

**Human Rights Council****Fifty-fourth session**

11 September–6 October 2023

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development****Enforced or involuntary disappearance****Report of the Working Group on Enforced or  
Involuntary Disappearances\*\* \*\*\****Summary*

The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances was established pursuant to resolution 20 (XXXVI) of the Commission on Human Rights and its mandate was most recently extended by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 45/3.

The mandate of the Working Group is to assist the families of disappeared persons to ascertain the fate and whereabouts of their disappeared relatives, to assist States and monitor their compliance with their obligations deriving from the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and provide States with assistance in the prevention and eradication of enforced disappearances.

Since its inception in 1980, the Working Group has transmitted a total of 60,703 cases to 112 States. The number of cases under active consideration that have not yet been clarified, closed or discontinued stands at 47,774 in a total of 97 States. During the reporting period, 80 cases were clarified.

The present report reflects the activities of and communications and cases examined by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances from 13 May 2022 to 12 May 2023.

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\*\* Agreement was reached to publish the present report after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.

\*\*\* The annexes to the present report are reproduced as received, in the language of submission only.



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## I. Introduction

1. The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances was the first United Nations human rights thematic mechanism to be established with a universal mandate, by the Commission on Human Rights, pursuant to its resolution 20 (XXXVI). The mandate was most recently extended by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 45/3.
2. The primary task of the Working Group is to assist families in determining the fate and whereabouts of their family members who have reportedly been disappeared. In that humanitarian capacity, the Working Group serves as a channel of communication between family members of victims of enforced disappearance, other sources reporting cases of disappearances and the Governments concerned.
3. Following the adoption of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (General Assembly resolution 47/133), the Working Group was entrusted with monitoring the progress of States in fulfilling their obligations derived from the Declaration. The Human Rights Council, in its resolution 7/12, encouraged the Working Group to provide assistance in the implementation by States of the Declaration and of existing international rules.
4. The present report contains information on the activities of, and communications and cases examined by, the Working Group from 13 May 2022 to 12 May 2023. A summary of the decisions on individual cases taken by the Working Group and communications transmitted to the States concerned during the reporting period is set out in section III. Overall statistics concerning cases transmitted between 1980 and 2023 are contained in annex II.
5. Since its inception in 1980, the Working Group has transmitted a total of 60,703 cases to 112 States. The number of cases under active consideration that have not yet been clarified, closed or discontinued stands at 47,774 in a total of 97 States. During the period covered in the present report, 80 cases were clarified.
6. In September 2019, the Working Group announced that it would start documenting violations tantamount to enforced disappearance perpetrated by non-State actors.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the Working Group has transmitted a total of 72 cases to six non-State actors, namely the de facto authorities in Sana'a (45), Hamas (6), the Libyan National Army (7), the Restoration Council of Shan State (3), the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (8) and the Taliban in Afghanistan (3). The number of cases tantamount to enforced disappearances under active consideration that have not yet been clarified, closed or discontinued stands at 68, with 3 cases related to the so-called Donetsk People's Republic clarified by the Government of Ukraine and one regarding the Libyan National Army clarified by the source.

## II. Activities of the Working Group from 13 May 2022 to 12 May 2023

### A. Activities

7. During the period under review, the Working Group held three sessions: its 128th session, from 19 to 28 September 2022, 129th session, from 6 to 10 February 2023 and 130th session from 8 to 12 May 2023.<sup>2</sup> The reports on the sessions should be considered as complementary to the present report.
8. On 20 September 2022, Luciano Hazan, the then Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group presented the annual report for the period from 22 May 2021 to 13 May 2022 and its

<sup>1</sup> [A/HRC/42/40](#), para. 94. In taking this action, the Working Group is acting pursuant to its humanitarian mandate to address a growing protection gap affecting disappeared individuals and their relatives who have been denied information on the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones.

<sup>2</sup> See [A/HRC/WGEID/128/1](#), [A/HRC/WGEID/129/1](#) and [A/HRC/WGEID/130/1](#) respectively.

addenda<sup>3</sup> to the Human Rights Council at its fifty-first session and participated in an interactive dialogue with States.

9. During the 128th session, Aua Baldé was appointed Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group and Gabriella Citroni Vice-Chair.

