



International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

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Committee on Enforced Disappearances Twenty-ninth session

Summary record (partial)* of the 540th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 22 September 2025, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. de Frouville

later: 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 10.05 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chair** declared open the twenty-ninth session of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances.

2. As his term as Chair was coming to an end, he wished to make a few remarks about the work carried out by the Committee over the previous two years. Following his election as Chair, the Committee had defined three strategic objectives. The first of those objectives had been to promote the ratification of the Convention through various channels, but primarily through the organization of the first World Congress on Enforced Disappearances, which had been held in Geneva in January 2025. The Committee had also made efforts to strengthen its links with regional institutions around the world, with local offices of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and with certain non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

3. The second strategic focus had been to develop the Committee's procedures. In particular, its reporting procedure had been streamlined and a number of changes had been made to its rules of procedure. The Committee had also improved its working methods on urgent actions and had reformed its individual complaints procedure, including by incorporating innovations adopted by other treaty bodies, such as the possibility of receiving amicus curiae briefs. Despite those changes, the Committee continued to face obstacles to the implementation of its mandate, including the fact that the treaty body strengthening process provided for in General Assembly resolution 68/268 had not been completed although the deadline set by the General Assembly had passed several years previously.

4. The third strategic objective had been to continue developing the Committee's thinking on particular issues relevant to the Convention. Specifically, it had issued general comment No. 1 (2023) on enforced disappearance in the context of migration and a statement on so-called "short-term enforced disappearances" and had begun the development of a new general comment on the subject of women, girls and enforced disappearances.

5. **Mr. Cissé-Gouro** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that, as a result of the liquidity crisis facing the United Nations, the third sessions of those treaty bodies that normally held three sessions per year had been cancelled but the second sessions of all treaty bodies either had taken or were going to take place. It was regrettable that the reduced meeting time available for its twenty-ninth session had forced the Committee to cancel certain meetings, including a planned meeting with regional human rights mechanisms. The liquidity crisis had also forced the Committee to postpone its consideration of the report of its Rapporteur on reprisals and to cancel the country visits scheduled for 2025. OHCHR would do its utmost to ensure that the Committee could continue to fulfil its mandate under the Convention.

6. In March 2023, he had met with the Committee to discuss the fact that the notion of enforced disappearance was not widely known and was not addressed in the national laws of most countries. That statement remained true today even as the number of reports of enforced disappearance continued to rise. According to a statement published on 30 August 2025 by the International Committee of the Red Cross, the number of disappeared persons registered with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement had increased by nearly 70 per cent over the previous five years. Over the same period, the number of urgent action requests registered by both the Committee and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances had risen significantly.

7. On the occasion of the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, the Committee, the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances and eight other international regional human rights mechanisms had released a joint statement recalling that the prolonged isolation and deprivation of communication with the outside world to which forcibly disappeared persons were subjected constituted a violation of the prohibition of torture and/or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

8. Since its previous session in March 2025, the Committee had taken part in more than 20 webinars and other activities organized by regional and country agencies and partners

around the world. The Committee had also held the first in a series of regional consultations related to its forthcoming general comment on women, girls and enforced disappearances.

9. The Committee's concluding observations, reports on country visits, urgent actions, general comments and jurisprudence constituted the backbone of the work of OHCHR and the wider United Nations system on enforced disappearance. Strengthening that work was essential, but would be challenging in the midst of the liquidity crisis, which adversely affected the planning and implementation of the Committee's work. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had used every opportunity to highlight the serious impact that resource constraints had on the Committee's work and on human rights protection in general. While there was no question that the Committee required additional resources to fulfil its mandate in a timely manner, unfortunately, all signs indicated that the current difficult financial situation would continue for the foreseeable future.

10. In its resolution 79/165, the General Assembly had not endorsed the detailed proposals for a predictable eight-year calendar of reviews and a strengthening of coordination on working methods that the Chairs of the treaty bodies had put forward. Furthermore, the annual meeting of the Chairs held in Geneva in June 2025 had been dominated by discussions of the liquidity crisis, which, in the Chairs' view, called for the adoption of urgent measures to ensure the continuity of the functions provided for in the treaties. In particular, the Chairs had recommended that the modalities of the treaty bodies' interactions with stakeholders during State Party reviews should be harmonized.

11. During its twenty-ninth session, the Committee would consider the reports of Benin, Montenegro and Sri Lanka and would adopt lists of issues for Finland, Oman and Slovenia and lists of themes on additional information in respect of Ecuador and Iraq. It would continue its discussions on the urgent action request received from Mexico under article 30 of the Convention and its planned general comment on women, girls and enforced disappearances. It would also hold its annual meetings with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, States, and civil society organizations.

