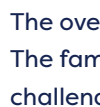




International Commission on Missing Persons

Annual
Report
2022



The overwhelming majority of missing persons from war, human rights abuses and migration are men. The family members left behind are women. When male family members go missing, women face distinct challenges in accessing rights, including the rights to justice, truth and reparations. Women often face severe stigmatization, especially in patriarchal societies; this hinders efforts to secure custody of children and inheritance rights. In addition, there are cases where women are direct victims of enforced disappearance, including femicide and human trafficking - in which category women constitute 70 percent of the missing. The gendered impact of this crime is severe, and failure by governments to address the rights of families of the missing, particularly women, perpetuates cycles of violence and undermines justice and peace. The woman in the image on the cover represents women survivors and victims of missing persons everywhere.

The Hague, May 2023

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Image on the right:
Photos of victims of torture commemorated in a bunker in Albania.





Kathryne Bomberger
Director-General

Director-General's Report

In 2022, against a challenging geopolitical backdrop, the International Commission on Missing Persons delivered tangible benefits to civil society and government partners throughout the world.

Following the 24 February 2022 Russian invasion of **Ukraine** and at the request of the Ukrainian government, ICMP teams were deployed to Ukraine in the spring. An office was opened in Kyiv in July. ICMP launched a series of field visits with DNA scientists and forensic anthropologists and reached out to family groups and civil society. By the end of the year preparations were well advanced for a comprehensive effort to support Ukraine in locating large numbers of missing persons and investigating their disappearance in line with rule-of-law standards.

The German Federal Foreign Office, the EU Service for Foreign Policy Instruments, the US State Department and the Government of Canada provided funding for ICMP's Ukraine Program. Among other things, this funding enabled ICMP to augment the throughput capacity at its Human Identification Laboratory to process the large volume of samples expected to be received from Ukraine. ICMP's support will help to ensure an impartial, DNA-led process of identifications, which is essential to providing irrefutable evidence of the identity of victims of atrocities and the ability to link the identity of a missing person back to the crime scene through proper chain of custody, in thousands of cases. While Ukraine is fighting a war and investigating a variety of other war crimes and atrocities, support in meticulous investigations into missing persons cases is essential.

ICMP's specialized expertise will also play a key role in the Vietnam Project, which was rolled out in 2022. Under an agreement signed in October with the Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology (VAST), ICMP is working with Vietnamese government partners to establish a foundation for the use of Next Generation Sequencing. This technology expands the scope for intergenerational kinship matching between distant relatives, which is crucial in Vietnam, where half a century has passed since the end of the war. ICMP's Vietnam project began in 2021 and is being implemented with the support of USAID: it will support the development of a centralized data system, civil society engagement, the collection of genetic family reference samples and the collection, recovery and forensic examination of human remains.

In April, at the invitation of the respective governments, I visited **Armenia and Azerbaijan** to discuss cooperation on locating missing persons. At the invitation of each country, ICMP will conduct a review of the missing persons process, including, the engagement of relevant governmental and judicial institutions, legislative frameworks, scientific and technical capacities, the engagement of families of the missing, advocacy groups and other members of civil society, with an emphasis on women-led organizations, data collection and data analysis capacities; documentation of illicit gravesites, cooperative mechanisms and other measures. The review will be carried out separately in each country in 2023 and will culminate in a report on recommendations for a way forward.

In 2022, ICMP opened an office in **Tripoli**. The newly-established **Libya team**, operating with the benefit of an ICMP [Assessment Report](#) prepared in 2021, began developing relationships with relevant ministries and civil society organizations. In March in The Hague, the Libyan Expert Group on Missing and Disappeared Persons, supported by ICMP, held its first meeting. The Expert Group includes representatives from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior, the General Authority for the Search and Identification of Missing Persons, and other Libyan forensic, judicial and law enforcement experts. In April, ICMP convened an online coordination meeting of international organizations whose work is relevant to supporting Libya's missing persons process.

ICMP collected data from families of missing persons in **Northeast Syria and in Europe** during the year, as well as in countries neighboring Syria. We also worked with Syrian organizations in the Data Governance Group and the Policy Coordination Group (PCG) to ensure that the experience of ICMP and its partners is included in the debate over a proposed UN Syria mechanism. In 2022, the PCG issued [a paper on Syrian legislation related to missing persons](#), [a paper on constitutional principles related to missing persons](#), and [a paper on mass graves in Syria](#).

In May, the PCG presented recommendations at an online Brussels VI event facilitated by ICMP with the participation of the Delegation of the European Union to Syria. Subsequently, ICMP convened the Third Intergovernmental Roundtable on Syria in June under the title "Accounting for the Missing Is an Investment

in Peace”, focused on cooperation among European and Middle Eastern countries that are hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees. To date, ICMP has collected data from 70,000 families of the missing who have reported over 25,000 missing persons.

The **Iraq team** worked throughout 2022 to help domestic institutions implement the conclusions reached at the policy conference organized by ICMP in The Hague in September 2021. The team worked with the Ministry of Health's Medico-Legal Directorate and the Mass Graves Affairs and Protection Directorate of the Martyrs' Foundation to deploy ICMP's Integrated Data Management System (iDMS) and assisted at mass graves exhumations.

In November in **northern Mexico**, ICMP and the Office of the Nuevo Leon Prosecutor General (FGJNL) unveiled the customized, [Spanish-language Online Inquiry Center \(OIC\)](#) through which families of the missing and judicial and forensic authorities will be able to report and share data in the iDMS. ICMP ran a successful program in Nuevo Leon between 1 January 2019 and 31 July 2022 together with the Citizens in Support of Human Rights NGO in cooperation with the FGJNL. The program was generously supported by USAID. In 2022, we presented our work – including the project in Nuevo Leon – to the Federal authorities in Mexico City with a view to extending ICMP's assistance to other parts of the country. ICMP's DNA extraction methods have since been implemented at the DNA laboratory of the Federal Attorney General's Office and there are prospects for further cooperation in 2023 and beyond.

In **the Western Balkans**, ICMP and partners took a number of significant forward steps during the year. In March in Sarajevo, family associations of missing persons from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia signed a Memorandum of Understanding establishing the Regional Coordination Network. In so doing, they reaffirmed their commitment to work together to secure truth, justice and reparations through a mechanism in which all families and all associations have equal rights and duties.

In November in The Hague, as part of the Berlin Process, ICMP and the Missing Persons Group (MPG), which brings together regional institutions responsible for accounting for missing persons, launched the [Regional Database](#) of active missing persons cases from the conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. This means that up-to-date records are now publicly available at all times. It also enables families of the missing and others to review existing records and provide online feedback to domestic institutions. This is a landmark achievement – the first time that the authorities of former warring countries anywhere in the world have pooled and harmonized their data on missing persons and put it in the public domain. During the year, members of the MPG, jointly participated, some for the first time, in events organized to commemorate those who are still missing.

To mark the International Day of the Disappeared on 30 August, ICMP published a [Q&A and Topical Guide for Resolving the Missing Persons Issue in the Western Balkans](#), which explains in detail the rights of families.

In January, **nine Albanian Family Associations and civil society organizations**, all of which have been beneficiaries of ICMP's Small Grants program, signed an MoU to work collaboratively to address the issue of persons who went missing during the communist era in Albania.

Between 2018 and 2022, ICMP established the Joint Process under which **Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta** worked to assess their investigatory capacities and enhance cooperation in accounting for migrants who have gone missing in the Mediterranean. In March, I joined the heads of other international organizations to call on all States to assume collective responsibility and prevent migrants from going missing or dying along migration routes and to search for and identify those who have gone missing and assist their families. In our statement, we laid out a series of practical steps that governments can take to address this issue, including information exchange and coordinated efforts across countries of origin, transit and destination, to collect and publish data on migrant deaths and missing migrants.

In 2022, events around the world accentuated the need for missing persons processes that are supported by competent institutions and by civil society, that utilize the latest developments in forensic science and

database technology, and that are embedded in the rule of law. ICMP helped its partners with targeted and effective programs to implement such processes, and this is what we will continue to do.

Kathryne Bomberger
Director-General





Ambassador (ret)
Thomas J. Miller
Chair

Report by the Chair

In 2022, ICMP expanded its program activities and enhanced its operational structure, utilizing the financial support of its donors to optimal effect. During the year, we secured funding for new programs in Ukraine, Vietnam, Libya, the Caucasus, and Albania while maintaining support for established programs in Iraq, Syria-MENA, the Western Balkans, and Albania. At the end of the year, following receipt of funding for the Ukraine Program from Germany, planning and equipment procurement got underway to upgrade of the ICMP Human Identification laboratory in The Hague. This will enable the lab to process a high volume of DNA samples from Ukraine.

We introduced new financial software in 2022, which enables more efficient overview and management of costs and expenditure, and once again, we received a clean bill of health from our auditors. We also issued a new audit tender in 2022. This did not reflect any dissatisfaction with our existing auditors, KPMG, who have provided robust scrutiny of ICMP's accounts for a number of years. Rather, it reflected international best practice: issuing an audit tender from time to time is an accepted means of maintaining the highest standards of financial probity. At the conclusion of the tender, the Board agreed to appoint Ernst & Young as the new ICMP auditors.

For more than a quarter of a century, ICMP has worked with civil society groups that are mainly composed of and led by women. On 8 March, International Women's Day, we issued a [statement](#) on gender and the issue of missing persons, highlighting the fact that women survivors are often stigmatized and/or marginalized. In November, ICMP participated in the International Gender Champions Focal Points annual meeting and launched a social media campaign on gender and the issue of missing persons.

At the start of the campaign, Director-General Kathryne Bomberger issued a [statement](#) highlighting the connection between gender-based violence and missing persons and articulating the experience of women in different countries. In this Annual Report, women from around the world who are working on the issue of missing persons describe the challenges they face and the experiences and beliefs that motivate their work.


During 2022 we had the good fortune to welcome two new members to the ICMP Board.

Barbara Haering, who became an ICMP Commissioner in March 2022, has been a member of the Swiss Parliament, chairing the Security Committee as well as the Committee on Science, Education and Culture and serving as Vice-President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE. Dr Haering chairs the Board of Foundation of the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining.

Thao Griffiths, who joined the ICMP Board in December 2022, has been Meta's Public Policy Head for Vietnam since December 2021. Before that, she served for nearly a decade as Country Director of the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation.

We ended the year with a strengthened Board, with more programs, and with enhanced capacity. We move forward in the sure knowledge that ICMP will continue to reward the confidence placed in us by our donors, by the governments we work with and by the civil society organizations and families of the missing who are our partners.

Ambassador (ret) Thomas J. Miller
Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Miller". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.



About **ICMP**

ICMP is a treaty-based intergovernmental organization with Headquarters in The Hague, the Netherlands. Its mandate is to secure the cooperation of governments and other authorities in locating persons missing as a result of conflicts, human rights abuses, natural and man-made disasters, organized crime, irregular migration and other involuntary reasons and to assist them in doing so. ICMP also supports the work of other organizations, encourages public involvement in its activities and contributes to the development of appropriate expressions of commemoration and tribute to the missing.

As the only international organization that is dedicated exclusively to the issue of missing persons, ICMP works to develop institutional and civil society capacity, promote the rule of law, good governance and human rights, foster social and political advocacy, and develop and provide technical expertise to locate and identify the missing.

History

ICMP was created at the initiative of US President Bill Clinton in 1996 at the G-7 Summit in Lyon, France. It developed and assisted efforts by the governments in the former Yugoslavia to locate those who were missing as a result of the conflicts in the region in the 1990s. Today, almost 75 percent of the 40,000 missing in the region have been reliably accounted for to standards required by courts of law, an unprecedented achievement anywhere in the world.

ICMP is focused on developing and applying good governance and rule-of-law-based strategies to address the issue of the missing around the world and brings a unique element of technical assistance to its activities. In 2001, it established a missing persons DNA identification system that has become the benchmark for technical innovation and performance in the field of human identification. ICMP has also developed an Integrated Data Management System (iDMS) to enable the comprehensive processing of missing persons data globally.

ICMP's achievements and the support of a growing number of states resulted in the Foreign Ministers of Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom signing the Agreement on the Status and Functions of the International Commission on Missing Persons (the ICMP Agreement) on 15 December 2014. The Agreement established ICMP as a treaty-based intergovernmental organization and provided for a new organizational structure and Headquarters in The Hague, a move that was completed in 2017.

Governance

The Board of Commissioners oversees the work of ICMP. The Director-General manages and directs the organization, supported by directors who manage horizontal programs. The ICMP Agreement established a Conference of States Parties which convenes at least every three years and a Financial Committee, which meets annually.

To date, nine countries -- Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Chile, Cyprus, Serbia, Afghanistan, and Germany – are States Parties to the ICMP Agreement, and Belgium and El Salvador are Signatory States.

Board of Commissioners

ICMP's Board of Commissioners comprises distinguished individuals active in the fields of international relations, diplomacy and human rights. In 2022, the Board comprised eleven members. It meets three times a year to discuss ICMP's strategic planning, fundraising, and program implementation, and to adopt ICMP's program of work.