10. On 1 May 2023, Ana Lorena Delgado Pérez took office as a new member of the Working Group from the Latin American and Caribbean region. Her appointment represents a historic moment for the mandate, as it is the first time in more than 40 years that the mechanism has five women experts. Ms. Delgado Pérez takes the place of Mr. Hazan, who made a remarkable contribution to the activities of the Working Group.

11. On 18 October 2022, the newly appointed Chair-Rapporteur, Ms. Baldé, addressed the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session and participated in an interactive dialogue with Member States.

12. On 25 October 2022, Ms. Baldé attended the seventy-third session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in Banjul and participated in a panel on the launch of the guidelines on the protection of all persons from enforced disappearances in Africa.

13. The Working Group holds one of its sessions each year outside Geneva. This practice was exceptionally suspended during the previous years in view of the travel restrictions imposed on account of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The Working Group appreciates the opportunity to resume this practice in the course of 2023, thanks to the invitation of the Government of Chile, where it held its 129th session from 6 to 10 February 2023. The Working Group expresses gratitude to the Government of Chile for its willingness to host one of its regular sessions in the country and for its cooperation in the organization and conduct of the session.

14. On 28 September 2022, the Working Group adopted a joint statement on illegal intercountry adoptions, together with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children and the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children.<sup>4</sup> The Working Group emphasizes that, in certain cases, illegal intercountry adoptions involve the perpetration of enforced disappearances and calls on States to abide by their international obligations, as detailed in the joint statement.

15. During the reporting period, the Working Group continued to discuss the issue of new technologies and enforced disappearance, the thematic focus of its work for 2023. To inform the report, the Working Group launched a call for inputs in October 2022. The Working Group is grateful for the submissions received from Member States, individuals and organizations following its call for inputs.<sup>5</sup> The thematic report and its annexes are presented as addenda to the present report.

16. The Working Group decided to devote its next thematic report to the issue of enforced disappearances and elections. In line with this decision it held an internal consultation during its 130th session in May.

17. During the reporting period, the Working Group adopted a revised version of its methods of work.<sup>6</sup>

18. On 17 March 2023, members of the Working Group, Aua Baldé, Grażyna Baranowska and Luciano Hazan took part in a regional forum for regional cooperation in the search for disappeared persons and the investigation and prevention of the disappearance of persons in the context of migration, which took place in Panama City and was organized by the Regional

<sup>3</sup> See [A/HRC/51/31](#), [A/HRC/51/31/Add.1](#) and [A/HRC/51/31/Add.3](#).

<sup>4</sup> See [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/ced/2022-09-29/JointstatementICA\\_HR\\_28September2022.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/ced/2022-09-29/JointstatementICA_HR_28September2022.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2023/call-inputs-thematic-study-working-group-enforced-or-involuntary>.

<sup>6</sup> [A/HRC/WGEID/1](#).

Office for Central America and Dominican Republic of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The same delegation also visited a migration reception station and a cemetery where solemn burials take place in the province of Darien at the invitation of the Defensoría del Pueblo de Panamá. The Working Group notes the very difficult situation of migrants crossing the Darien Gap and recalls its report on enforced disappearances in the context of migration, notably the recommendation that, given the transnational nature of the enforced disappearance of migrants, States should carry out all investigative efforts, both in the search for the migrants and for the prosecution of those presumed responsible, duly cooperating with the authorities of all States involved and with the relevant international organizations.<sup>7</sup> It is particularly important that all cases of disappearances of migrants are thoroughly investigated from the outset, without excluding, a priori, the fact that they may amount to enforced disappearance.

19. During the reporting period, all the members of the Working Group carried out a number of activities connected to enforced disappearances, which included participating in conferences, consultations, seminars, training events, workshops and lectures organized by Governments and civil society organizations.<sup>8</sup>

20. The Working Group is thankful for the continuous support, including through voluntary contributions, provided by donor States, notably France.

## **B. Meetings**

21. During the period under review, the Working Group held meetings during the 128th session with representatives of the Governments of Azerbaijan, France, Japan, Libya, Portugal, Ukraine, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of); during the 129th session with representatives of Chile, Japan and Portugal; and during the 130th session with representatives of Angola, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brazil, China, El Salvador, Nepal and Ukraine. A number of informal meetings were also held with representatives from various States. The Working Group expresses its appreciation to those Governments for the meetings and emphasizes the importance of cooperation and dialogue.

