

## **MISSING PERSONS AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES: A GLOBAL CHALLENGE**

International Commission on Missing Persons' (ICMP) monthly Newsletter examines emerging trends regarding missing persons and enforced disappearances around the world. Newsletter articles in 2015 included:

### **PERU DEALS WITH LEGACY OF CONFLICT**

An effective effort to address the legacy of missing persons from the conflict of the 1980s and 90s will require legislative, administrative, and social initiatives and the application of advanced technology. This can succeed if resolving Peru's thousands of missing persons cases is viewed as a national priority.

### **INDONESIA CONFRONTS HALF A CENTURY OF SILENCE ON THE MISSING**

Some in Indonesia argue that launching a process to account for the missing from the events of 1965-66 and afterwards will foment social and political instability. The counter argument is persuasive – *not* addressing such a major issue makes long-term stability impossible.

### **MEXICO'S MISSING – ONE YEAR ON**

The disappearance of the 43 students in Guerrero state in September 2014 is just one aspect of a national pandemic. More than 26,000 people have gone missing in the country since 2007, and in some states the majority of those who go missing are young women and girls.

### **ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES IN EGYPT**

Activists allege that the regime of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi is responsible for a rising tide of human rights violations – to an extent that authorities appear to be using enforced disappearance as an instrument of policy.

### **ACCOUNTING FOR THE MISSING IN SRI LANKA**

In September 2015 the Sri Lankan government announced that it would establish "independent, credible and empowered mechanisms for truth seeking, justice, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence," including a Commission for Truth, an Office on Missing Persons, and an Office for Reparations.

### **MISSING INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN CANADA**

At least 1,017 Indigenous women and girls are reported to have been murdered between 1980 and 2012, four and a half times the homicide rate for all other women. Aboriginal women represent 4.3 percent of Canada's female population, but 16 percent of female homicide victims and 11 percent of missing persons cases involving women.

### **COLOMBIA'S SYSTEMATIC APPROACH**

A breakthrough in peace talks has cleared the way for rapid progress in resolving tens of thousands of missing persons cases. Priorities include support for institutions, cooperation among stakeholders, inclusion of civil society, and the systematic application of forensic expertise.

## **ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES IN PAKISTAN**

The legal struggle in Pakistan to protect citizens against enforced disappearance and ensure that officials are subject to judicial restraint reflects a global debate. Governments argue the need for a “forthright” response to terrorism while civil society insists that any response must be governed by law.

## **IRAQ’S BIGGEST CRISIS**

Speakers at conferences organized by ICMP in Baghdad and Erbil in April/May stressed the need to gather precise statistics as a preliminary step to tackling the issue of missing persons. With as many as one million missing, one participant described the issue as “the biggest and the oldest crisis facing our nation.”

## **A MISSING PERSONS STRATEGY FOR LIBYA**

Libyan stakeholders meeting at a seminar organized by ICMP in Istanbul in May called on the parties preparing a national dialogue in Libya to make a formal commitment not only to work towards disclosing the fate of missing persons but to conduct investigations and safeguard the rights of families.

## **MIGRATION AND MISSING PERSONS**

Maritime migration in the Mediterranean, the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea, and in Southeast Asia has placed large numbers of refugees in peril, while governments have shown an inability to tackle the issue in a responsible or effective way.

## **ADDRESSING THE MIGRATION AND REFUGEES CRISIS**

ICMP is exploring cooperation with the authorities in Italy to address the challenge of locating and identifying missing migrants, and it has joined forces with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the missing migrants and refugees situation in the Mediterranean region.

## **GENDER AND THE MISSING**

While men are globally the primary victims of enforced disappearance, there are huge ramifications for women survivors, their children, and society as a whole. Additionally, reports indicate that women and children are increasingly becoming targets of abductions and subject to torture, sexual violence, trafficking and slavery.

## **YAZIDI WOMEN IN MASS GRAVES IN IRAQ**

Mass graves discovered in northwest Iraq in November 2015 highlight a shift in the gendered angle of mass killings and enforced disappearances. Women and children are not spared atrocities: many are used as sex slaves and then disappear.

## **MASCULINITIES AND PRACTICES OF MEMORIALIZATION**

Men and women, as a consequence of gender role, are likely to exhibit different grieving patterns. Grief is an emotion, but also a social construct, “shaped to a large extent by dominant gender expectations, rather than a ‘natural’ response to loss.”

## **WOMEN AND CONFLICT IN NEPAL**

Established in February 2015, Nepal’s Commission on Enforced Disappearances will investigate 1,300 cases of missing persons. Among problematic aspects of the truth and reconciliation process dealing with the 1996-2006 conflict is an institutional bias against investigating violence against women.

**MEMORIES THAT DIVIDE: MEMORIES THAT HEAL**

ICMP facilitates discussions among civil society organizations on remembrance and universal memorialization. Groups no longer view memorialization as something that is exclusively connected to physical monuments: they have developed a concept of continually evolving memorialization.

**LIVING MEMORIAL**

A living memorial is interactive, inclusive, challenging, transforming and temporary. It does not nurture blame, or guilt, or accusations, or judgments, or comparisons, or stereotypes, or prejudices, or ignorance, or denial, or sectarianism, or racism, or bitterness, or hatred, or resentment, or revenge, or fear.