Commissioners



Ambassador (ret) Thomas J. Miller (Chair)

Former US Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Greece, and US special Cyprus Coordinator
ICMP Commissioner since May 2011



Ambassador Rolf Ekéus

Former OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities
ICMP Commissioner since April 2005



Her Majesty Queen Noor

ICMP Commissioner since June 2001



Ambassador Knut Vollebaek

Former Foreign Minister of Norway
ICMP Commissioner since September 2013



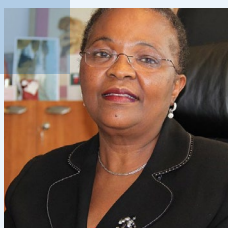
Rt. Hon. Alistair Burt

Former UK Minister of State and
Member of the UK Parliament
*ICMP Commissioner since
December 2013*



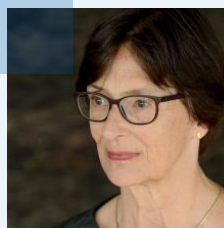
Ambassador Dirk Brengelmann

Former German Ambassador to
the Netherlands
*ICMP Commissioner since
May 2019*



Judge Sanji Monageng

Former Judge of the International
Criminal Court
*ICMP Commissioner since
May 2017*



Barbara Haering

Former Vice President of the
OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Chair
of the Geneva International Center
for Humanitarian Demining
*ICMP Commissioner since
March 2022*



**María Eugenia Brizuela
de Ávila**

Former Foreign Minister
of El Salvador
*ICMP Commissioner since
February 2019*



Thao Griffiths

Former Country Director of the
Vietnam Veterans of America
Foundation, Head of Public Policy
for Meta in Vietnam
*ICMP Commissioner since
December 2022*



Bert Koenders

Former Foreign Minister of the
Netherlands
*ICMP Commissioner since
February 2019*

Conference of States Parties

The Conference of States Parties (CSP) represents States Parties to the ICMP Agreement and includes signatory and other states that participate in an observer capacity.

The ICMP Board of Commissioners and the Director-General invite the CSP to meet at least once every three years. The CSP, constituted in 2015 under the terms of the ICMP Agreement, considers ICMP's reports on activities, proposes policy directives for the Board of Commissioners' program of work, and recommends to States Parties measures to advance ICMP's objectives.

International organizations may be invited to participate in meetings of the CSP as observers. The number of participating States Parties and observers (States Signatories, other states and International Organizations) has grown from three States Parties (that had signed and ratified the agreement) and seven observers, including two States Signatories, in 2015, to a total of 26 at its last session in 2021, of which nine are States Parties. Afghanistan remains a State Party following its accession in 2019 but is unable to participate in the CSP and in its decision-making processes. The CSP's Financial Committee is the primary forum in which ICMP's



Germany acceded to the ICMP agreement in May 2021.

financial strategy is presented together with donors and meets annually. All ICMP's governing bodies have adopted Rules of Procedure and comply with corresponding obligations.

Article IX, paragraph 7, of the ICMP Agreement includes an amendment clause that allows for a review of the Agreement and for bringing amendments at the initiative of the original Signatory States. It determines that a decision to review or amend the Agreement can be taken after five years. Following a virtual Consultative Meeting in December 2020 during which ICMP invited members of the CSP, observers and other states to discuss the option of amending or supplementing the Agreement, it was recommended during the third meeting of the CSP, in December 2021, that a Working Group on Treaty Review be formed in 2022. This Working Group, comprising the original States Signatories of the ICMP Agreement and States Parties, met twice in 2022 and prepared a proposal which would, among other things, modify the ways in which States Parties are able to support ICMP. This will be presented at the next meeting of the Conference of States Parties.

The ICMP Agreement is open to accession by States only. ICMP invites third States, as well as organizations to participate in the Conference of States Parties and, where appropriate, in the Financial Committee as observers.

Belgium, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom, El Salvador, Chile, Cyprus, Serbia, Afghanistan, and Germany are currently either Parties or Signatories to the ICMP Agreement. In addition, Brazil, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, Norway, South Africa, Switzerland and the United States are observers to the CSP.

The European Union, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Criminal Court (Office of the Prosecutor), INTERPOL, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals participate in the CSP as observer organizations.



States Parties				
Party	Signature	Provisional Application	Ratification	Entry into force
Afghanistan			30-10-2019 (A)	29-11-2019
Belgium	15-12-2014			
Chile	14-12-2014		17-09-2018 (B)	17-10-2018
Cyprus	14-12-2014		07-06-2018 (R)	07-07-2018
El Salvador	18-11-2015			
Germany			30-04-2021 (A)	30-05-2021
Luxembourg	15-12-2014		17-05-2016 (R)	16-06-2016
The Netherlands	15-12-2014		17-06-2015 (R)	17-07-2015
Serbia	16-12-2014		21-07-2017 (R)	20-08-2017
Sweden	15-12-2014		14-04-2015 (R)	14-05-2015
United Kingdom	15-12-2014		14-04-2015 (R)	14-05-2015

Observers	
Brazil	United States
Canada	European Union
Czech Republic	International Committee of the Red Cross
Denmark	International Criminal Court
Ireland	INTERPOL
Norway	International Organization for Migration
South Africa	United Nations International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals
Switzerland	

Financial Committee

- Article V of the ICMP Agreement establishes a Financial Committee representing States Parties that have supported ICMP financially during a reporting period. The Financial Committee considers ICMP's report on activities for the past year and the coming year, adopts recommendations relating to ICMP's financial management, and reviews and approves ICMP's Financial Regulations and reporting format. At its eighth meeting on 11 November 2022, the Financial Committee noted that in ICMP's current funding structure, in which restricted funds represent 96 percent of income, the overwhelming preponderance of funding is allocated to the geographic programs while only a very small portion goes to the Headquarters programs that underpin all operations – Direction & Policy, Science & Technology, Data Systems & Data Coordination, Civil Society Initiatives, and the Wim Kok Center for Excellence and Learning. Two new units have been created within the Office of the Director-General: Program Operations and Program Coordination and Impact, in order to coordinate fundraising, communications, relations with external partners, implementation and managing new and developing programs (See below).
- Following the decision in August 2021 by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) to approve the inclusion of ICMP in the list of multilateral organizations that can receive funding under Official Development Assistance (ODA) programs, ICMP and its partners made strenuous efforts in 2022 to alert prospective donors to the fact that the DAC listing means they can now contribute to ICMP's Headquarters programs as well as its geographic programs using development funds.
- In 2021/22, at the direction of ICMP's Audit Committee, a tender was published for the renewal of the contract to conduct the annual audit of ICMP's accounts. This was done in line with best practice among international organizations, where audit contracts are routinely put out to tender, and did not reflect any dissatisfaction with ICMP's long-serving auditor, KPMG. Following a thorough review of prospective applicants by the Chair of the Audit Committee and ICMP staff, the contract was awarded to Ernst & Young, which conducted the annual audit of ICMP's accounts in 2022.
- Income for 2022 is 9.8 million USD, while expenses were at 9,9 million USD, representing a slight decrease from 2021 and less than expected in comparison to the 2022 budget. This is due to the late start of the Vietnam grant and the delays in implementation in Ukraine due to the current ongoing war.

Program Coordination & Impact

In the course of 2022, ICMP filed proposals worth almost **\$41 million** in new grant funding and secured **\$33.68 million** in multi-year grants. In addition, 32 performance reports were submitted to donors, highlighting achievements, maintaining cash-flow, and alerting them to implementation risks. This reflected a systematic effort to develop proposals in which donor policy objectives and

ICMP expertise dovetail in specific program areas, and to maintain continuous, detailed, and accurate reporting. This strategy is designed to facilitate targeted and effective assistance and support the fundamental operating principle that accounting for the missing is an investment in peace.

Treaty Review

Article IX 7. of the ICMP Agreement allows for a review of the treaty and for bringing amendments at the initiative of the original signatory States. Consultations on initiating a review began with a Consultative Meeting Regarding Article IX, Paragraph 7 of the ICMP Agreement on 18 December 2020, with the participation of representatives of States Parties and States Signatory to the ICMP Agreement, and others.

The Consultative Meeting considered possible areas of improvement of provisions of the Treaty as outlined in a Discussion Paper that the ICMP

Directorate-General had prepared for the occasion. States Parties to the ICMP Agreement were sympathetic to some or all of the proposals outlined in the Discussion Paper, as were the great majority of other States. The proposals were as follows:

1. Redressing possible disincentives to broader State participation, among other things, through reopening the treaty for signature;
2. Creating additional incentives for participation in ICMP by giving the Conference of States Parties (CSP) more competencies, especially to take initiatives;

3. Granting privileges and immunities to ICMP by virtue of the treaty, rather than exclusively through bilateral office agreements and similar arrangements; and
4. Creating possibilities for securing more sustainable funding for ICMP under agreements among States Parties and Signatory States, as well as third States.

At its 3rd meeting, on 14 December 2021, the ICMP Conference of States Parties (CSP) recommended to its members the formation of a Working Group to review the Agreement. In accordance with the recommendation of the CSP, the ICMP Director-

General invited states parties' representatives to participate in the Working Group on Treaty Review (WGTR) to elaborate possible draft amendments to the ICMP Agreement for discussion at the next meeting of the CSP. The WGTR met twice in 2022 and developed a detailed proposal on reopening the Agreement for signature by States, broadening competencies of the Conference of States Parties, granting ICMP Privileges and Immunities by virtue of the ICMP Agreement, and enabling funding for ICMP under Partial Agreements. This proposal will be discussed at the next meeting of the Conference of States Parties.

Global Forum on Missing Persons

The Global Forum (GF) is mandated by the ICMP Agreement and provides for a range of engaged parties, including the Board of Commissioners, the Panel of Experts and the Interagency Committee, as well as civil society organizations and representatives of families of the missing. The GF reflects the diversity of missing and disappeared persons crises as well as the diversity of potential solutions. As a mechanism for the exchange of ideas and practical proposals based on expertise and experience, the GF is designed to identify common problems faced by countries and families around the world and seek solutions at the international and domestic level. Through policy

forums, conferences and publications, the GF endeavors to broaden public discourse on the issue of missing persons, highlighting the needs of survivors and the requirements of society. The GF is currently a virtual space.



In 2021 ICMP published the first Global Report on Missing Persons.

Other Expert and Advisory Bodies

Panel of Experts

The ICMP Panel of Experts (PE) comprises distinguished researchers and practitioners in the field of human rights, the rule of law, transitional justice, and forensic science. The Panel of Experts was established in January 2020 under Article III, paragraph 5 of the ICMP Agreement. It provides regular and ad hoc expert advice to the Director-General on issues pertaining to ICMP's program of work, relations with current or potential partners, and other issues about which ICMP may wish to receive expert advice. Members of the PE work individually or jointly on specific programmatic, editorial, evaluation, outreach and other projects. The PE includes in particular an Editorial Group and a Peer Group that draft and review contributions to the Global Report on Missing Persons.

Cooperation Mechanisms

1. Multilateral Forums and Intergovernmental Bodies

ICMP develops and facilitates multilateral cooperation among governments on shared missing persons challenges. For example, in the Western Balkans, ICMP facilitates cooperation through the Missing Persons Group to find those still missing from the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. In the context of Missing Migrants and Refugees in Europe, ICMP has facilitated the work of the Joint Process for countries

in the Mediterranean. ICMP also launched an inter-governmental mechanism for Syria in 2019, which includes countries from the MENA region and others in Europe that are hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees, to explore shared challenges and find shared solutions to support the effort to account for missing persons from the Syrian conflict.

Interagency Committee on Missing Persons

In 2016, ICMP launched the Interagency Committee on Missing Persons (IAC) at the UN Security Council in New York. The IAC brings together international and other organizations with a public mandate concerned with the issue of missing persons. Cooperation with international and other organizations is central to ICMP's global strategy. It is a key element in discussing data sharing modalities, in particular concerning cases of unidentified human remains, and missing persons reports by families, in order to develop interagency solutions. Participating organizations include the European Commission, EUROJUST, EUROPOL, the ICC, the ICRC, INTERPOL, the IOM, UNHCR and UNICEF.

2. Civil Society Forums

Regional Coordination Body of Families of the Missing (Western Balkans)

Associations of families of missing persons from the former Yugoslavia gathered in the Regional Coordination in 2005 to lobby jointly for the resolution of missing persons issues. This process was strengthened through the establishment of the Regional Coordination Network in March 2022.

The Regional Coordination Network brings together family associations of missing persons from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia in a mechanism in which all families and all associations have equal rights and duties.

Policy Coordination Group (Syria)

The Syrian-led PCG is facilitated by the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) and was launched in 2021 (read more [here](#)). The group is composed of 27 members, including members of Syrian family associations, representatives of civil society organizations, jurists, human rights defenders located inside and outside Syria, members of the Constitutional Committee, and international advisors. The group aims to develop a policy framework for a future Syrian missing persons' process.