## **C. Communications**

22. During the reporting period, the Working Group transmitted 1,103 new cases of enforced disappearance to 28 States.

23. The Working Group transmitted 791 of the above-mentioned cases under the urgent action procedure to 15 States.

24. During the reporting period, the Working Group transmitted 24 cases tantamount to enforced disappearance to the Taliban in Afghanistan (2), the Restoration Council of Shan State (1), the de facto authorities in Sana'a (19), and Hamas (2).<sup>9</sup>

25. During the reporting period, the Working Group clarified 80 cases in 13 States. Of the 80 cases, 42 were clarified on the basis of information provided by Governments and 38 on the basis of information provided by sources.

26. The Working Group transmitted one prompt intervention letter addressing allegations of harassment of and/or threats to human rights defenders and relatives of disappeared persons in Mexico.

27. The Working Group transmitted 18 joint urgent appeals concerning persons who had been arrested, detained, abducted or otherwise deprived of their liberty or who had been

<sup>7</sup> See [A/HRC/36/39/Add.2](#).

<sup>8</sup> See [A/HRC/WGEID/128/1](#), annex III; [A/HRC/WGEID/129/1](#), annex II; and [A/HRC/WGEID/130/1](#), annex II.

<sup>9</sup> The Working Group stresses that the cases addressed to Hamas and the de facto authorities in Afghanistan, Myanmar and Yemen do not in any way imply the expression of any opinion concerning the legal status of any territory, city or area, or of its authorities.

forcibly disappeared or were at risk of disappearance with other special procedure mandate holders, in Argentina (1), Australia (1), Chad (1), Egypt (1), Iran (Islamic Republic of) (5), Luxembourg (1), Mexico (1), Nicaragua (1), Saudi Arabia (1), South Sudan (1), the Sudan (1), Sweden (1), the United Arab Emirates (1) and Viet Nam (1).

28. The Working Group transmitted 35 joint allegation letters, with other special procedure mandate holders, concerning Bangladesh (1), Brazil (1), China (2), Colombia (1), Egypt (3), El Salvador (1), Ethiopia (1), the Gambia (1), Honduras (1), India (1), Iran (Islamic Republic of) (4), Iraq (1), Lebanon (2), Libya (1), Mali (1), Mexico (1), Pakistan (1), Panama (1), Peru (2), the Russian Federation (3), Sri Lanka (2), the Sudan (1), Tajikistan (1) and Uganda (1).

29. The Working Group transmitted 6 “other letters”, concerning bills, laws, policies and practices that do not comply with international human rights law and standards to Mexico (1), El Salvador (1), Guatemala (1), Tajikistan (1), Sri Lanka (1) and to “other actors”, namely the Wagner Group (1).

30. The Working Group transmitted 7 general allegations relating to obstacles in the implementation of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, to the Governments of Algeria (1), Mexico (1), the Sudan (1), the Syrian Arab Republic (1), the United Arab Emirates (1), Yemen (1) and a joint general allegation (1) to El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua.

31. The Working Group would like to thank the Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for the information provided through communication NV-MBNV-337/202, dated 19 September 2022, which was not considered at previous sessions due to a clerical error. The information will be given due consideration at the 131st session, taking place in September 2023.

## D. Country visits

32. During the reporting period, the Working Group carried out a visit to Uruguay, from 7 to 14 July 2022, and to Honduras, from 20 to 29 March 2023. The reports of the visits are contained in addenda to this report.<sup>10</sup>

33. The Working Group regrets that the Government of Kenya did not confirm the proposed dates for its visit in July 2023 and hopes that the Government will agree to dates for a visit to take place before the end of the year, in order to deliver on its pledge.<sup>11</sup> The Working Group stands ready to discuss dates and modalities for the visit with the Government of Kenya.

34. During the reporting period, the Working Group requested a visit to Angola. In addition to this new request, the Working Group reiterated during the reporting cycle its requests to visit Brazil, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and the Philippines. The Working Group hopes to receive a positive response to these requests soon. At the same time, it notes the intention expressed by the Government of Algeria, after many years of discussion on the subject, to invite the Working Group for a visit to the country in the second half of 2024.<sup>12</sup>

35. The Working Group invites all States that have received a request for a visit by the Working Group to respond favourably to it, in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 21/4.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> [A/HRC/54/22/Add.1](#) and [A/HRC/54/22/Add.2](#).