Solemn declaration by the newly elected members of the Committee

12. In accordance with rule 11 of the Committee's rules of procedure, **Mr. Albán-Alencastro, Ms. Definis, Mr. Solís González** and **Mr. de Tarso Vannuchi** 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."

13. **Ms. Wan-Hea Lee** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) noted that Mr. Bambara would make his solemn declaration later in the session.

Election of the officers

14. **Ms. Villa Quintana** nominated Mr. Albán-Alencastro for the Office of Chair.

15. **Ms. Wan-Hea Lee** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that it was her understanding that the Committee wished to elect Mr. Albán-Alencastro as Chair.

16. *Mr. Albán-Alencastro was elected Chair by acclamation.*

17. **Ms. Wan-Hea Lee** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said it was her understanding that the Committee wished to elect Mr. de Frouville, Mr. Diop and Ms. Villa Quintana as Vice-Chairs and Ms. Definis as Rapporteur.

18. *Mr. de Frouville, Mr. Diop and Ms. Villa Quintana were elected Vice-Chairs by acclamation.*

19. *Ms. Definis was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.*

20. *Mr. Albán-Alencastro took the Chair.*

21. **The Chair** said that the opening of the twenty-ninth session was an opportunity for the Committee to renew its commitment to ensuring that no case of disappearance would be forgotten and that each case would involve efforts to search for the victim, uncover the truth, obtain justice and provide reparations to loved ones. Since the Convention's entry into force, the international community had taken resolute steps forward in the fight against enforced disappearance and there had been steady growth in the number of States Parties, many of which had initiated legislative reforms and established specialized institutions to facilitate the search for disappeared persons and provide victims with the necessary support. The Committee's observations and recommendations had led to tangible changes in the support available, while its response to the thousands of requests for urgent action had helped to activate search, investigation and protection processes in various regions across the world.

22. The Committee had also contributed to the development of international standards on enforced disappearance through its substantive statements, its Guiding Principles for the Search for Disappeared Persons and its general comment on enforced disappearances in the context of migration. Its current work to develop a new general comment on women, girls and enforced disappearances and draft statements on transnational repression and sexual and gender diversity in relation to enforced disappearance reflected the capacity of the United Nations human rights treaty bodies to adapt to the evolving global landscape and was a sign of the Committee's commitment to helping States and victims to deal with emerging issues.

23. Enforced disappearance continued to be used as a tool of repression, terror and social control. There had been an increase in the so-called "short-term enforced disappearances" used to intimidate and punish human rights defenders, journalists and peaceful protestors, and also in acts of enforced disappearance perpetrated by non-State actors. The disappearance of persons on the move was another worrying phenomenon; increasingly, migrants were being intercepted along dangerous routes and then summarily deported or moved to another location without being registered. Statistics from various United Nations mechanisms showed that tens of thousands of cases of disappearance remained unresolved and that impunity continued to prevail in many contexts.

24. With universal ratification of the Convention still far from being achieved, enforced disappearance remained a threat in many places beyond the scope of the Committee's monitoring activities. At the same time, the Committee continued to observe gaps in the legal systems of States that had ratified the Convention, some of which had still not established enforced disappearance as a stand-alone offence, failed to keep appropriate records of persons deprived of their liberty and lacked protocols to guarantee the immediate initiation of search and investigation procedures. Such gaps served to perpetuate the use of enforced disappearance and to deprive families of hope. An additional challenge lay in the liquidity crisis facing the United Nations, which had compromised the Committee's ability to work efficiently, to follow up on requests for urgent action, to conduct visits, to handle individual communications and to carry out awareness-raising activities. Protecting victims' rights required not only political will but also adequate resources.

25. The dignity and strength shown by the loved ones of disappeared persons were the driver of the Committee's work. The Committee would not rest until every case of disappearance had been resolved. The search for disappeared persons was a collective cause that transcended borders and ideologies. The Committee was deeply grateful for the work carried out by the organizations that provided support for victims and their families along with valuable information that enriched the Committee's discussions. Their efforts helped to strengthen the Committee's independence and served as a reminder that protecting human rights was a collective task. He also wished to pay tribute to his fellow Committee members and reiterate his faith in their ability to work together to effectively tackle current and future challenges.

26. Lastly, he called on all States to support the Committee by promoting the ratification and full implementation of the Convention, prosecuting and punishing the perpetrators of enforced disappearance, maintaining up-to-date registers and immediately activating search mechanisms. He invited those States that had not yet done so to recognize the Committee's competence to receive individual and inter-State communications and to fully cooperate with its follow-up mechanisms. Above all, he urged States to guarantee that adequate resources

continued to be made available, both for their own search and investigation bodies and for the United Nations human rights system. The progress made since the entry into force of the Convention showed that truth and justice were possible. The Convention had become a living instrument thanks to the efforts made by victims, civil society and experts and the political will shown by many Governments. The fight against enforced disappearance called for courage, empathy and determination. The Committee remained determined to transform the suffering of the millions of individuals affected by the horror of enforced disappearance into a story of truth, justice, reparation and memory.