3. Data Governance Group (Global)

The Data governance Group (DGG) aims to advance best practice in the field of missing persons data management through the sharing of experience, mutual support and problem solving. Through the DGG, ICMP further enhances its shared repository of missing persons cases, steps-up analytical support for data consolidation, and directly supports the collection of genetic reference information globally. These measures contribute significantly to the future success of missing persons strategies globally.

Image on the right:

ICMP develops and facilitates multilateral cooperation among governments on shared missing persons challenges.





What We Do



ICMP's Main Program provides direction, oversight and support to all geographic and horizontal programs and is responsible for the direct delivery of activities across all geographic and horizontal programs. It comprises three components:

■ Statutory Bodies

- **The Board of Commissioners**
- **The Conference of States Parties**
- **The Financial Committee**
- **The Global Forum on Missing Persons**
- **Other expert and advisory bodies**

■ Horizontal Programs

- **Direction and Policy**
- **Institutional Development**
- **Civil Society Initiatives**
- **Science and Technology**
- **Data Systems and Data Coordination**
- **The Wim Kok Center for Excellence and Learning (CEL)**

■ Corporate Services

ICMP's highly specialized Main Horizontal Programs include standing capacities such as the state-of-the-art, high throughput DNA human identification laboratory. The laboratory works on identifying missing persons cases from around the world, including cases referred by geographic programs. It is central to building DNA Human Identification laboratory capacities in country programs, and it provides learning and development programs for stakeholders, including technical experts, government officials and families of the missing.

The Data Systems and Data Coordination Program maintains standing capacities that underpin all geographic and horizontal programs. Accounting for missing persons requires the collection, processing and analysis of large quantities of data. ICMP's Integrated Data Management System (iDMS) is the foundation for missing persons data systems in country programs. This system also supports training that highlights rule-of-law-based processes to account for the missing.

ICMP's Direction and Policy, Institutional Development and Civil Society Initiatives programs and the CEL, all presented in more detail below, provide similar central support that enables delivery of program activities.

ICMP maintains multiple country and thematic programs across the world, often in countries where there is ongoing conflict, post-conflict transition and political instability and where the number and nature of the missing persons challenge exceeds domestic capacities. Most of ICMP's programs are deployed in areas considered eligible for Official Development Assistance by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC). ICMP's thematic programs address global challenges including persons missing from migration and man-made or natural disasters and the ramifications of crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Often, the thematic programs intersect with country programs – the Syria/MENA and Missing Migrants and Refugees programs, for example, both focus on persons missing from Syria, from the conflict directly or as a result of dangerous migratory journeys to escape the conflict. ICMP's Main Program supports the work implemented by geographic and horizontal programs.

Direction and Policy

The Direction and Policy Program (DP) comprises the Office of the Director-General (ODG), and includes the Director-General (DG), Policy and Cooperation (PC), the Program Operations Unit, the Program Coordination and Impact Unit (PCI), the Documentation Unit (DU) and the Legal Unit (LU). The DG provides overall strategic direction to the organization and management of the Horizontal and Geographic Programs, and in addition to fundraising, managing grants and communications, the D&P program supports and provides a secretariat to ICMP treaty or statutory and subsidiary bodies, including the Board of Commissioners, the Conference of States Parties, the Financial Committee, the Panel of Experts and the Global Forum. It is also responsible for efforts to broaden state participation in ICMP as Parties, Signatories and Observers, or through States' adherence to ICMP declarations and other instruments, or through technical cooperation and assistance.

DP is responsible for enhancing and strengthening cooperation with governments, particularly in new program areas, by concluding agreements or other arrangements that allow for program implementation. DC functions ensure effective outreach and planning across programs through inclusive consultative processes, and by ensuring that ICMP's policies, standards and best practice are implemented across all thematic, regional and country programs. DU and LU provide documentation and legal services.

ICMP maintains partnerships and cooperation agreements with other international organizations and NGOs, including:

- The International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- INTERPOL
- The International Criminal Court (ICC)
- The United Nations International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (UNMICT)
- The Kosovo Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor's Office
- The UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD)
- The International Impartial and Independent Mechanism for Syria (IIIM).

ICMP also works with academic institutions and civil society organizations and partners with leading scientific agencies such as the Netherlands Forensic Institute (NFI). In 2021 ICMP signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Bournemouth University to develop Missing Persons Indicators. This builds on the successful collaboration between ICMP and Bournemouth University on developing the [Bournemouth Protocol](#) for the Protection and Investigation of Mass Graves.

Members of the ICMP Panel of Experts, established in 2021, are:

- Arely Cruz Santiago
 - Alicia Decker
 - Charlotte McDonald-Gibson
 - Noor Hamadeh
 - Baik Tae-Ung
 - Melanie Klinker
 - Eric Stover
 - Matthew Smith
 - Nadim Houry
 - Sharon Nakandha
 - LeAndra Nephin
 - Paula Gaviria
 - Brooks Newmark
 - David Tolbert
 - Mark Freeman
 - Tom J. White
 - Jan Kizilhan
 - Stephen Rapp
 - Hisham Al Alawi
 - Manfred Kayser
 - Peter de Knijff
 - Walter Parson
 - Ingo Bastitch
 - Christopher Phillips
 - Lourdes Prieto
 - Sara Katsanis
 - Andreas Tilmar
 - Anders Gotherstrom
 - Love Dalen
 - Jodie Ward
 - Charla Marshall
 - Stefan Prost
- Tâm T. T. Ngô
 - Senem Skulj
 - Carsten Proff
 - Amy Mundorff
 - Karine Duhamel

Institutional Development

Institutional Development (ID) supports processes to account for missing and disappeared persons by helping stakeholders to create and sustain institutions that can operate effectively, working through domestic and multilateral initiatives. Effective and transparent institutions are indispensable in a successful missing persons process. If the institutional framework is weak or otherwise flawed, public trust is compromised. This in turn undermines efforts to restore the rule of law, which limits the capacity of states to fulfill obligations and achieve broader development objectives.

Institution building may generally be focused on low-income or developing countries, or on countries affected by widespread violence or war, but developed countries that are affected by international missing persons issues also benefit from support. Globalization and global warming have resulted in increasing numbers of refugees and migrants, and this has turned the issue of missing persons into a global challenge. A common factor in all countries is the need to develop institutional resources that can deliver effective, centralized capacity to account for the missing.



Family association of missing persons in Ilijaš, Bosnia and Herzegovina marking International Day of the Disappeared.

Civil Society Initiatives

ICMP helps domestic authorities to implement effective missing persons processes and supports the active participation of civil society and families of the missing through education, training and grant programs that empower recipients. ICMP works with survivor groups to rebuild trust and with states to ensure that families of the missing play a central role in accounting for their relatives. It works to ensure that families and civil society participate in the development of institutions, legislation, and policies relevant to missing persons. Where political will is lacking, ICMP devises programs to respond to requests for assistance from civil society actors to generate recognition of responsibility from the State. ICMP seeks to secure the rights of survivors and families of the missing to justice, the truth, reparations, and socio-economic well-being.

ICMP supports Small Grants programs designed to help CSOs and family associations. In late 2021 and over the course of 2022, ICMP issued 15 small grants worth almost USD 95,000 in total, to CSOs, including family associations, to advocate for the rights of families from Syria and the Western Balkans.

The key donors for ICMP Small Grants during 2022 were the European Union, the United Kingdom, and Sweden. The program supported the creation of family associations, commemoration, monitoring implementation of regionally agreed upon framework plans, awareness-raising and advocacy activities, research, artistic expression of memory, submission of reports to national institutions, and strengthening organizational capacities of recipient organizations.



Science and Technology

ICMP is recognized as a world leader in DNA identification. In addition to handling casework, ICMP has played a major role in building the capacity of DNA laboratories worldwide and in disseminating advances in the field of forensic genetics.

The ICMP laboratory in The Hague has an internationally accredited Casework section that applies “traditional” DNA identification methods using STR (Short Tandem Repeat) testing. The laboratory also works to integrate new methods. A particular emphasis is on adapting transformative advances from Massively Parallel Sequencing (MPS) technology to the specialized application of missing persons identification. This enables identification through comparison to distant relatives and is applicable to challenging cases with degraded DNA. It is currently being applied to resolve complex cases from the Western Balkans and elsewhere that previously could not be identified. In 2022, work continued, in collaboration with Verogen/Qiagen, to develop testing techniques using a modified SNP (single nucleotide polymorphism) panel and to assess other MPS assays for suitability for the ICMP’s work.

The Science and Technology Program (ST) maintains Disaster Victim Identification capabilities supported by the laboratory’s standing DNA testing capacity. ST collaborates actively with companies and academic institutions and works closely with the CEL to ensure that ICMP’s advanced technical methods, practical experience and strategic insight serve as a global

resource for training and capacity building. ST supports ICMP’s geographic programs with technical assistance and training.

In the final quarter of the year work began on a comprehensive upgrade of the ICMP laboratory system to increase throughput capacity in anticipation of receiving a large number of samples from Ukraine. This includes significant technical upgrades and automation of processes where possible, with the recruitment of additional technical staff. This will continue to be a focus for the coming year.

The annual RVA accreditation assessment was successfully completed with no significant issues identified. In the course of 2022, the laboratory completed a total of 65 DNA match reports leading to new identifications, alongside approximately 200 reports to support reassociation of skeletal remains.

The ST Archeology and Anthropology Division (AAD) maintains a high level of expertise and operational capability in the search for, recovery, and examination of human remains and associated evidence from mass graves and other contexts. AAD experts conduct forensic examinations, DNA sampling, mortuary casework management, strategic planning, and assessments as well as gap analysis for medico-legal authorities and policymakers.

*Image on the left and the following page:
ICMP staff working in the DNA laboratory in The Hague.*



In 2022, AAD assisted the Prosecutor General of Nuevo Leon with anthropological analysis of highly commingled human remains, which resulted in 17 identifications, while in Ukraine, AAD conducted extensive work to map the forensic capacity of mortuaries and DNA centers. Meanwhile, AAD maintained its program of field work and training with stakeholders in the Western Balkans and Iraq. A documentary film, *The DNA of Dignity*, by the Swiss filmmaker Jan Baumgartner, described the work of ICMP AAD personnel in the Western Balkans and was premiered at the Locarno Film Festival in August.

Data Systems and Data Coordination

ICMP's Integrated Data Management System (iDMS) makes it possible to collect, store, and share information on missing persons in a central, secure and globally accessible location. The iDMS supports international and domestic processes of locating missing persons worldwide.

Managing large quantities of data from complex missing persons scenarios is essential to ensuring proper chain of custody of evidence, so that it can be used to secure the rights of surviving families of the missing and deliver information for scientific identifications. ICMP makes the iDMS available to government authorities and others engaged in missing persons investigations and provides training in its use. ICMP's Online Inquiry Center (OIC) makes it possible to report a missing person online and follow progress on

the reported case. Information submitted to the OIC, stored in the iDMS, is only shared with the express consent of those who have provided it.

The iDMS facilitates collaboration and integration of information from various jurisdictions. ICMP assists governments and families of the missing in the process of collecting missing persons data and biological reference samples for DNA testing.

The iDMS has been used in support of missing persons response activities in a wide variety of contexts and countries. It is designed to be readily adaptable to specific contexts, with custom modifications easily made for country or program-specific settings, and language conversion.

The iDMS functions as a flexible global tool for information sharing and information protection, with continued support from a dedicated development team. It has been successfully modified to interface for data import with other external database systems, and, as the iDMS continues to develop, a primary emphasis will be placed on database interconnectivity.

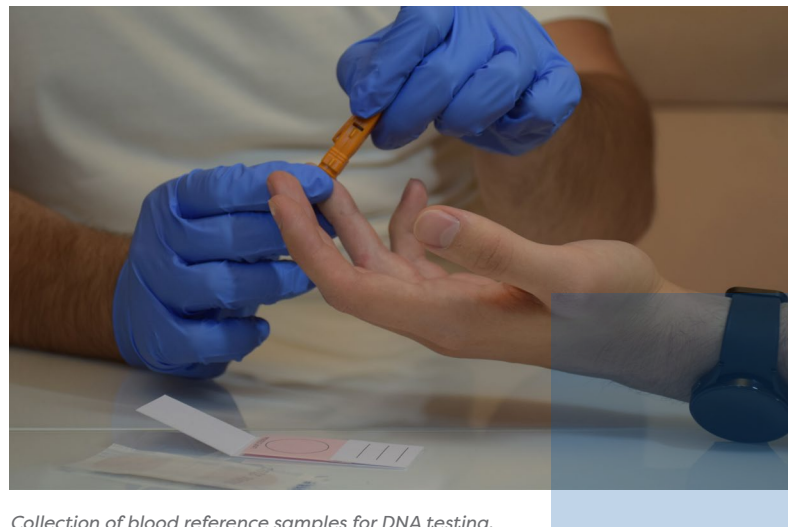
ICMP fully upholds the principles of the EU's General Data Protection Regulation.

