenge. States parties must prioritize the effective implementation of the Convention and adopt specific measures to that end, which included the dissemination of the Committee's concluding observations. Those efforts should be supported by joint initiatives undertaken by United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to strengthen the capacities of national institutions. National human rights institutions, government organizations, civil society and victims must participate to a greater extent in the Committee's work, including its meetings, State party reviews and the implementation of and follow-up to its recommendations. She therefore wished to call on the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions to coordinate cooperation between national human rights institutions and the treaty bodies.

8. The Committee's allotted meeting time and human resources, unchanged since its establishment some 12 years previously, were insufficient. Its particular requirements had been communicated to the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies at their thirty-fourth meeting in June 2022, and specific, reasonable proposals had been made to the Third Committee of the General Assembly. Victims of enforced disappearance expected the Committee to work efficiently, consistently and coherently. Nothing, not even the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, would prevent the Committee from affording them, and States parties, vital, unwavering support. All means necessary should be employed to eradicate the loathsome crime of enforced disappearance and to combat impunity. Multidimensional efforts were required to ensure that States parties fulfilled the commitment they had made to search for disappeared persons and to investigate and punish the perpetrators.

9. After the customary exchange of courtesies, she declared the twenty-fourth session of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances closed.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.