<sup>11</sup> [A/HRC/WGEID/126/1](#), para. 83.

<sup>12</sup> [A/HRC/51/31](#), para. 29. See also para. 60 below.

<sup>13</sup> See annex I for country visit requests and invitations extended.

## **E. Follow-up reports and other procedures**

36. According to the Working Group's schedule, this year it should have prepared follow-up reports on the implementation of recommendations made following its visits to Kyrgyzstan<sup>14</sup> and Tajikistan<sup>15</sup> in 2019. The Working Group, however, while thanking the respective Governments for the information provided, decided to postpone consideration of the follow-up reports in the light of insufficient inputs received from other relevant stakeholders.

37. The preparation of the follow-up report on the implementation of the recommendations made after the visit to Ukraine,<sup>16</sup> which was postponed last year, is still on hold in light of the prevailing situation in the country. The Working Group will reassess the situation in the coming months.

## **F. Technical cooperation**

38. In November 2022, the Working Group accepted a formal request for technical cooperation received from the Government of Chile, through the Sub-Secretary of Human Rights of the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights. The technical cooperation concerns the design of a national plan for the search for victims of enforced disappearance during the dictatorship. The process to design the national plan is currently ongoing and consultations with different stakeholders are taking place. Through its technical cooperation, the Working Group aims to support the process, sharing good practices and formulating recommendations so that the design, implementation and evaluation of the national plan are carried out in line with international standards, including the Guiding Principles for the Search for Disappeared Persons.

39. During the reporting period, the Working Group started to act as an observer in the context of a multidisciplinary and inter-institutional commission, established pursuant to a decision of the Supreme Court of Justice of Mexico, that is in charge of the search for two disappeared persons and the identification of those responsible.<sup>17</sup>

40. In September 2022, April 2023 and May 2023, the Working Group conducted online training sessions with representatives of the Governments of Thailand, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Egypt, respectively.

## **G. Press releases and statements**

41. The full list of press releases and statements issued by the Working Group during the reporting period is contained in annex IV.

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<sup>14</sup> [A/HRC/45/13/Add.2](#).

<sup>15</sup> [A/HRC/45/13/Add.1](#).

<sup>16</sup> [A/HRC/42/40/Add.2](#).

<sup>17</sup> Comisión Especial de Búsqueda de los Sres. Edmundo Reyes Amaya y Gabriel Alberto Cruz, establecida con arreglo a lo ordenado por la Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nación (amparo en revisión No. 51/2020 del 4 de agosto de 2022).

### III. Decisions on individual cases taken by the Working Group and communications transmitted to the States concerned during the reporting period<sup>18</sup>

	Number of cases transmitted to the Government during the reporting period			Number of cases clarified during the reporting period by:		Number of cases of possible clarification by the Government (six-month rule)	Number of outstanding cases at the end of the reporting period	Number of communications sent during the reporting period					Number of communications received during the reporting period				
	Number of outstanding cases at the beginning of the reporting period	Urgent Procedures	Standard cases	Government	Sources			Prompt intervention letter	Urgent appeal	Allegation letter	General allegation	Other letter	Response to prompt intervention letter	Response to urgent appeal	Response to allegation letter	Response to general allegation	Response to other letter
Afghanistan <sup>a</sup>	20						20										
Algeria	3 286		1				3 287				1						
Argentina	3 065						3 065		1				1				
Armenia	6		32				38										
Azerbaijan	17	1	1			1	19										
Bangladesh	81			10	1		70			1					1		
Brazil	16						16			1				1			
Cambodia	1						1		2	1			2	1			
Chad	23		1				24		1					1			
Chile	785		1				786										
China	152	1	16	1		32	168			2					2		
Colombia	943		1				944			1				1			

<sup>18</sup> Urgent procedures relate to cases of enforced disappearance that have occurred within three months prior to the receipt of a report by the Working Group; or cases of enforced disappearance that have occurred prior to the three-month limit, but within one year prior to the receipt of a report by the Working Group, provided that there is a link with a case that occurred within the three-month period. Standard cases are cases of enforced disappearance that have occurred prior to the three-month limit. Prompt intervention letters concern cases of intimidation, persecution, or reprisal against families of disappeared persons, witnesses, lawyers, human rights defenders or other individuals concerned with disappearances. Urgent appeals concern allegations of enforced disappearance, or allegations regarding persons deprived of liberty who are at risk of being disappeared. Allegation letters and general allegations concern alleged obstacles encountered in the implementation of the Declaration. Other letters concern bills, laws, policies and practices that do not comply with international human rights law and standards.