In 2022 the Data Systems and Data Coordination (DSDC) Program worked on the adaptation and launch of the OIC in Mexico, the launch of the Regional Database in the Western Balkans, and the launch of the AM/PM screening application in the iDMS, which compares AM and PM data to produce a preliminary list of possible matches. The team also worked on adaptations of the iDMS for partners in Iraq and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as implementing the [MyFace](#) tool in the OIC, accepting, processing and importing Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) lists of missing from Ukraine into the iDMS, and developing and deploying the [Syrian Mapping Tool](#).

With an increased number of external and internal iDMS users, the volume of data in the system significantly increased in 2022. Currently, more than 110,000 missing persons records and information on 250,000 family members are stored in the iDMS.

The DSDC Data Analytics Unit further improved the Data Analytics Framework during the year: as part

of these improvements, a new approach to geo-referencing data was introduced. This includes more data categories to highlight data patterns, enhancing visualization and accessibility. The team also worked on new ways of presenting data on the ICMP Dashboard and the iDMS ecosystem to generate key metrics and statistical indicators.



Collection of blood reference samples for DNA testing.

The DSDC Program continued to provide expert training and monitoring to support optimal use of the iDMS and the highest standard of data collection and analysis. Continuous analysis of data sets, supporting the creation of a central data repository, is carried out regularly, along with activities to ensure the informed and active participation of families of the missing. Due diligence and inclusion of relevant government and non-government sectors in this process is also maintained. In 2022 such activities focused on the Syria, Iraq and Mexico programs.

Wim Kok Center for Excellence and Learning

The Wim Kok Center for Excellence and Learning (CEL), established in 2019, supports ICMP's efforts to develop the capacity of government authorities and civil society organizations to account for missing persons. The CEL ensures that ICMP maintains the highest standards of learner-centered design in its training courses and continuously evaluates the impact of ICMP's learning activities.

The CEL supports ICMP's horizontal and geographic programs by coordinating all facets of the learning process. This includes assessing stakeholder needs and designing training courses to meet those needs, developing training materials and delivering training along with subject matter experts, and evaluating

courses to assess their impact on stakeholders' ability to account for missing persons.

In 2022, the CEL worked across ICMP's programs to support the development of institutional and technical capacity with stakeholders across the world. Together with subject matter experts, the CEL delivered 24 training courses to nearly 450 CSO and government representatives and created more than 20 new training packages.

The CEL operates as a multiplier – expanding the effectiveness and the reach of work carried out by ICMP programs. Throughout the year, the CEL team ensured that instructional design principles were



The Wim Kok Center for Excellence and Learning (CEL) was established in 2019.



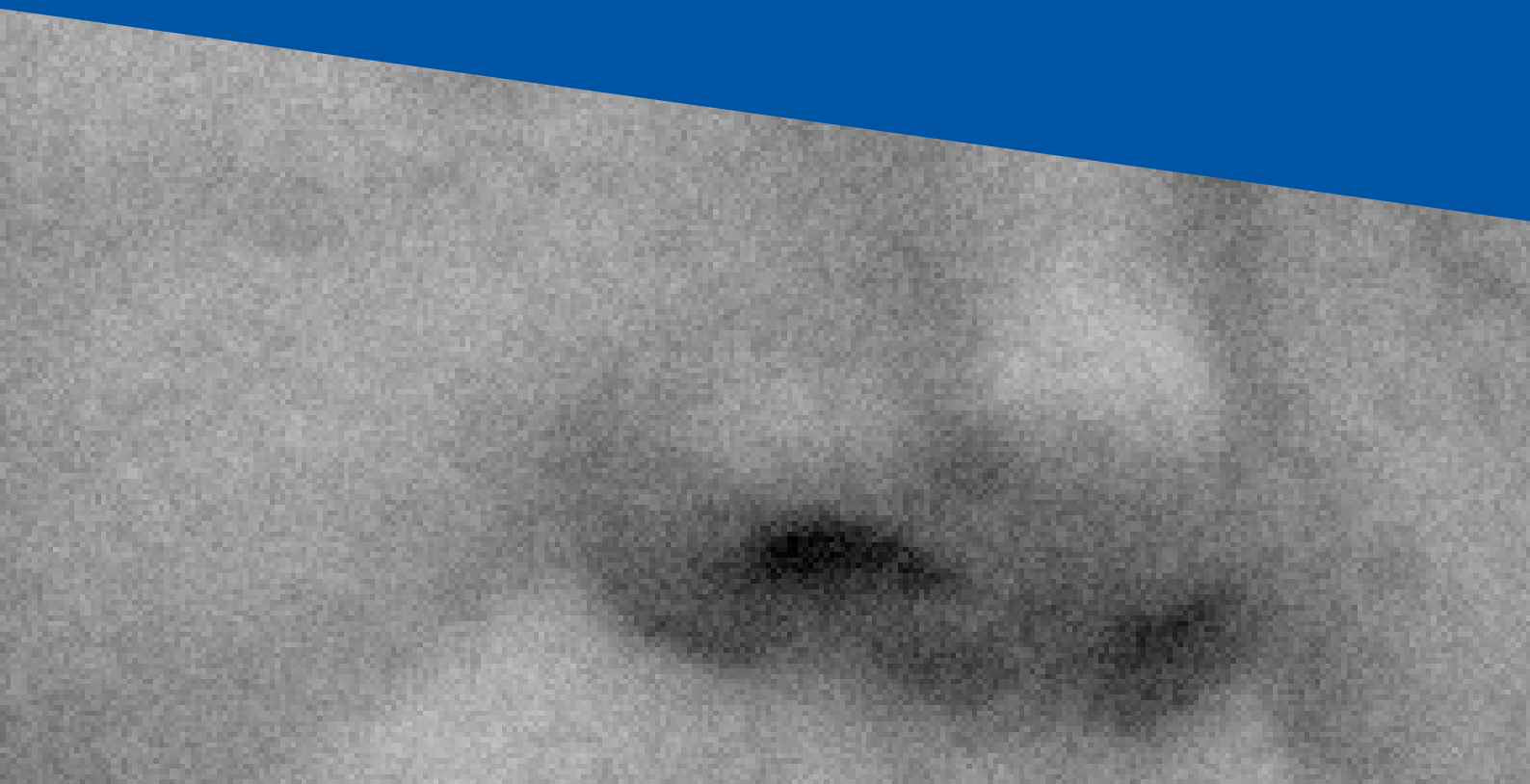
In 2022, the CEL worked across ICMP's programs.

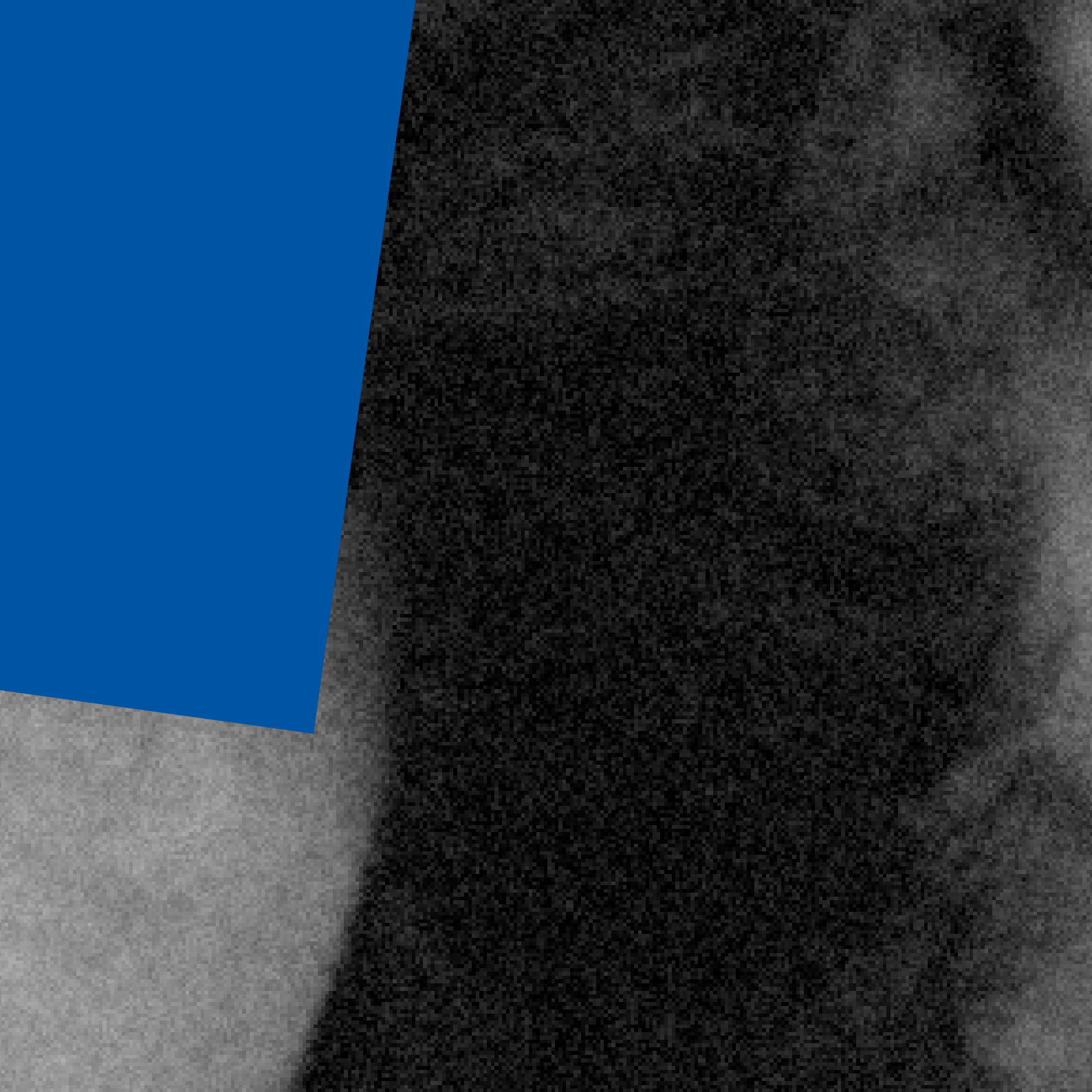
applied across ICMP's learning and development activities. ICMP's training courses are supported by needs assessments to explore the type of activities that will meaningfully contribute to stakeholder development; they are also evaluated to ensure lasting impact.

During the year, the CEL helped to design and deliver virtual training related to the reporting and safeguarding of mass grave sites to civil society organizations in Syria. The CEL also worked with subject matter experts to design forensic archaeology and anthropology training for delivery to Ukrainian government forensic experts to support efforts to identify missing persons there.

In addition, the CEL designed new and innovative learning solutions, including online courses utilizing multimedia content on topics related to forensic anthropology and DNA based identification. These courses were created to build the capacity of external government stakeholders, as well as to build internal technical capacity.

Program **Highlights**





D Albanian Family Associations (FAs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).



Albania

In January in Tirana, nine family associations and CSOs signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work collaboratively to address the issue of persons who went missing during the communist era. All nine signatories were beneficiaries of ICMP's small grants program in Albania, which was funded by the European Union and the Swiss Government in 2020-2021.

Profiles of the Missing



Nura Begovic

Chair of the Association of Citizens
Women of Srebrenica

“I am the Chair of the Association of Citizens, Women of Srebrenica, I am a woman, a victim survivor of the Srebrenica Genocide.”



After the fall of Srebrenica and the Genocide and ethnic cleansing that followed, we were deported from Srebrenica to Tuzla. The Association of Citizens, Women of Srebrenica, was registered on 21 March 1996 with its seat in Tuzla and Srebrenica; it brings together relatives of missing persons. Its members are mainly women, mothers, wives, sisters and daughters who lost their family members, or, more accurately, whose family members were killed in the last war during the Srebrenica Genocide.

Since the Srebrenica tragedy in July 1995, we have been searching for truth and justice for persons missing from the last war.

I organize peaceful protests that are held on the eleventh day of every month in the streets of Tuzla demanding truth and justice for our beloved missing family members.

Activities of the Association I lead are best represented by the slogan, Campaign for truth and justice.

The Association has run and will continue to run this campaign and will continue to advocate for all issues that concern the people of the Srebrenica and the Podrinje area. These include accounting for missing persons, victims of genocide; the process of exhuming the remains of victims; the identification process;

burial of human remains; construction of the Memorial Center in Potocari; holding perpetrators to account and arresting war criminals; and the responsibility and culpability of the international community for the Srebrenica massacre.

My intention is to keep our Association operating and open to all citizens, women, or any other group, that might be interested in investigations or in improving and strengthening our activities to account for persons missing from the last war.

My intention is to empower women, irrespective of their age, to be strong and sincere, to tell the truth, to fight against wars and for truth, to fight for better education and to help and sympathize with others regardless of their national background or community or place of origin.

Working through our Association we have helped many young women who lost their husbands and became single mothers to raise and educate their children, who are now helping other people.

We have helped mothers who lost their sons and husbands to stay strong and empowered through our activities. We have provided the most important type of aid – psychosocial assistance – through workshops with the help of other organizations that provide such relief.

