

Concept Note

20th anniversary of the International Convention
for the Protection of All Persons against Enforced Disappearances

*1. **Background***

|On 20 December 2006, by resolution **A/RES/61/177**, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons against Enforced Disappearances (the Convention). As the only comprehensive and universal treaty specifically dedicated to enforced disappearance, it fills a gap in international law by establishing the absolute prohibition of enforced disappearance and provides that, under specific circumstances defined in international law, enforced disappearance may constitute a crime against humanity.[1] It is the only universal treaty that details States' obligations in terms of criminal action, preventive measures, remedies and reparation in relation to this heinous crime. Finally, the Convention establishes a monitoring body, the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, which guides States Parties about the concrete measures by which enforced disappearances can be prevented and eradicated.

The 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention this year presents an opportunity to raise awareness about enforced disappearances; to highlight the Committee's work supporting victims and States Parties; to stimulate discussions on effective and innovative practices to address related structural and emerging challenges; and to recall to UN Member States the importance of joining forces to prevent and eradicate enforced disappearances worldwide, starting with the ratification of the Convention.

*2. **Campaign and stakeholders***

The impact of the Convention highly depends on the involvement of stakeholders. In this perspective, the objective of the campaign is to encourage activities and projects to be undertaken throughout the year by all interested actors, namely:

- States Parties;

[1] See reporting manual, pp. 50–53

- Victims and civil society actors;

- National Human Rights Institutions;

- International and regional organizations;

- Other human rights mechanisms, international and regional;

- Academia and private sector.

The Committee encourages all the above to contribute to the commemoration of the 20th anniversary through the organization of events, dissemination of impact stories and other awareness and advocacy activities related to progress and challenges in the eradication and prevention of enforced disappearances, in all its forms and manifestations.

Lectures, panel discussions, publications, art competitions, videos are only a few examples of activities that may promote the Convention and the work of the Committee in pursuit of some specific key objectives (see below). The anniversary may also be used as an occasion to conduct activities to promote the implementation of the Convention, such as training for national authorities and civil society organisations about the Convention and its procedures (State Party reporting, Urgent Actions, country visits, etc).

States are particularly encouraged to take concrete, formal action this year to strengthen the substantive impact of the Convention.

All ideas and initiatives are welcome.

3. ***Key objectives***

3.1. Strengthen the impact of the Convention and its procedures:

- ***Consolidate*** the international legal framework through universal ratification
  - Promote the ratification of ICED with a view to achieve its universal ratification.
  - Demystify and clarify the mandate and procedures of the Convention/Committee

- ***Strengthen*** access to the Urgent Action procedure
  - Raise awareness on the procedure through publications and trainings

- ***Strengthen*** access to justice through individual complaints and interstate communications
  - Encourage State Parties to the Convention to make the optional declaration provided for in articles 31 and 32 of the Convention, recognizing the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances to receive and consider individual complaints and interstate communications.
  - Raise awareness on the individual complaints and interstate communications procedures through leaflets and other materials to be developed in cooperation with OHCHR field presences and HRTB capacity building programme.

- ***Increase*** compliance through reporting and the implementation of recommendations
  - Promote the submission of reports and follow-up reports by States Parties.
  - Effectively implement at least one concrete recommendation made by the Committee.
  - Highlight the importance of and strengthen the engagement with the Committee and the submission of information on the implementation of the provisions of the Convention by relevant stakeholders, including civil society organizations, NHRIs, international and regional organizations.

3.2. 20 years of the ICED: progress and achievements in the fight against enforced disappearances

- ***Share*** the progress at the regional and local levels against enforced disappearances

  - Underscore the progress made in the fight against enforced disappearances at the regional and local levels and how the Convention has influenced such progress.
  - Create ways for others to learn from those experiences in their efforts to combat enforced disappearances and promote the rights of victims.
  - Analyse the potentials of new digital technologies and social media in the search and investigation of enforced disappearances.

3.3. Looking ahead: challenges and opportunities to effectively implement the Convention

- ***Identify current contexts and patterns of enforced disappearances and raise awareness in that regard***

  - Strengthen and refine CED's work to identify patterns of enforced disappearances
  - Gather and promote the publication of related information.
  - Highlight the prevention of enforced disappearances as a key tool to prevent conflicts and promote peace.

