



INTERNATIONAL COALITION
AGAINST ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

ICAED

RISING UP!

A Unity Statement

The 2nd ICAED General Membership Conference
Geneva, Switzerland, 24 – 27 March 2014

We, human rights organizations from

Belarus, Cyprus, Indonesia, Morocco, Philippines, Switzerland, Western Sahara, including the online participation of organizations from France, El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru, Thailand, Uruguay, gather here in Geneva, Switzerland during the last week of the 25th session of the UN Human Rights Council in the spirit of international solidarity to step up our global campaign for the universal ratification and full implementation of the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

We evaluated our work; read the signs of the times on

the phenomenon of enforced disappearance in our respective countries; and sharpened our strategies in campaigning for the end of enforced disappearance and impunity worldwide. We renew our common commitment to attain a world without disappeared people.

Enforced Disappearance: A Present Global Problem

Even after the long years of struggle against this most heinous of human rights violations, someone, somewhere is still disappeared or is under the threat of being disappeared by repressive and non-repressive governments in many parts of the world.

Enforced disappearance violates the most basic rights



ICAED members with enforced disappearance expert, Ms. Gabriella Citroni (3rd to the left).

of a person – the right to security and dignity, right to fair trial, right not to be tortured, right to truth, right to have effective investigation and remedies, right to family life, and when the disappeared is killed, the right to identification and proper burial or cremation. Its persistence is a grave threat to the values and principles that we hold dear as democratic societies. Without an appropriate and urgent response, more will add to the long list of *desaparecidos* worldwide.

The total number of cases transmitted by the Working Group to Governments since its inception is 53,986. The number of cases under active consideration that have not yet been clarified, closed or discontinued stands at 42,889 in a total of 84 States. These numbers do not take into account the massive underreporting of cases in many countries in the world. From the reports of the Working Group, different human rights organizations, specially our member organizations, disappearances are still happening in alarming



Ms. Jenny Bettancourt, President of the Garden of the Disappeared, gives a moving testimony.

numbers in Asia, the Euro-Mediterranean, Africa and even Latin America, among other regions.

Considering that enforced disappearance is a continuing crime, cases of the past are still problems of the present for as long as the fate and whereabouts of the victim remain unknown and families of the victims continue to suffer from the devastating effects of the disappearance.

The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance is far from achieving universal ratification. Of the 42 States Parties, only 17 have recognized the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances. The number of States Parties pales in comparison with the number of States with outstanding cases of enforced disappearances. Much remains to be achieved to give justice to this international treaty whose value stems from real life experiences of the disappeared and their

families.

Convention Now: A Call to Action

The Coalition, composed of 52 associations of families of the disappeared and human rights organizations from different parts of the world working on the issue of enforced disappearance, strongly affirms the value of the International Convention Against Enforced Disappearance. We believe that it is an important instrument that, with full and proper implementation, can finally end the scourge of enforced disappearance in any country and ensure that this crime will never be repeated in any scale at any time.

We commend the governments that have signed and ratified the Convention as much as we call on all States Parties to step up their commitment to the cause of the disappeared by:

Ensuring the full and proper implementation of the Convention;

- **Recognizing the competence of the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearance (UN CED);**
- **Passing domestic laws against enforced disappearance that will complement the Convention;**
- **Supporting civil society organizations and human rights defenders working on the issue of enforced disappearance and other human rights violations;**
- **Convincing other States to sign and ratify the Convention, and recognize the competence of the UN CED, and finally.**
- **Resolving past cases of enforced disappearances, attaining to the needs of the victims and their families and putting to a stop all cases of enforced disappearances.**

In addition, we call on all human rights organizations around the world to express their support to this very important Convention. Let us speak together on behalf of our beloved *desaparecidos*, our collective voice will make a big impact and send a clear message – **enough is enough.**



Prof. Emmanuel Decaux, Chairperson of the UN CED, gives a keynote speech highlighting the value of NGOs in the fight against enforced disappearance.

Cooperation with the UN WGEID and the UN CED

The ICAED works very closely with the two main UN bodies working on enforced disappearance, the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearance and the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance. We would like to thank the respective chairpersons of both bodies, Prof. Emmanuel Decaux of the UN CED and Mr. Ariel Dulitzky of the UN WGEID for their participation in our meeting. We strongly support these two bodies and we enjoin human rights organizations to maximize their engagements with them .

The ICAED calls on its members to follow States that are under examination and submit alternative reports that depict the situation of enforced disappearances from the perspective of the victims. Side by side with the work with the Committee, ICAED stresses the importance of fully using the mandate of the UN WGEID through submission of cases and follow up of old cases, cooperation with the Working Group in country visits and giving inputs on its General Comments so as to reflect the victims' viewpoint and pushing governments to reply to requests for visits.

Much as ICAED calls on its members to concretely make full use of their respective mandates for the sake of the victims, it calls on the UN CED and UN WGEID to share their expertise through trainings, conferences or seminars. We also request that they follow-up the recommendations they have made during their official visits in many countries even if such visits were conducted several years ago.

ICAED Rising Up: the Value of International Solidarity

The road to the adoption of the Convention was long and arduous. Family members' organizations, human rights NGOs, experts and a number of States struggled for 25 years to reach this significant milestone. Almost eight years after the adoption of the Convention, however, enforced disappearances are still perpetrated with impunity in many parts of the world. As a global problem, the role of an international coalition that brings together civil society organizations all over world in the fight against enforced disappearance is as important as ever.

One of the biggest challenges for the Coalition is on how to effectively raise awareness on the issue of enforced disappearance. Many of our members have raised their concerns about the very low public awareness on the Convention. The Coalition should step up its efforts in informing the public and even other NGOs about the non-derogable right not to be subjected to enforced disappearance and disseminate information on the Convention that is easy to understand using a variety of channels. We also see the need to facilitate the raising of awareness on enforced disappearance among media practitioners and try to transform them as important allies in our cause.

To achieve all of these, the Coalition has to give value to consolidating its ranks, renewing and recharging its unity amidst diversity, and together, going beyond the parochial concerns of each of our countries and forging unity and solidarity as we fight the global problem of enforced disappearance.

Ms. Gabriella Citroni, a lawyer and an expert on enforced disappearance reckoned that ICAED is the face of the global struggle against enforced disappearance. Being true to this attribution is indeed, a real challenge to the Coalition.

We have achieved significant milestones in our struggle, but there is definitely more to be done and we should never allow a step back, we can only move forward. As long as there are governments who disappear people, as long as there are families wanting truth and justice for their disappeared loved ones -- we carry on until truth is unveiled and justice, reparation and memory shall emerge triumphant.

Respect the right not to **DISAPPEAR!**

Support the International
Convention Against
Disappearances