I have paid regular visits to women, and organized meetings, going to local courts to seek truth and justice. I have encouraged women to be brave and to testify in order to locate the missing and convict the murderers who killed their loved ones, and to stay strong when visiting execution sites, mass graves, camps, and other locations where crimes were committed.

I want to encourage all women victims of war to seek their rights, including the right to reparations in order to provide for their children, their families and themselves.

My message is the following: I am with you and beside you, alongside all women throughout the world. Be brave, be united, come together, help yourselves and others. Let us fight for truth and for justice. Justice is slow but it will come!



Armenia

In 2021, ICMP for the first-time assisted Armenia with an initial project, supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The project focused on strengthening the DNA laboratory of the Ministry of Health of Armenia (MoH) through DNA identification and capacity building.

The project with the MoH laboratory was a first step in helping the Republic of Armenia to account for missing and disappeared persons. ICMP provided technical support to the MoH by performing DNA testing on complicated degraded samples. Following DNA testing, ICMP held workshops with DNA experts

of the MoH laboratory to assist with the implementation of specialized methods for testing highly degraded human remains. During the year, Armenia made a formal request to continue working with ICMP to address the missing persons issue in a sustainable manner. In 2022, ICMP continued to perform DNA testing for the MoH laboratory, with support from the Government. At the end of 2022, ICMP secured funding from the Government of the Netherlands to assess gaps in the overall missing persons process in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Profiles of the Missing



“We will survive and we will be a force in the process of democratic transformation; we will survive by building full and equal citizenship for all Syrian men and women.”



Alice Mofraj

Leader of the National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change in Syria

Working as an Arabic-language teacher at institutes and high schools in and around Damascus until the end of 2014, I was arrested twice, in July 2011 and in December 2013. I was dismissed from my teaching position and my property was confiscated due to my arrest and transfer to the Terrorism Court. I was released in an exchange at Barzeh al-Balad in February 2014.

I am one the leaders of the National Coordination Committee for the Forces for Democratic Change in Syria. I have participated in the Geneva negotiations

and I have been a member of the Constitutional Committee since it was established in September 2019. I have also been a member of the Syrian Women for Peace and Democracy Initiative sponsored by the United Nations since 2013, and I am a founding member of the Women’s Political Movement in Syria, the Syrian Civil Women’s Network, and the Homeland No Prison Campaign for Detainees and the Forcibly Disappeared. Since 2015 I have been Co-chair of the Dodi Center for Studies and Research, living with my family in Germany as a political refugee.

I have prepared and published policy papers on the issue of detainees and missing persons, transitional justice, standards for a safe and neutral environment, gender and security sector restructuring, sexual violence in Syria as a tool of war, Decentralization and women's rights, ideological reconstruction in the Syrian education sector, accountability and sustainable peace, and the independence of constitutional structures.

As a detainee and a survivor, I have endeavored to link politics with real life through my work on the Committee of Detainees and Missing Persons since the beginning of 2016. The strategy has been based on UN Resolution 2254 and international resolutions for detainees and forcibly disappeared persons. Data has been collected and shared with the Syrian Network for Human Rights and the International Working Group on Syria, in coordination with international organizations such as ICMP, the Commission of Inquiry on Syria, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the IILM. I have worked with Syrian civil rights activists and feminist organizations addressing gender and the Syrian constitution, to abolish every kind of discrimination against women and stigma that impacts women detainees, putting them at risk of violence. With colleagues, I have maintained continuous coordination in the Koblenz court, to include gender-based sexual violence issues in trials and with survivors of sexual violence and to support them and associations of victims in Syria. I have participated in sessions of the Human Rights Council in Geneva and at Security Council sessions in New York. In June 2022, I participated in a Security Council

session, held under the Arrria formula, on supporting victims' associations and the independent mechanism for detainees and missing persons. This focused on convening an international conference on detainees, which has been opposed by Russia and Turkiye as it is not consistent with the Astana agenda.

With ICMP and others I co-founded the Syrian Policy Coordination Group, and we have produced a number of constitutional proposals on the issue of detainees, building on different Syrian contexts and actual experience and unifying the positions of activists. My message to Syrian women is this: we are victims of all kinds of tyranny, the tyranny of an oppressive regime and the tyranny of forces that exercise de facto control; we will survive and we will be a force in the process of democratic transformation; we will survive by building full and equal citizenship for all Syrian men and women; there will never be sustainable peace without a fundamental solution to the issue of detainees or without holding all war criminals in Syria accountable.

ICMP supporting the Mass Graves Directorate of the Martyrs' Foundation in assessing 3 mass grave sites in the Missan Governorate, Iraq for possible excavation.



Iraq

ICMP has been working since 2005 to help Iraq address a legacy of hundreds of thousands of missing persons from decades of conflict. Support to government and CSO partners in Iraq includes facilitating Iraq's efforts to establish a central mechanism and central record on missing persons; supporting the formation of an institutional and legislative framework to secure the rights of families of the missing; helping Iraqi authorities to develop an impartial, transparent and credible strategy for locating missing persons that results in evidence that can be used in criminal proceedings; and

strengthening the capacity of CSOs in their work with families of the missing and helping them to build bridges with government authorities.

In 2022, ICMP sought ways to support Iraqi institutions in their efforts to implement the conclusions reached by 18 senior officials from Iraq at a **policy conference** held in The Hague in September 2021, although the absence of a new government for most of 2022 made implementation of these strategic steps difficult. Even with no new government in place, there was a willingness on the part of some institutions to follow

up on the conclusions reached in The Hague. In this context, ICMP participated in meetings called by the Iraqi Foreign Ministry and facilitated meetings of the Iraqi Permanent International Humanitarian Law Committee addressing key issues pertaining to the missing persons process. Under the auspices of the Office of the Prime Minister and with the support of ICMP and the ICRC, the [International Humanitarian Law Committee](#) held a total of four meetings to work on the establishment of a central mechanism and a central record – two key conclusions of the September 2021 event. These four meetings were preceded by two meetings on the same topic organized by the Iraqi Foreign Ministry.

These meetings resulted in a draft law on a missing persons coordination mechanism and further explored the options for expanding the roll-out of a central record for all relevant data pertaining to missing persons in Iraq.

ICMP devised a [five-year support plan](#) centered on advancing progress on the [12 conclusions](#) reached at the September 2021 policy conference.

In addition to encouraging institutional and legal changes necessary to establish a functional and sustainable missing persons process, ICMP continued its support for field activities, in some instances together with the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD). In 2022, ICMP assisted the Ministry of Health's Medico-Legal Department (MLD) and the Mass Graves Affairs and Protection Directorate of the

Martyrs' Foundation (MGD) financially and provided technical assistance related to five excavations at 11 sites (including two jointly with UNITAD), involving three sites related to crimes associated with Da'esh and two related to crimes associated with the former regime; four technical mass grave site assessments (three related to crimes associated with Da'esh and one related to crimes associated with the former regime); and four DNA reference collection campaigns for families of the missing (three related to crimes associated with Da'esh and one related to crimes associated with the former regime).



ICMP staff supporting the Mass Grave Directorate of the Martyr's Foundation and the Medico-Legal Directorate of the Ministry of Health during a data and DNA reference sample collection campaign for relatives of missing Yazidi community members.



On 26 July 2022 ICMP facilitated a roundtable discussion with the Iraqi authorities and families of victims from the Camp Speicher massacre. The discussion included progress on the identification process, entitlements and other challenges.

ICMP supported the continued roll-out of the Integrated Data Management System (iDMS), including the donation of equipment and provision of training to at least 40 end users at the MLD and MGD (with a women participation rate of 20 percent on average). The introduction of the iDMS, which could house an Iraqi central record, represents progress by Iraqi institutions towards establishing a unified database that includes information on all missing persons and their families.

ICMP also continued to support civil society, in particular families of the missing, holding several awareness-raising events in affected communities and facilitating dialogue – albeit limited – between families and relevant government entities.

Over the next five years, ICMP will work towards advancing progress against three strategic objectives in the five-year plan, specifically by promoting a centrally coordinated, impartial approach to accounting for missing persons, through the creation of a central mechanism and central record; strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations and helping them to build bridges with government authorities; and advancing Iraq's legal framework so that it adheres to international standards, including efforts to locate all missing persons, including victims from the Saddam Hussein regime and victims of Da'esh crimes.

Profiles of the Missing



Khawla Ismael Khudeeda

Member of the Yazidi Survivor
Network (YSN)

“You are not alone in your efforts for justice and equality; there are countless other women who share your vision and are working towards the same goals”.

I lost my father, my mother, my three brothers, my stepmother, and my brother’s wife in August 2014 as a result of the ISIS attack on Sinjar.

I have actively participated in multiple initiatives dedicated to supporting the search for missing persons. Through my involvement, I have maintained a steadfast commitment to helping the effort to reunite families with their missing relatives. I have also played an active role in advocacy campaigns to expedite the identification process, and I have been a vocal proponent of establishing an international committee dedicated to the search for missing persons.

Through my advocacy work, I have sought to garner support and build consensus around the need for a coordinated, global effort to address this critical issue.

My message to women across the world who are pursuing the path towards truth, justice, and reparations is to keep pushing forward with determination, resilience, and a steadfast commitment to your values and goals. You are not alone in your efforts for justice and equality; there are countless other women who share your vision and are working towards the same goals. Remember to draw strength from your community and support networks, and to seek out allies who can amplify your voice and provide additional resources and perspectives. Above all, remember that your efforts are making a difference, no matter how small they may seem at times. Every step you take towards truth, justice, and reparations helps to create a more just and equitable world for all. So, keep pushing forward, stay true to your values, and know that your contributions are truly invaluable.



Photo credit:
REUTERS / Suhaib Salem

Libya

In 2022, the ICMP Libya team focused on establishing trust with government and civil society partners, as well as accessing forensic sites, mapping civil society, and assisting families of the missing. This included facilitating regular dialogues with key Libyan stakeholders and providing a safe space for families to meet. ICMP also developed its partnership with international organizations working on the issue of missing persons in Libya, through the inter-agency working group on missing persons and other mechanisms designed to coordinate international engagement in the country.

In June, a joint field trip was organized with the Ministry of Justice to the mass grave in Bani Walid, where ICMP offered technical support in assessing the grave and the extent of human rights violations committed in the area. This opened the way for talks with relevant government institutions in Tripoli, including the Attorney General's Office, the Mass Graves Committee, and the Ministry of Justice, on a concrete work-plan encompassing data systems, data collection, criminal investigations, DNA processing, chain of custody, identification techniques and communication with civil society.

In June 2022, ICMP convened a two-day roundtable with 10 Libyan CSOs working on the issue of missing persons, the rule of law and human rights, to determine the extent to which civil society in Libya is willing to cooperate with government authorities and institutions working on the issue of missing persons. During the meeting, ICMP provided training on international legal frameworks related to missing persons.

In the second half of the year, ICMP reached out to 95 representatives of families of missing persons throughout Libya, arranging meetings at which families were able to articulate their concerns in a secure environment.

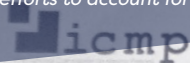
In October, ICMP visited the Libyan Criminal Investigation Directorate's forensic laboratory department and the DNA laboratory facility of the General Authority for Search and Identification of Missing Persons to conduct preliminary assessments and gather information to be used in designing appropriate training courses. The need for digitization was identified at the Criminal Investigation Directorate's DNA laboratory; both agencies also require assistance to improve operating procedures and to work towards obtaining ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation.

At the end of 2022, ICMP began planning joint field missions to mass grave sites with the Ministry of Justice.



In-person PCG session in Istanbul in October 2021.

ICMP and the Office of the Attorney General in Nuevo Leon (FGJNL) at the launch of the Online Inquiry Center (OIC), a major new initiative to provide transparency and enhance efforts to account for the missing.



Lanzamiento del Centro de Consulta en Línea de Personas Desaparecidas

de Noviembre, 2022



Mexico

According to the National Registry of Missing Persons, which is administered by the National Search Commission (Comisión Nacional de Búsqueda, CNB) and incorporates data from Federal and State attorney general's offices and local search commissions, by the end of 2022 more than 109,000 active cases of missing persons had been reported since 1964. In view of underreporting from families, and the unreliability of state-level databases, the actual number is likely to be considerably higher.

Active cases include victims of political repression from the 1960s to the 1980s, and from specific periods of heightened violence since the adoption of the Security Strategy in 2006. In some areas of the country, disappearances peaked in 2009-13, while in others disappearances have continued at the same level. Many families report disappearances immediately, others report several years afterwards, and many, it is believed, do not report due to security concerns or lack of trust or information.

The National Registry lists more than 87 percent of active cases as enforced disappearances or disappearances by private persons. Data from the Registry indicates that in 25 percent of cases the victims are women, while more than 65 percent of cases involving victims below the age of 20 are women, mostly aged between 15 and 19. From the 32 states in Mexico, six – Mexico, Guanajuato, Nuevo León, Puebla, Tamaulipas, and Mexico City – account for 51 percent of cases of disappeared girls and women.