- ***Discuss*** emerging challenges in the fight against enforced disappearances

  - Stimulate discussion on challenges in the fight against enforced disappearances, such as the factors that make the crime invisible[2]; the surge of enforced disappearances in the context of migration and/or of transnational repression; the increase of practices such as the so-called "short term enforced disappearances", the applicability of the notion of enforced disappearances and the extent and nature of States' responsibility as relates to disappearances committed by non-State actors.
  - Promote international and regional cooperation to address enforced disappearances, including for disappearances committed by non-State actors.
  - Stimulate exchanges on the challenges raised by the use of new digital technologies and social media in the search and investigation of enforced disappearances and as a tool for victims and their representatives.

- ***Revitalize*** the commitment for the implementation of ICED

  - Reaffirm the relevance of ICED to prevent and eradicate enforced disappearances.
  - Renew the commitment of States Parties and other stakeholders to the full implementation of the Convention, including by effectively implementing CED recommendations.
  - Highlight lessons learned and positive experiences to prevent and eradicate enforced disappearances and to ensure the effective implementation of the Convention.

[2] See inter alia the inexistence of the crime or its lack of clarity in national legislations; impunity; or the absence of adequate registers.

4. ***Existing and planned tools:***

Various specific actions will be developed throughout the year. All partners are invited to contribute to any of the planned activities; organize others; and make use of the material that will be progressively produced in this context.

OHCHR (CED secretariat) will announce developments through the CED 20th Anniversary Webpage and the CED Newsletters. All partners undertaking Anniversary related activities are kindly invited to inform OHCHR (CED secretariat) for listing on the webpage. They are warmly welcomed to freely use any and all of the tools listed below, including the anniversary logo and slogan, in connection with their Anniversary related events.

Questions or comments on the Anniversary may be sent to: ohchr-ced@un.org. Basic information about the Convention and Committee on Enforced Disappearances other than that presented here through separate links may be found on the Committee's main webpage: https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/ced. Please join in the activities and help make this Anniversary count!

TOOLS THAT MAY FREELY USED FOR ANNIVERSARY RELATED ACTIVITIES	**Date and place (if relevant)**	**Comments**
1. **Dedicated webpage on the 20th Anniversary** of the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons against Enforced Disappearances		20th anniversary of the adoption of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances | OHCHR
2. Anniversary logo in three languages (E/F/S)		CED 20 Trello board
3. Anniversary slogan: *"Victims first. Action now."*		
4. Article and short video on the history of the Convention.	Under development, aimed to be released at the 30th session of the Committee in March 2026.	
5. Training videos on the concepts and procedures of the Convention in language and format accessible to the youth.	Under development	May be used in training programmes on the Convention, diffused widely, translated into local languages, etc
6. Positive impact stories on Urgent Actions: compilation; publication.	Under development	
7. Update of CED leaflet.	Under development	Will be made available in digital format only.
8. Podcasts on enforced disappearances.	Under development	
9. Virtual memory wall on the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances and statement on the 20th anniversary of the Convention	30 August 2026	A virtual wall will be created, where victims and interested actors can post small messages on the occasion of the international day of the victims of enforced disappearance.

		Information will be shared in due course through the CED 20 webpage and through the newsletters of the Committee
10. e-training programme on the Convention	Under development	
11. CED video: "Enforced disappearances: hear the victims"		Publicly available in English, French and Spanish: Enforced Disappearances: hear the victims
12. CED related pledges made at the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (2023).		May be promoted and recalled throughout the year.
13. Pledges made and plan of actions adopted in connection with the 1st World Congress on Enforced Disappearances (January 2025)		Publicly available in English, French and Spanish. All interested actors are invited to promote and take part to the implementation of specific actions, particularly those identified by participants to the World Congress as priority in the fight against enforced disappearances and in support of victims. These include: • Creation of a victim-led regional network in Sub-Saharan Africa • Creation of a global youth network against enforced disappearances • Organization of regular meetings of women searchers • Promotion of ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance • Reporting on the sessions of the United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances • Strengthening the capacity of CSOs to engage with UN mechanisms.

CED20

Victims First. *Action Now.*

Join us to prevent and stop enforced disappearances.