	<i>Number of cases transmitted to the Government during the reporting period</i>			<i>Number of cases clarified during the reporting period by:</i>		<i>Number of cases of possible clarification by the Government (six-month rule)</i>	<i>Number of outstanding cases at the end of the reporting period</i>	<i>Number of communications sent during the reporting period</i>					<i>Number of communications received during the reporting period</i>				
	<i>Number of outstanding cases at the beginning of the reporting period</i>	<i>Urgent Procedures</i>	<i>Standard cases</i>	<i>Government</i>	<i>Sources</i>			<i>Prompt intervention letter</i>	<i>Urgent appeal</i>	<i>Allegation letter</i>	<i>General allegation</i>	<i>Other letter</i>	<i>Response to prompt intervention letter</i>	<i>Response to urgent appeal</i>	<i>Response to allegation letter</i>	<i>Response to general allegation</i>	<i>Response to other letter</i>
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	362		42				404							1			
Egypt	261	4	14	1	3		275		1	4							
El Salvador	2 284						2 284			1	1	1		1		1	
Equatorial Guinea	8		3				11										
Ethiopia	113						113			1							
Gambia	13						13			1							
India	443	1	1				445			1				1			
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	556	2	12		1		569		5	4							
Iraq	16 427		1				16 428			1							
Jordan	1			1			0										
Kazakhstan	1						1										
Lebanon	310		1				311			1			1				
Libya <sup>b</sup>	54						54			1							
Luxembourg									1				1				
Madagascar									1	1							
Malaysia	3	1					4										
Mali										1				1			
Mexico	357						357		1		1		1	1			

	<i>Number of cases transmitted to the Government during the reporting period</i>			<i>Number of cases clarified during the reporting period by:</i>		<i>Number of cases of possible clarification by the Government (six-month rule)</i>	<i>Number of outstanding cases at the end of the reporting period</i>	<i>Number of communications sent during the reporting period</i>					<i>Number of communications received during the reporting period</i>						
	<i>Urgent Procedures</i>	<i>Standard cases</i>	<i>Government</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>Prompt intervention letter</i>			<i>Urgent appeal</i>	<i>Allegation letter</i>	<i>General allegation</i>	<i>Other letter</i>	<i>Response to prompt intervention letter</i>	<i>Response to urgent appeal</i>	<i>Response to allegation letter</i>	<i>Response to general allegation</i>	<i>Response to other letter</i>			
Myanmar <sup>c</sup>	20						20												
Pakistan	799	9	61	20	6	5	843			1									1
Peru	2 361						2 361		1						1				
Qatar	2						2												
Russian Federation	916	755	72	1	21	57	1 721				3		1					2	
Saudi Arabia	21	5	7	3	3	2	27												
South Sudan	3						3		1										
Sri Lanka	6 264						6 264				2								
Sudan	177						177		1			1							
Syrian Arab Republic	605		39				644					1							
Tajikistan	1	1					2				1		1						
Thailand	76	1					77												
Tunisia	13						13				1								1
Türkiye	85			1			84												
Uganda	18		4				22				1								
United Arab Emirates	11						11		1			1							
Uzbekistan	7	4				4	11												
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	29			1			28												

	<i>Number of cases transmitted to the Government during the reporting period</i>			<i>Number of cases clarified during the reporting period by:</i>		<i>Number of cases of possible clarification by the Government (six-month rule)</i>	<i>Number of outstanding cases at the end of the reporting period</i>	<i>Number of communications sent during the reporting period</i>					<i>Number of communications received during the reporting period</i>				
	<i>Number of outstanding cases at the beginning of the reporting period</i>	<i>Urgent Procedures</i>	<i>Standard cases</i>	<i>Government</i>	<i>Sources</i>			<i>Prompt intervention letter</i>	<i>Urgent appeal</i>	<i>Allegation letter</i>	<i>General allegation</i>	<i>Other letter</i>	<i>Response to prompt intervention letter</i>	<i>Response to urgent appeal</i>	<i>Response to allegation letter</i>	<i>Response to general allegation</i>	<i>Response to other letter</i>
Viet Nam	1	1					2			1					1		
Yemen <sup>d</sup>	28		1				29				1						
State of Palestine <sup>e</sup>	4						4										