All 32 jurisdictions in Mexico are dealing with active cases of missing persons. Only seven states report fewer than 500 missing persons, and this may reflect underreporting. Given the high mobility in the country, cases often concern residents of one state who were last seen in another state. Persons also go missing en route from Central America or the Caribbean through Mexico to the United States.

In December 2021, the CNB reported that since 2006, at least 4,839 clandestine sites had been located, from which 8,278 bodies had been exhumed. Of this number, the government says 1,136 have been identified and 1,019 have been returned to families.

Consolidating data from 27 jurisdictions, the National Movement of Families of the Missing reports that there are 52,000 unidentified human remains across the country. This does not include bone fragments recovered from execution sites.

During 2022, ICMP successfully concluded a four-year project in the northern state of Nuevo Leon, working in collaboration with the Citizens in Support of Human Rights organization (Ciudadanos en Apoyo a los Derechos Humanos (CADHAC)), with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Throughout the project ICMP worked with the Attorney General’s Office of the State of Nuevo Leon (FGJNL) to improve its technical capacity to respond to enforced disappearances, in relation to recovery, analysis and processing of human remains, adoption of new DNA identification processes, and the deployment of a new system to store, manage and analyze information.

Highlights during 2022 included adopting and validating optimized DNA extraction methods that increase the possibility of obtaining genetic profiles from small and difficult bone samples (ICMP also donated equipment and reagents critical for this exercise); training in forensic anthropology to aid in the establishment of a team dedicated exclusively to the analysis of skeletal remains; adopting a comprehensive analysis strategy of the more than 19,000 remains recovered from the “El Tubo” case; deploying the Integrated Data Management System for Nuevo Leon (iDMS-FGJNL); creating a consolidated registry of missing persons (ICMP analyzed 78,889 records of missing persons provided by different FGJNL units, and by identifying duplicates consolidated a unique list of 33,016 records); and launching the Nuevo Leon Online Inquiry Center (OIC) as an open platform that makes it possible to obtain and share information on missing persons.

The OIC currently contains 7,646 records of active cases registered in the state of Nuevo Leon.

Additionally, in 2022 ICMP concluded an 18-month project with the Federal Attorney General's Office (FGR). Under the Project "Towards an effective and sustainable strategy of forensic identification for missing persons in Mexico", ICMP helped the FGR to adopt two new DNA extraction methods for skeletal remains. This was made possible through a donation of specialized equipment and intensive training of

FGR genetic experts. In 2022, through the validation process the FGR recorded a success rate increase from 39 percent to 70 percent; the project also included publication of a [Handbook on DNA extraction methods](#).

ICMP has identified areas that need to be addressed in order to respond effectively to Mexico's missing persons crisis and is actively exploring possible avenues through which it will be able to continue its assistance.



Mexico City, 29 August 2022: In the framework of collaboration between the Office of the Federal Attorney General (FGR) and USAID, through its RED-DH activity, ICMP developed a Manual on methods of DNA extraction from unidentified human skeletal remains: <https://www.icmp.int/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Handbook-Mexico.pdf>. ICMP provided training on the DNA extraction methods, which were validated and adopted by FGR. These methods provide a higher success rate, especially on degraded skeletal remains.

Profiles of the Missing



Yezka Garza

Lawyer, public office-holder, human rights expert and consultant on issues related to forensic human identification, public policy, and children's and women's rights.

In 2014, after serving for a year as Director of the Center for Women's Justice and Empowerment in the state of Coahuila de Zaragoza, during which she successfully consolidated the state government's model for the protection of women against violence, Yezka was appointed as Prosecutor for Children's Rights. In this position she had responsibility for strengthening prevention of, and accountability for, crimes affecting children. In 2018, Yezka led the state's effort to locate, secure and repatriate a 12-year-old girl from the United States, after an intensive and effective collaboration with the East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office.

In 2019, Yezka was selected by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to coordinate the project "Consolidation of the Criminal Justice System in México", aimed at assessing the level of implementation by each state government regarding the Accusatory Penal System enacted by Congress in 2008.

In 2020, Yezka was appointed Director of the Regional Center for Human Identification (known by its Spanish acronym, CRIH), a new institution created with the sole purpose of building the state's technical capacities to address the issue of missing persons. By pursuing self-sufficiency and deeper ties with strategic allies, Yezka has successfully put the organization on a steady upward trajectory that has made it a national model.

Members of the Syrian Policy
Coordination Group at a meeting
in The Hague.



Syria/MENA

ICMP is working to establish the foundations of an effective missing persons process in Syria that can become quickly and fully operational when conditions on the ground allow. Launched in 2017, the program places the rights of families of missing persons at the center of efforts to account for their relatives, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or other characteristics. The program is premised on the fact that there cannot be lasting peace unless families of the missing are able to access their right to truth, justice, and reparations. This in turn will facilitate the safe and dignified return of refugees to their communities in

Syria. ICMP is helping CSOs, including family associations and survivor groups, to develop a unified policy approach, and is working to enable the meaningful participation of family members, especially women, in the missing persons process.

During 2022, with the support of partners, ICMP collected information from 10,801 family members about 5,705 missing persons from Syria. ICMP also signed Data Partner Implementation Agreements with five Data Partner Organizations (DPOs) based in Turkiye and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Through

these agreements and the work of ICMP, information on 4,742 missing persons was updated.

In addition, ICMP collected 326 DNA samples from relatives of missing persons in Iraq and Germany. Also in 2022, ICMP convened and facilitated the eighth meeting of the Data Governance Group, enabling DPOs to take stock of progress and discuss the way forward.

ICMP conducted 28 outreach seminars in northeast and northwest Syria, Lebanon, and Turkiye. The seminars took place in partnership with four Syrian civil society organizations, two women-led associations of survivors of detention, and one activist. A total of 498 persons, mostly relatives of missing persons, attended the seminars. The majority (444 or 89 percent) were women. These seminars served as an entry point for ICMP to engage with families of missing persons and they offered families an opportunity to learn more about ICMP's work. Families also received a tutorial as part of each seminar, on how to report a missing relative through the Online Inquiry Center (OIC).

Throughout 2022, the Lebanon-based NoPhotoZone and the Turkiye-based Human Rights Guardians, implemented three projects, which resulted in the launch of an association for Syrian families of the missing, the publication of a study on the reasons that prevent families from reporting missing women relatives, and the implementation of an advocacy initiative by families of missing persons. ICMP implemented a series of discussions with more than 50 civil society actors, relatives of missing persons, and former detainees on the stigmatization of missing

women and their families. These discussions engaged actors in Syria, Turkiye, Lebanon, and Iraq. During the year, ICMP continued to support a platform of women-led actors and worked closely with them on launching an awareness video on the occasion of International Women's Day

ICMP also initiated consultations with actors in Europe, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Turkiye to gather information about capacity and needs pertaining to the launch of civil society networks to advocate for a rule-of-law-based approach to accounting for Syria's missing persons. A networking event was attended by 122 individuals, including 82 civil society actors and representatives of 11 women-led CSOs, 10 family associations and eight survivor groups. As well as enabling the exchange of experiences, the event helped to forge bridges between actors in Syria and neighboring countries and actors in European countries.

Eight training sessions were delivered during the year, two of which focused on advocacy campaigns and story-telling about the issue of missing persons, while six focused on self-advocacy. ICMP also delivered two training sessions on safeguarding mass graves, aimed at civil society representatives, medics and first responders in Syria.

ICMP published [Family Rights: Short Guide for Families of the Missing](#), which provides information about the rights of survivors and about agencies, including ICMP, that can provide assistance. The Guide also outlines how family members can play an active role in the process of accounting for their missing relatives. The Policy Coordination Group (PCG), which was established in February 2020 following a conference organized by ICMP in The Hague, continued to

produce policy papers designed to shape a framework for a future Syrian missing persons process. The PCG has 27 members, including Syrian family associations, CSOs, legal and human rights defenders, and international advisors. The PCG held five meetings in 2022, during which the group finalized a [paper](#) on missing persons legislation and institutions to enable a sustainable and just process to account for Syria's missing; a [paper](#) that proposes the adoption of a national legal framework to address the issue of mass graves in Syria; and a [paper](#) on the failure of Syrian amnesty decrees to address the issue of missing persons and detainees.

The PCG also developed a plan to distribute its papers more widely and advocate for adoption of its recommendations.



ICMP staff collecting DNA reference samples in Germany from Syrian families of the missing.

Profile of the missing



Jumana Seif

Lawyer and legal advisor to the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights in Berlin, ECCHR

“I am firmly convinced that the issue of the missing, the disappeared, and the detainees is a humanitarian issue, and it must remain at the top of our priorities as Syrian women.”



I was born in Damascus and lived there until 2012. Since my childhood, I have experienced the horrific effects of absence and enforced disappearance by the Syrian regime. At the age of ten, I witnessed the disappearance of my uncle in 1980, then my cousin in 1981. From that time on, I realized the meaning of fear and how the lives of families turn into mere pain especially for mothers, wives and children. In 1996, my younger brother, Iyad, disappeared under mysterious circumstances. To this day, my mother is still waiting for him, in the absence of any information about his fate.

This bitter personal experience, which I share today with hundreds of thousands of Syrian families, is one of the main incentives that motivates me to contribute to the issue of the missing. In addition to my work on investigating international crimes committed in Syria and holding the perpetrators accountable from all sides, and to be close and in contact with many family associations and families of the victims, I cooperate with ICMP through the Syrian Policy Coordination Group, which works to advocate for the issue of the missing and tries to protect the rights of tens of

thousands of missing persons, detainees, and the rights of their families. I am proud to be among many colleagues for whose tireless efforts I have only appreciation and respect.

I am firmly convinced that the issue of the missing, the disappeared, and the detainees is a humanitarian issue, and it must remain at the top of our priorities as Syrian women. This is because of its harsh and devastating consequences for individuals and societies, especially women and children, and the right of families to know the fate of their loved ones and their whereabouts. Compensating them for the pain and damage they have suffered, and holding the perpetrators accountable are basic rights that cannot be waived in any way, no matter how long it takes. From here, I see the importance of cooperation and coordination with ICMP as an international organization specialized in revealing the fate of the missing. ICMP provided us with a lot of experience within our discussions in the Policy Coordination Group, as well as its efforts to make tangible progress on this issue in extremely complex local, regional, and international circumstances.



Photo credit: Krysjá

Ukraine

On 24 February, Russia invaded Ukraine, radically escalating an armed conflict that began in 2014. From April onward, mass graves were found in areas liberated from Russian occupation, and more graves containing unidentified victims are likely to be uncovered in the future. In addition to military personnel reported missing in action, people have gone missing as a result of deportation, summary execution, incommunicado detention, abduction, and, in the case of children, unlawful adoption and family separation in the midst of mass displacement. Missing persons include Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians, combatants, and civilians.

In April 2022, the authorities in Ukraine requested urgent ICMP assistance based on an exchange of diplomatic notes and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in Kyiv in 2021. ICMP responded immediately with deployments to help Ukrainian institutions access high-volume, DNA-led identification capabilities; help the authorities ensure that evidence is collected, including evidence from mass and clandestine graves admissible in criminal trials. ICMP also supported laboratory operations, data collection, and mass grave investigations; and started engaging with civil society and families of the



ICMP representatives examining the facilities of Kharkiv Regional Bureau of Legal Medical Expertise.

missing to ensure their effective participation in the missing persons process. An ICMP office was opened in Kyiv in July, and by the end of the year, nine members of staff had been hired to implement the Ukraine Program.

During 2022, ICMP developed constructive partnerships with the Commissioner on Persons Gone Missing under Special Circumstances, the Ombudsman for Human Rights, the Ministry of Interior, the National Police, the Ministry of Health, the Office of the Prosecutor General, and other institutions that have a role in accounting for missing persons.

ICMP made field visits to Regional Bureaus of Forensic Expertise and Regional Bureaus of Legal Medical

Expertise in Kharkiv, Dnipro, Mykolaiv, Boyarka (Kyiv oblast), and Bucha in order to assess technical and material needs and develop training programs to be delivered in 2023.

ICMP also began systematic outreach to families of missing persons, CSOs and local communities, and established links with other international organizations operating in Ukraine and neighboring countries.

The CSI team created a database of more than 200 civil society partners, and relationships were formed with organizations such as the Center for Civil Liberties, whose leader Oleksandra Matviichuk won the 2023 Nobel Prize, Poshuk Znyklykh, led by TV-host

and activist Kateryna Osadcha, and the women-led advocacy group Nadiia, which brings together relatives of missing servicemen.

The Online Inquiry Center (OIC), which had already been translated into Ukrainian and Russian, continued to receive input from families in 2022, principally in connection with military personnel who have gone missing in the eastern part of Ukraine.



Representatives of Expert Service under the Ministry of Internal Affairs during the visit to ICMP DNA lab in the Hague.

As part of a limited pilot program, 51 ante-mortem reference samples were collected from relatives of missing persons and compared with 68 post-mortem samples, with all the data being stored in the iDMS. The ICMP laboratory in The Hague was able to obtain 42 DNA profiles from the post-mortem samples, enabling seven DNA match reports, which were presented to the Ukrainian authorities.

