



INTERNATIONAL COALITION
AGAINST ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Manifest of the International Coalition against Enforced Disappearances

Enforced disappearance is one of the most serious violations of human rights and it constitutes an international crime. The disappeared person is deprived of all his or her rights and he or she remains totally defenceless, in the hands of his or her torturers, outside the protection of the law. Enforced disappearance means by itself the denial of being human. The practice of enforced disappearance causes severe sufferings to the relatives and to the friends of the disappeared: the eternal wait for his or her return and the constant uncertainty about the fate and whereabouts of the loved one amount to a form of ongoing torture for mothers, fathers, wives, husbands, partners, sons, daughters, brothers and sisters of the disappeared person.

The wrongful removal of children born during the captivity of a mother subjected to enforced disappearance is a particularly heinous crime, contrary to any basic principle of humanity. The practice of enforced disappearance violates the fundamental values of humanity and the basic principles of the rule of law and, in general, of international law.

Enforced disappearance challenges the very concept of human rights: it amounts to the denial of the right of all persons to exist, to have an identity. Enforced disappearance turns a human being into a non-being. It is the ultimate corruption, the abuse of power that allows the perpetrators, while committing abominable crimes, to reduce law and order to something insignificant.

Unfortunately, enforced disappearance is not a practice of the past nor is it limited to a few regions of the world. All the continents have experienced or are experiencing this criminal practice. People are disappearing in many parts of the world. The practice intermittently appears and reappears, always determining the denial of the fundamentals of human dignity. Enforced disappearance does not only manifest itself as criminal activities of public authorities: its practice is related to forms of clandestine repression and, in many countries, it has been or it is an integral part of strategies aiming at spreading terror within the society. The feeling of insecurity generated by this practice, is not limited to the close relatives of the disappeared, but it also reaches the communities to which the disappeared person belongs and the society as a whole.

To effectively struggle against and to eradicate enforced disappearances and impunity – which is the principal factor that encourages the existence of the practice – an international convention is needed as well as the mobilization of all human energies against this scourge.

Since 1981, associations of relatives of disappeared people, non governmental organizations, governments and international organizations have deployed huge efforts against this heinous and inhuman practice, in order to obtain the adoption by the United Nations of a treaty against enforced disappearance. Finally, on 20 December 2006, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted by consensus the *International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance*.

The Convention fills an immense and intolerable gap: the lack of an international treaty to prevent and suppress this international crime and most serious violation of human rights. The Convention provides for the right not to be subjected to enforced disappearance as well as the right for the relatives

of the disappeared person to know the truth. The Convention contains several provisions concerning prevention, investigation and sanctioning of this crime, as well as the rights of victims and their relatives and the wrongful removal of children born during their captivity. The Convention further sets forth the obligation of international cooperation, both in the suppression of the practice and in dealing with humanitarian aspects related to the crime. The Convention establishes a Committee on Enforced Disappearances, which will be charged with important and innovative functions of monitoring and protection at the international level. This Convention will not only become an effective tool for the international community in its struggle against enforced disappearances, but it also represents a basically political message that this odious practice will no longer be tolerated and must be suppressed.

All the States of the world must assume as a priority the prompt entry into force of the Convention and its effective implementation. Indeed, the full implementation of its provisions will constitute a critical development in the strengthening of human rights and the rule of law, both internationally and in any country

Finally, the time has come to translate all the declarations by the international community condemning this heinous scourge into actions and eradication of enforced disappearance. For this reason, the International Coalition against Enforced Disappearances calls on all the States of the world to:

- Sign and ratify the *International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance* without delay and as a priority matter;
- Refrain from reservations that may result incompatible with the object and purpose of the *International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance*;

- Recognize the competence of the new *Committee on Enforced Disappearances* to receive and consider individual complaints; and
- Enact without delay the domestic legislation which is necessary to fully implement the *International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance*.

International Coalition against Enforced Disappearances

The International Coalition against Enforced Disappearances (ICAED) is a worldwide network of organisations of families of disappeared and NGO's that work in a non-violent manner against the practice of enforced disappearances at the local, national and international level. The principal objective of ICAED is an early ratification and effective implementation of the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearances

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