Adoption of the agenda (CED/C/29/1)

27. *The agenda was adopted.*

Tribute to victims of enforced disappearance

28. *A video about the first World Congress on Enforced Disappearances was projected in the meeting room.*

29. **Mr. de Frouville** said that, at a time when hatemongers were seeking to pit individuals against each other, it had been particularly encouraging to see how people from around the world had come together at the first World Congress on Enforced Disappearances in January 2025 to defend the same values and rights and make the same demands in relation to a tragic yet profoundly human experience. Participants had shown extraordinary levels of strength, resilience and support for the global movement in favour of human rights and against enforced disappearance, with the main message from victims being one of love and truth. The Congress had brought together all actors engaged in the fight against enforced disappearance, including States that had ratified the Convention and those that had not yet done so, associations working with and for the families of disappeared persons and survivors, international organizations, international non-governmental organizations, the media and academics. It had thus represented an unprecedented opportunity for stakeholders who shared the same concerns and goals to discuss their experiences, coordinate their activities and develop common strategies.

30. The outcomes of the Congress had surpassed the organizers' initial expectations. Almost 2,000 individuals from 118 countries had attended either in-person or remotely. Some 300 civil society organizations had been present, as had over 70 State delegations. Formal commitments had been assumed by 16 States, 5 international and regional organizations, 25 civil society organizations, 2 national human rights institutions and 4 academic establishments. It was now essential for all partners to take the steps necessary to give effect to those commitments, including by stepping up the rate of ratification of the Convention. The key follow-up activities identified during the Congress included the establishment of a victim-led network in sub-Saharan Africa, the creation of a global youth network on enforced disappearance, the organization of regular meetings of women searching for disappeared relatives, the development of an initiative to enhance reporting on the Committee's sessions and the arrangement of capacity-building for civil society organizations to facilitate their interaction with United Nations protection mechanisms and regional bodies.

31. A number of events had already been organized in follow-up to the Congress. The Association française pour les Nations Unies (the French Association for the United Nations) and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs had held a conference to mark the International Day for the Right to the Truth concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims, the aim of which had been to mobilize government and civil society actors to promote the right to truth. Also, in August 2025, to commemorate the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Committee of the Red Cross had organized a conference in Pretoria at which the Government of South Africa had announced strong pledges to address the issue of enforced disappearance in the wider region.

32. In late January 2025, an academic conference had been organized in Paris to follow up on certain issues, such as the obstacles to the prosecution of acts of enforced disappearance, that had been addressed during two panel discussions on impunity that had taken place at the Congress. In June 2025, those same issues had been discussed by experts

at a seminar organized by the Geneva Human Rights Platform and the Paris Human Rights Center. A number of the participants in those events, which had included judges, lawyers, prosecutors, human rights experts, academics and representatives of victims, had already issued follow-up recommendations. A seminar on the recent conference room paper on universal criminal jurisdiction in cases of enforced disappearance, issued by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, would be held in October 2025 in Geneva.

33. A debate on illegal international adoption had been held at the 150th assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in April 2025, and it was hoped that a resolution on that issue would be adopted at the Union's next assembly. As Chair of the Committee, he had held a frank discussion with representatives of the European Union on the need for the bloc's member States to give effect to the commitments assumed at the World Congress on Enforced Disappearances. He had also taken the opportunity to express concern about the fact that eight European Union member States and four candidates for membership had not yet ratified the Convention – a situation that should be remedied as a matter of urgency. In June 2025, the Council of Europe had held its own meeting on follow-up to the Congress, at which it had identified the steps to be taken to address the fact that 19 of its members were yet to ratify the Convention.

34. A panel discussion on the search for victims of enforced disappearance organized by the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform would be held in October 2025. The discussion would focus on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and would highlight the links between initiatives for the promotion of peace, justice and human rights and the search for disappeared persons. A meeting of women who were searching for disappeared relatives would be organized by the International Catalan Institute for Peace before the end of 2026. It was crucial for an event to be organized to mark the upcoming twentieth anniversary of the adoption, on 20 December 2006, of resolution 61/177, in which the General Assembly had opened the Convention for signature, ratification and accession. A reminder that the anniversary was approaching should be issued during the Committee's upcoming meeting with States Parties.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 11.05 a.m.