The program launched a dynamic media campaign in the middle of the year designed to explain the underlying principles of ICMP's rule-of-law-based approach and ICMP's support for legislative and institutional initiatives that will facilitate a sustainable and effective missing persons process, as well as access to forensic science and database technology resources for Ukrainian institutions. ICMP's Ukrainian Facebook page, launched in August, had more than 5,000 followers by the end of the year, and had interacted with almost a quarter of a million visitors.



ICMP team during the exhumation in Bucha, Kyiv oblast, Ukraine.

Profiles of the Missing



“Take care of yourself! Constant communication with people who have lost contact with loved ones, who are suffering is stressful, it can lead to loss of motivation and burnout.”



Vitaliia Serebrianska

Lawyer at the CSO “SICH” in Dnipro

I have been working in the field of human rights for a long time, and since 2015 I have been helping people who have suffered in one way or another as a result of the conflict in Ukraine, including relatives of people who have gone missing.

This issue has become especially relevant since February 2022. During eight years of human rights work, I have provided legal assistance to more than 100 people, successfully completing around 20 court cases.

I help the relatives of missing persons as a lawyer; I provide advice, prepare requests to state institutions, and lawsuits in court. For example, I advise relatives regarding the necessary steps to find the missing and to receive payments from the state. People are often disoriented at the beginning of their search due to the large amount of information and the long list of government agencies they must apply to. It is very useful in this case to have a lawyer to guide them from the beginning to the end of the search process. I make applications to the authorized institutions to obtain information about missing persons.

These are statements to the police, the Security Service of Ukraine, the Ministry of Defense and others. I assist with court cases related to collecting payment from the state for relatives of the disappeared or for people who have been released from captivity. There are cases where state institutions deny the right of relatives of the missing to receive state assistance; in such cases a lawyer helps them defend their rights in court. In addition, relatives of the missing and people who have been released from captivity need moral support and inspiration to fight for their rights. Often, due to the stress they have had to endure, they lose faith in the state, in justice; they lose faith in people. I always try to encourage them, listen and provide moral support and motivation.

My message to women around the world who are seeking truth, justice and reparations is: take care of yourself! Constant communication with people who have lost contact with loved ones, who are suffering is stressful, it can lead to loss of motivation and burnout. It is necessary not to forget about yourself, about your health and security, in order to maintain compassion and kindness.

The signing ceremony of the Implementation Plan between ICMP and VAST on 31 October 2022.



Vietnam

The Government of Vietnam (GVN) estimates that more than 1.1 million North Vietnamese Army personnel and Viet Cong (pro-communist South Vietnamese irregulars) were killed or went missing in the 30 years of fighting before 1975. Around 300,000 are still missing in action or presumed to be casualties. In addition, between 50,000 and 65,000 North Vietnamese civilians and between 195,000 and 430,000 South Vietnamese civilians died as a result of the conflict.

Reuniting human remains with the families of victims is an important task, and the GVN has devoted considerable attention to this issue. The ICMP-Vietnam human identification project funded by USAID started in August 2020. Its objective is to improve the ability of Vietnamese institutions to implement effective DNA-based identifications of missing persons.

Recognizing the inherent limitations of the standard DNA testing that has been applied to date in Vietnam, one major component of the project is to adapt proven new methods of DNA identification to the context of Vietnam, and – working in concert with Vietnamese scientists – to establish a plan for applying these methods in Vietnam’s identification program. This is coupled with an active program of coordination with diverse Vietnamese institutions progressively to identify and address development needs relating not only to DNA testing but also to other necessary elements of an effective multidisciplinary identification program.

Under the USAID-funded project, ICMP has been working on developing new DNA analysis workflows for human identification based on highly degraded samples, at its DNA laboratory in The Hague. As the GVN would like to have workflow optimization conducted in Vietnam, and a GVN laboratory is fully equipped to operate the new DNA analysis workflows, in 2022, ICMP worked towards transitioning to a Cooperative Agreement that will allow more time, funding and flexibility in project activities.

In March 2022, ICMP submitted a new proposal for the project and in April 2022, ICMP started to review a proposal submitted by the GVN partners to USAID/Vietnam. ICMP has been working with the GVN partners, especially with the Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology (VAST), to design an agreed workplan for the project. In July 2022, ICMP organized a meeting with VAST (milestone 30 of the previous project) to discuss the way forward for Phase

II of its assistance to Vietnam. Following this successful meeting, an implementation plan was finalized, laying out detailed activities of a program to advance DNA extraction and testing methods for Vietnam over the next two years.

In October 2022, the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) submitted an application with the implementation plan to the Prime Minister’s Office for in-principal approval. Approval was received in late October, enabling relevant ministries to participate in a joint program with ICMP. These include the MFA, the Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA), VAST, the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ministry of National Defense (MND) and the Ministry of Public Security (MPS). Approval opened the way for 100 post-mortem samples to be sent from Vietnam to the ICMP DNA laboratory in The Hague for the joint DNA workflows optimization study. ICMP has received funding to donate equipment and reagents to the Center for DNA Identification (CDI) at VAST so that the CDI can join the optimization study and will be able to operate the new DNA analysis workflows by the end of the project.

Program Highlights

On 31 October 2022, ICMP, in collaboration with CDI/VAST, successfully organized a signing event that officially marked the start of the Phase II of ICMP's assistance to Vietnam. During the event, VAST reviewed challenges and needs in the identification of remains from the war in Vietnam. ICMP proposed to help establish a foundation for using next-generation DNA sequencing technologies to identify missing persons on a large scale.

In late 2022, ICMP and the CDI worked on the selection of 100 samples of human remains. ICMP also established a chain-of-custody process for the transport of the samples from the CDI to the ICMP DNA laboratory for the joint optimization study and completed an initial assessment of the CDI laboratory.



Profiles of the Missing



Salwa Saedo Omar

Member of the Yazidi Survivor Network (YSN)

“I encourage women from all corners of the world who are seeking truth, justice, and reparations to hold onto these goals.”




I lost my mother, my brothers, and my sister in August 2014 as a result of the ISIS attack on Sinjar.

As an advocate for the Yazidi community, I have been actively engaged in advocacy for those who have gone missing since ISIS’s brutal campaign of violence in Sinjar in August 2014. Despite the passage of time, I continue to be absolutely committed to this cause. I have worked together with various organizations and individuals to pool resources and launch search efforts in both Iraq and Syria, where many Yazidis were taken captive or forced to flee their homes. In particular, I have focused my attention on the Al-Hol camp in Syria, which has become a hub for ISIS supporters and

former members, and where many Yazidi women and children are still being held against their will. While our collective efforts have yielded some success, the task at hand remains daunting, and we cannot do it alone. That is why I am calling for the establishment of an international committee to oversee the search and recovery of missing Yazidis, and to coordinate efforts with local authorities and organizations on the ground. Such a committee would serve as a crucial mechanism for ensuring accountability, transparency, and efficiency in the search for missing persons, and would help to address the urgent humanitarian crisis facing the Yazidi community. I urge all those who share my commitment to this cause to join me in

advocating for the establishment of this committee and to work together toward a brighter and more hopeful future for the Yazidi people.

I encourage women from all corners of the world who are seeking truth, justice, and reparations to hold onto these goals. Perseverance is key, and they should never allow themselves to be deterred or discouraged by any obstacles that they may encounter along the way. By working diligently and refusing to give up, they can help to bring about positive change and inspire others to do the same.

A black and white photograph showing four women standing outdoors, holding a large, patterned scarf. The scarf features a repeating pattern of stylized trees and a striped border. The women are dressed in a mix of traditional and modern attire. In the background, other scarves are hanging on a fence, and a child is partially visible on the right. The scene is set in an open area with trees in the distance.

ICMP Director General, Kathryn Bomberger participating in art installation "Mother's Scarf" by Mothers of Srebrenica.

Western Balkans

In the Western Balkans, ICMP supports regional cooperation among CSOs and governments in the search for the missing. ICMP pioneered the use of state-of-the-art DNA identification methods following the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and advanced database analysis to locate and identify large numbers of missing persons.

In 2022, ICMP continued to provide technical assistance both in the field and at mortuaries. At the request of the relevant authorities, ICMP Archeology and Anthropology experts assisted at 28 excavations.

The ICMP laboratory received 269 post-mortem samples and submitted 147 DNA match reports to partner institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo and Croatia. In total, ICMP provided DNA laboratory results enabling domestic institutions in the former Yugoslavia to make accurate identifications of 40 missing persons and perform 107 re-associations of skeletal remains.

In March in Sarajevo, family associations of missing persons from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) establishing the Regional Coordination Network, and in November, as part of the Berlin Process, ICMP and the Missing Persons Group (MPG), which comprises senior representatives of the domestic authorities in the Western Balkans responsible for addressing missing persons issues, [launched the Regional Database](#) of active missing persons cases from conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia.



Launch of Regional Database of active missing persons cases from conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

In January, ICMP co-chaired with the Kosovo Government Commission on Missing Persons the 4th regular session of the NN (Nomen Nescio, or No

Name) operational group in Pristina. Experts from BIH, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia participated, reporting on cases successfully closed as a result of regional cooperation and agreeing on future joint actions to resolve more NN cases.



ICMP representatives at the Srebrenica genocide commemoration.

In August, in Podgorica, ICMP co-chaired with Government Commission on Missing Persons of Montenegro meetings of the MPG. The parties agreed on the launch of the regional database and on increased exchange of information to locate clandestine gravesites.

In September in Podgorica, family associations of missing persons from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia together with the MPG [jointly commemorated all victims of conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia at the Pobrezje Park memorial.](#)



Family associations of missing persons and the Missing Persons Group commemorating all victims of conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

In 2022, ICMP presented a [combined volume set of reports of progress in accounting for those who went missing during the conflicts in BIH, Croatia and Kosovo](#), analyzing how the issue has been addressed to date and examining prospects for resolving remaining cases.

During the year, ICMP supported cooperation among domestic institutions through the participation of national authorities in the Operational Group to Resolve NN Cases and the Operational Group for the Regional Database. The national authorities also participated in numerous bilateral and trilateral meetings organized by ICMP to resolve country-specific issues.

To date, around 75 percent of the approximately 40,000 people who went missing during the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia have been accounted for. More than 18,000 have been identified on the basis of ICMP DNA match reports. In order to make these DNA identifications, ICMP has gathered reference samples from more than 93,000 relatives of missing persons – through outreach campaigns to families of the missing in Europe, North America and Australia. DNA profiles from family members have been compared with more than 45,000 DNA profiles extracted from unidentified human remains found in mass and clandestine graves.

Anthropology and Archeology department Western Balkans Team technical assistance in 2022 in numbers

- **135 cases** anthropologically examined and sampled.
- **150 physical reassociations** of disarticulated skeletal elements conducted.
- **72 official identifications** conducted with ICMP's assistance.
- **8 expert reports** on field activities and other relevant information provided to prosecutors' offices.



Marking of massacre at Korićanske stijene, BiH.



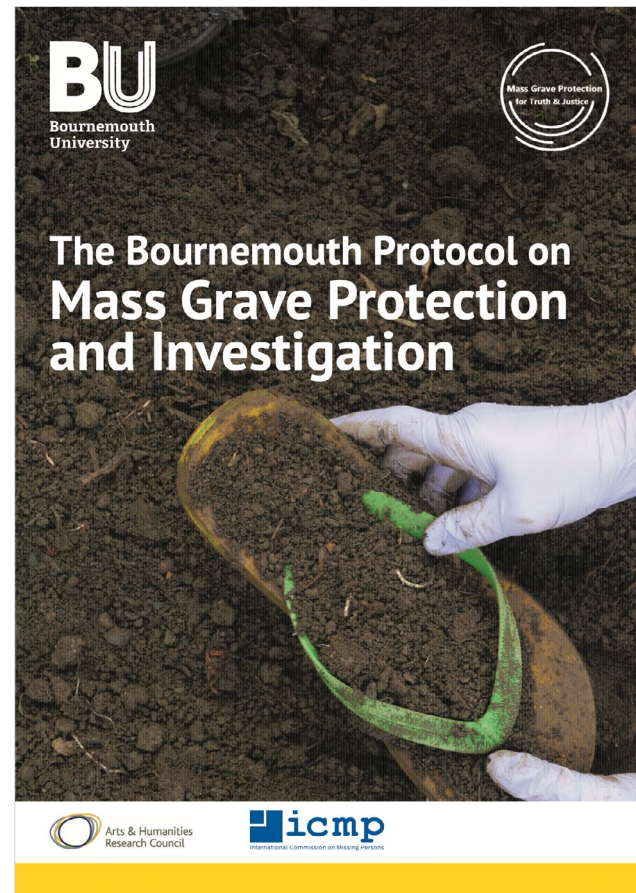
ICMP Director General, Kathrynne Bomberger paying respect to Srebrenica Genocide victims.

