



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

## **Written statement\* submitted by Franciscans International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[21 May 2025]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## Human Rights of Migrants

Franciscans International (FI) welcomes the opportunity to comment upon the subject of missing migrants following up on its contribution to the Special Rapporteur's request for input on the issue. Respect for the dignity of the human being is paramount, and we underscore the trauma and tragedy related to missing migrants. The scale of this issue is increasing as can be seen from the statistics cited in the latest reports.

In the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) latest report issued on 28 April 2025<sup>1</sup>, entitled *Missing Migrants and Countries in Crisis* it notes that 2024 was the worst year since records began for deaths and disappearances in respect of migrants, with some 8,791 cases. It surpassed the previous record which was established in 2023 of 8,746 cases. As in previous reports however, it underlines the difficulty of establishing correct numbers in regard to such losses and in this report linking the missing persons to their country of origin as being a country in crisis it makes the following statement.

"Since 2014, at least 52,500 people have died during migration linked to humanitarian crises, including more than 39,000 whose death occurred in a crisis-affected country, and another 13,500 people whose death was documented while fleeing from such countries. They comprise 72 per cent of all deaths recorded by IOM. Despite this staggering number, these data are almost certainly a vast underestimate of the true number of missing migrants in humanitarian contexts".<sup>2</sup> This underestimation requires to be taken into account in respect of dealing with the seriousness and urgency of the overall crisis in relation to missing migrants.

The IOM details figures in relation to geographical areas of the world and shows that the majority of the deaths and disappearances occur in the Mediterranean which amounts to 2,360 persons, over 25% of the total for the year 2024. The next area would be the Americas where around half of that figure – at least 1189 persons lost their lives in the course of the year.

There is a directly comparable figure however between the IOM and the non-governmental organization, Caminando Fronteras, in respect of the most dangerous sea crossing between Africa and the Canary Islands known as the Atlantic Route. For 2024 Caminando Fronteras gives an overall figure of 10,457 lost migrants who tried to cross over into Spanish territory and

9,757 for those lost on the Atlantic Route.<sup>3</sup> The corresponding figure of the IOM for the Atlantic Route is 1,167, which is approximately one ninth of the Caminando total. Whichever statistics are used the trend is for the worse.

Concrete recommendations for improving the situation and helping migrants are not lacking. We commend the UN Secretary General 2024 report on the Global Compact on Migration<sup>4</sup> which has outlined proposals under five headings, namely

1. prevention of migrants dying and going missing,
2. search and identification of migrants of migrants who have gone missing,
3. provision of support to affected families,
4. justice, accountability and redress; and
5. data and foresight.

Recommendations echoing many of the same points are to be found in the 2024 report of the Council of Europe.<sup>5</sup> In respect of finding missing migrants research has been done and practical measures suggested for individual countries – such as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Spain, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia<sup>6</sup> – but more must be done to respond to this crisis through policy and programming at a national, regional, and international level, as stated by IOM. Data from their Migration Governance Indicators (MGI), which has conducted assessments in more than 100 countries, shows for example that only 11% of countries have policies to trace and identify missing migrants. We commend the adoption by states of such policies as will improve matters in each individual country.

The principal problem that faces migrants is the risk of serious injury or death which they face en route and sadly too often fall victim. The answer to that is the often repeated recommendation of the provision, principally by States, of safe and viable routes to their destination. FI reiterates that recommendation. The secondary aspect is the problems which family and loved ones face when trying to find out what happened to an individual migrant. That would be improved by the effecting of the recommendations referred to above, and also by the use of multi-disciplinary efforts in identifying and informing the family of the migrant who has been found, either alive or dead.

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1 <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/1098aa8ecb07417ab4276607092149cc>

2 Ibid

3 <https://caminandofronteras.org/en/monitoreo/monitoring-the-right-to-life-2024/>

4 <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/sg-recommendations/recommendations-strengthening-cooperation-missing-migrants-and-providing>

5 <https://rm.coe.int/as-mig-2024-11-draft-report-missing-migrants-refugees-and-asylum-seeke/1680b090c3>

6 <https://publications.iom.int/books/families-missing-migrants-their-search-answers-and-impacts-loss>