<sup>a</sup> During the reporting period, a total of two cases were transmitted by the Working Group to the Taliban. These cases are not counted in the statistics of Afghanistan. The Working Group stresses that the cases addressed to the Taliban do not in any way imply the expression of any opinion concerning the legal status of any territory, city or area, or of its authorities.

<sup>b</sup> During the reporting period, a total of two cases were transmitted by the Working Group to the Libyan Liberation Army. These cases are not counted in the statistics of Libya. The Working Group stresses that the cases addressed to the Libyan Liberation Army do not in any way imply the expression of any opinion concerning the legal status of any territory, city or area, or of its authorities.

<sup>c</sup> During the reporting period, one case was transmitted by the Working Group to the Restoration Council of Shan State. These cases are not counted in the statistics of Myanmar. The Working Group stresses that the cases addressed to the Restoration Council of Shan State do not in any way imply the expression of any opinion concerning the legal status of any territory, city or area, or of its authorities.

<sup>d</sup> During the reporting period, a total of 19 cases were transmitted by the Working Group to the de facto authorities in Sana'a. These cases are not counted in the statistics of Yemen. The Working Group stresses that the cases addressed to the de facto authorities in Sana'a do not in any way imply the expression of any opinion concerning the legal status of any territory, city or area, or of its authorities.

<sup>e</sup> During the reporting period, two cases were transmitted by the Working Group to Hamas. These cases were not counted in the statistics of the State of Palestine. The Working Group stresses that the cases addressed to Hamas do not in any way imply the expression of any opinion concerning the legal status of any territory, city or area or of its authorities.

## IV. New technologies and enforced disappearance

42. In the thematic study submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 45/3, the Working Group analyses how new technologies (a) are being used against the relatives of disappeared persons, their representatives and human rights defenders; (b) can be effectively applied to facilitate the search for disappeared persons; and (c) can be used to obtain and secure evidence of the commission of enforced disappearance.<sup>19</sup>

43. In the thematic study, the expression “new technologies” is used in a broad sense to refer to technological innovations that have occurred mostly over the past 20 years, including hardware and software information and communications technologies (encompassing satellite imagery, geographic information science and remote sensing), digital social networks and online data sets, the use of artificial intelligence and the development of machine learning, as well as digital forensic data and biodata.

44. The concrete examples mentioned in the thematic study are drawn from cases received by the Working Group, either outstanding or clarified, that have been included in its reports, other public reports by United Nations agencies or other international organizations, or information received from the experts participating in meetings held on the sidelines of the Working Group’s 126th and 127th sessions and through a call for inputs issued in October 2022. The study is complemented by annexes.

45. The Working Group emphasizes that, on the one hand, new technologies, and in particular information and communications technologies, are frequently used to facilitate or conceal the commission of enforced disappearance, hinder the work of human rights defenders and the relatives of disappeared persons, and intimidate or harass them. The Working Group is especially concerned at the use of Internet shutdowns and targeted connectivity disruptions; spyware programmes; targeted and mass surveillance, including gait and facial recognition; cyberattacks and government-sponsored troll factories; and the specious use of technology-related legislation to suppress dissent and target human rights defenders and the relatives of disappeared persons.

46. On the other hand, regarding the search for disappeared persons, the documentation of the crime and the promotion of accountability, new technologies can offer cost-effective solutions that have already proved useful and are likely to have further relevant impacts. The Working Group emphasizes that there should not be overreliance on new technologies in this realm and expectations must be realistic: they may be going to facilitate the processes concerned but they are not going to solve all the existing problems. Traditional approaches and techniques to documenting, monitoring and reporting should not be abandoned and cannot be entirely replaced by digital material and new technologies.