Assistance to Justice

ICMP supports justice sector institutions to help them strengthen their capacity to investigate missing and disappeared persons cases. This support includes cooperation agreements with international tribunals and courts, as well as international law enforcement agencies.

Initially, ICMP's Assistance to Justice Program provided evidence at trials in domestic courts and before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) related to crimes committed during the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia.

ICMP supports international and domestic criminal justice processes and helps states fulfil their obligations under international and domestic law to conduct effective investigations into the fate of missing persons and the circumstances of their disappearance.



The Bournemouth Protocol on Mass Grave Protection and Investigation.

Disaster Victim Identification

ICMP began addressing missing persons issues related to disasters in 2004 following the Southeast Asian Tsunami and has since been involved in Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) efforts related to Cameroon, Canada, Cuba, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Kenya, Namibia, the Philippines, Thailand, Ukraine, and the United States, among other places.

In DVI, the challenge is often focused on the need to make identifications from few or distant relatives, and on the need for high-throughput extraction automation. ICMP has developed specialist techniques to extract DNA from highly degraded bone samples, including samples that have been severely burned or exposed to the elements for long periods. ICMP's DNA testing and reporting components are internationally accredited to ISO/IEC 17025 standard.

In many DVI events, multiple jurisdictions are involved, and international coordination is required for effective responses. ICMP's technical capacity is underpinned by policy frameworks for data processing and protection, and by international partnerships enabling effective operational deployments, including partnerships with INTERPOL and domestic agencies charged with responding to disasters, such as the Netherlands Forensic Institute and others. ICMP and INTERPOL have developed a permanent "DVI Platform" to serve as a global resource for coordinating and conducting DVI operations.

ICMP's objectives are to provide a global standing capacity to respond effectively and efficiently to large-scale, complex DVI needs; to enhance disaster response mechanisms, especially those provided by law enforcement in DVI situations, through training; to ensure cost-effective provision of DVI and greater access to DVI among countries affected by disasters; and, through the Wim Kok Center for Excellence and Learning, to provide training in DVI responses to law enforcement throughout the world.

Missing Migrants and Refugees

ICMP's Missing Migrants and Refugees Program supports the development of a multilateral sustainable process to account for migrants and refugees missing in the Mediterranean region. Since 2018, ICMP has organized three Joint Process meetings with country representatives of Italy, Malta, Greece, and Cyprus. Malta, Greece, and Cyprus have designated national focal points to facilitate cooperation among states and support outreach to families of missing migrants.

The Joint Process discussions are also supported by interagency roundtables which ICMP holds with representatives of international and other

organization involved in the issue of migrations, including Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, EUROJUST, FRONTEX, ICRC, INTERPOL, IOM, Office of the Special Envoy for the Central Mediterranean, UNHCR, and UN CED, among others.

The interagency meetings are pivotal to the Joint Process. Following the third Joint Process meeting held in Athens in November 2021, participants at the interagency roundtable agreed on three key points. The first is that the rights and needs of families are paramount. Families have to be supported, including through awareness-raising and capacity-building efforts related to how and why data is used.

ICMP Interagency Roundtable Meeting in November 2021.





Representatives of Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta participated in the third meeting of the Joint Process in November 2021, facilitated by ICMP at the Ministry of Migration and Asylum of Greece in Athens, to discuss the way forward in the effort to account for missing migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean region.

The second is that smugglers and human traffickers must be held to account, and individuals, whether citizens or non-citizens, must have equal access to justice. The third is that ICMP will maintain cooperation with international and other organizations to help countries in the Mediterranean region advance data-sharing modalities, especially concerning cases of unidentified human remains and missing persons reports by families. ICMP will also support the development of an agreed inter-agency solution with regard to data collected by international and other organizations.

In January 2022, with reference to the third point, ICMP convened another interagency roundtable event designed to initiate periodic meetings and discussions to help countries in the Mediterranean region advance data-sharing modalities, especially concerning cases of unidentified human remains and missing persons reports by families. The group aims to develop an agreed inter-agency solution regarding data collection by international and other organizations.

The participants agreed to Launch the Inter-agency Group on missing migrants; to Hold roundtable discussions regularly to discuss updates, common challenges for those working on the issue of missing migrants, and areas to be developed further; and that ICMP would circulate discussion items prior to each meeting with international and other organizations.

In 2022 as part of a cross-program effort, ICMP launched a pilot campaign, Act in their Absence, to encourage migrants from Syria residing in Europe to report missing persons to ICMP's [Online Inquiry Center \(OIC\)](#) as part of efforts to help find missing persons from Syria. Over a period of three months the campaign collected samples from almost 200 families living in Europe.

On 7 March 2022, aiming to emphasize that the issue of persons dying and going missing along migratory routes remains a critical humanitarian and rule-of-law challenge, the United Nations Network on Migration's Executive Committee, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross, Red Crescent Societies and ICMP [called on States](#) to assume collective responsibility to save lives and prevent migrants from going missing or dying along migration routes and to search for and identify those who have gone missing and to assist their families.

Media Coverage

ICMP's work and mandate received extensive media coverage in 2022, with stories and interviews appearing in a wide array of media outlets. ICMP continued to enhance its presence on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube, resulting in an increasing number of followers, visitors, and interactions.

Social Media	Number of followers at the end 2021	Number of followers at the end 2022
Facebook	7,369	7,966 (+8%)
Twitter	6,084	6,712 (+10%)
LinkedIn	8,499	10,055 (+18%)

Funding

ICMP is voluntarily funded and seeks support from governments, multilateral organizations, foundations, corporate funding sources (including through in-kind donations and corporate social responsibility programs), and private donations. From its inception in 1996 through 2022, more than 90 percent of ICMP's funding was provided by government sources, with Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States being the biggest contributors, along with the European Union. In 2022 ICMP was also funded by Switzerland and Italy.

In 2022, productive engagement with existing donors was maintained and, at the same time, the donor base was expanded. Support was secured for the geographic programs in Ukraine, Vietnam and Iraq, although securing adequate, multi-annual Main Program funding has remained a challenge.

In Iraq in 2022, ICMP continued implementation of grants from the governments of Germany and the United States (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL)). The Iraq Program was also supported by the Government of the Netherlands through a grant that was completed in 2022. In consultation with the authorities and other Iraqi stakeholders, ICMP developed a five-year strategy which by the end of 2022 was partly supported by the Netherlands for the full five-year period. In 2023, ICMP will continue fundraising to achieve full funding of the plan

ICMP's Syria/MENA Program successfully completed a grant from the EU that was awarded in late 2020. In 2022, further support from the Governments of the UK and Germany and from DRL was also secured, while further support was also obtained from DRL. In 2023, ICMP will continue discussions with donors, including the EU, Germany and others to expand support for this program.

In the Western Balkans, funding for Kosovo was received from Sweden and Italy. Throughout 2022, the Western Balkans Program continued implementing grants funded by the EU, Sweden and Germany for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and regional activities funded by the UK.

In March 2022, ICMP successfully completed the Swiss-funded grant for its Missing Migrants and Refugees Program. In 2023 ICMP will endeavor to secure financial support from Switzerland and other donors for this program.

ICMP's Vietnam Program received funding from the US in 2020. This grant was continuously implemented throughout 2021 and expanded in 2022 for a period of three years.

In 2022, ICMP completed a grant in Libya from the Government of the Netherlands. By the end of the year, the Netherlands had provided additional support for ICMP's Libya program over a period of 5 years. Throughout 2022, ICMP's Libya program continued implementing a US DRL funded grant.

ICMP launched its Ukraine program in 2022 with the support of funding provided by the EU, US, and Germany. In 2023 additional support was granted by the Government of Canada.



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Looking
Ahead

Looking ahead, it will be possible to build on the work that was done in 2022 across the whole range of geographic programs.

Albania

Working with the authorities and civil society groups to develop an effective process to account for those who went missing during the communist era, ICMP intends to continue its support for family associations that are cooperating in order to establish a coordinated and effective series of activities related to information management, exhumation and identification, and public outreach.

Canada

ICMP will endeavor to engage with Indigenous communities across Canada to address the issue of unmarked burials at Residential Schools. Indigenous and survivor led discussions will take place through family and community gatherings across Canada. Topics will include the use of advanced scientific methods to locate and identify missing children, securing the rights of survivors to truth and justice, and addressing other needs expressed by families and survivors.

Iraq

ICMP will help the Iraqi authorities make progress in implementing the conclusions from the September 2021 policy meeting in The Hague. To meet these strategic objectives, ICMP has proposed a five-year

plan, to begin in 2023. The primary objective is to assist in establishing a central mechanism, including a central record, that can coordinate and consolidate all government efforts to find missing persons in Iraq. ICMP will also continue efforts to build bridges between the government and civil society, in order to ensure that families of missing Iraqis participate in and benefit from these initiatives.

Libya

The Libya Program will help the authorities and others locate and identify missing persons using advanced forensic techniques, building a foundation for rule-of-law institutions that investigate missing persons cases to international standards, and enabling families and other civil society actors to participate in a sustainable process. The program will promote cooperation among government institutions, and it will engage marginalized and vulnerable communities, including migrants, in the process, prioritizing a survivor-centered approach.

South Caucasus

In 2022, at the invitation of the respective authorities ICMP completed exploratory visits to Armenia and Azerbaijan. Assured of the political will of both countries to step up efforts by their respective institutions to account for missing persons, ICMP has proposed concrete measures to improve domestic capacities, including the creation of a secure Central Database on missing persons in each country, to manage data collection, to locate and excavate suspected

illicit burial sites, support identification and family reunification through DNA testing and other forensic processes, and transfer knowledge and expertise in case management, data processing and outreach to families. In 2023, ICMP will conduct separate assessments of the missing persons process and related capacities in each country and publish separate assessment reports. This project is undertaken with the financial support from the Government of the Netherlands.

Syria/MENA

The Syria/MENA Program will implement its existing strategy while incorporating operations to account for those who disappeared as a result of the February 2023 earthquake. ICMP will assess ways of enhancing data collection and outreach with families and civil society organizations inside Syria, and it will continue to provide support to civil society actors, particularly the PCG, to advocate for a future state-led process to account for Syria's missing and disappeared persons.

Ukraine

ICMP will provide training in forensic investigations, data collection and DNA-based human identification, strengthen cooperation among CSOs and family associations, support measures to facilitate reporting of possible sites where missing persons might be found and where alleged human rights violations have taken place, implement data-collection outreach campaigns, and further modify ICMP's iDMS and OIC to fit the Ukrainian and regional context.

Where conditions permit, ICMP experts will be embedded in Ukrainian institutions, and DNA testing and matching will be conducted at ICMP's DNA laboratory in The Hague.

The program prepared to launch a dynamic media and outreach campaign designed to explain the underlying principles of ICMP's rule-of-law-based approach and its support for legislative and institutional initiatives and access to forensic science and database technology. Outreach to families of the missing was premised on online and offline channels, focused on raising awareness about the rights of families and facilitating partnerships among stakeholders. ICMP's Ukrainian Facebook page, launched in August, had more than 5,000 followers by the end of the year, and interacted with almost a quarter of a million visitors.

Vietnam

ICMP will move forward with an ambitious program to work with the Center for DNA Identification (CDI) of the Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology (VAST) at the ICMP laboratory in The Hague and the CDI laboratory in Vietnam to optimize workflow and apply advanced DNA sequencing techniques to challenging cases from the Vietnam War, which are more than half a century old.

Western Balkans

ICMP will actively support the Regional Coordination network of families of the missing, and the regional Missing Persons Group, initiatives that harness and sustain political will towards reconciliation across the Western Balkans while pooling resources and information in order to account for those who are still missing from the conflicts of the 1990s. It will maintain its technical assistance in the field and in mortuaries, working with partner institutions, and provide access to DNA testing and matching for the purpose of human identification. It will continue to increase the sustainability of the process by building domestic capacities in DNA analysis through learning and development and donation of lab equipment and supplies. It

Missing Migrants and Refugees

ICMP will endeavor to secure funding for the Missing Migrants and Refugee program in order to maintain the process of international cooperation that has been launched through activities already started by the program, which have been taken up by governments and supported by CSOs and families of missing migrants and refugees. The proposed program will seek to support families of missing migrants and refugees residing in Europe to advocate for their rights and to participate actively in measures to locate missing loved ones and to secure justice and accountability.

Financial Statement

Director-General's Report and financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2022.

	Note	2022 USD	2021 USD
Restricted donors' contribution	6	8,994,115	10,271,577
Unrestricted donors' contributions	7	601,720	868,256
Other income	8	193,185	-
Total income		9,789,020	11,139,833
Staff costs	9	(6,719,276)	(7,510,795)
Other operating expenses	10	(2,743,817)	(3,265,000)
Depreciation	12	(374,911)	(370,389)
Total operating costs		(9,838,004)	(11,146,184)
Finance income	11	63,683	325,266
Finance costs	11	(211,968)	(189,042)
Net finance income / (cost)		(148,285)	136,224
Net (deficit)/surplus for the year		(197,269)	129,873
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive (deficit)/surplus for the year		(197,269)	129,873

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