47. The Working Group notes that cooperation between different stakeholders, including States, corporations, civil society organizations, national human rights institutions, academic institutions and donors, is indispensable and, as such, should be promoted. In particular, the Working Group encourages strengthened coordination and cooperation between different stakeholders to forge alliances to detect risks concerning new technologies and enforced disappearance, devise mitigation strategies and effective measures to overcome the obstacles identified and promote tools to support those directly affected, including human rights defenders and the relatives of disappeared persons. There is a shared responsibility to ensure that new technologies are developed and used within a human rights framework, ethically and responsibly.

48. Accordingly, in the thematic study the Working Group makes several recommendations to States, corporations, civil society organizations, national human rights institutions, academic institutions, donors, international courts and other human rights mechanisms, as well as OHCHR.

49. The Working Group commits to regularly monitor the issue of new technologies and enforced disappearance and to systematically include remarks and recommendations

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<sup>19</sup> [A/HRC/54/22/Add.5](#).

concerning this subject in its activities, including in communications, urgent appeals, allegations, referrals, prompt intervention letters, country visits and awareness-raising activities. The Working Group also offers assistance to States on the subject through cooperation and advisory services.

## **V. Enforced disappearances and elections**

50. At its 128th session, the Working Group announced its intention to conduct a thematic study on the issue of enforced disappearances and elections.

51. Historically, enforced disappearance has been used as a tool to suppress political dissent and opposition by authoritarian regimes. However, more recent trends indicate that the phenomenon of enforced disappearances related to political processes is broader and can take place in democratic settings such as elections, before, during and after them, as well as in non-electoral contexts related to the restriction of the rights of individuals to participate in the civil and political life of society, for instance during mass protests, demonstrations and unrest in the context of changes of government. Elections and the electoral cycle have often been a source of turmoil and political instability, resulting in human rights violations, including enforced disappearance. Understanding the electoral cycle, in particular its links to enforced disappearance, is therefore paramount to finding solutions to address and prevent such human rights violations. Although under the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance States have an obligation to prevent and eradicate enforced disappearances, it is not uncommon that reports of enforced disappearances, however short in duration, increase before, during and after elections.

52. Over the years, the Working Group has documented a number of cases of enforced disappearances occurring in the context of elections; however, the intersection between elections and enforced disappearances is yet to be the subject of a systematic and comprehensive study. Many of the cases registered with the Working Group include individuals who are active in politics (or perceived as such) and their disappearance is aimed not only at deterring their participation in the political process, but also at producing a collective impact on elections.

53. In the thematic study, the Working Group proposes to examine the correlation between elections and enforced disappearance, with the aim of identifying tools that can be used to respond more effectively to this phenomenon, through both preventive and accountability mechanisms. The Working Group proposes to analyse this phenomenon by (a) examining the nature and specificities of enforced disappearances committed in the context of elections; (b) identifying the patterns of violence, namely the timing, the profile of the perpetrators and the victims and the ramifications of the practice for society at large, including by exploring its consequences within and beyond the electoral process; (c) identifying the main challenges to accountability; and (d) discussing the need for early warning mechanisms and proposing recommendations to prevent and address enforced disappearances in the context of elections.

54. To conduct the study, the Working Group held a hybrid discussion with interlocutors from the United Nations system during its 130th session in May 2023. It will also hold a hybrid external consultation meeting during its 131st session in September 2023, which will be followed by a call for written inputs from various stakeholders in late 2023. The thematic study will be published in September 2024.

## **VI. Observations**

55. The Working Group remains concerned by the lack of engagement and cooperation from a number of countries, including in relation to country visits. The Working Group is especially appreciative of those States that have extended invitations for a country visit, as this offers the possibility to gather first-hand information and foster genuine cooperation. The Working Group hopes that the number of Member States that extend an invitation and engage in a meaningful dialogue increases. In particular, it encourages States to which the Working

Group has sent an explicit visit request to promptly commence a concrete dialogue in order for the visits to materialize soon.

56. The Working Group noted some positive developments during the reporting period, including the fact that Cabo Verde, Finland and the Republic of Korea became parties to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

57. In addition to these observations and those formulated in its post-session documents, the Working Group makes the following country-specific observations in relation to situations that are of particular concern.

## **Algeria**

58. The Working Group notes with concern the scarce progress in terms of search and investigation vis-à-vis the enforced disappearances perpetrated during the conflict in the 1990s<sup>20</sup> and reiterates its recommendation to the Government of Algeria to fulfil its obligations to continue the search for disappeared persons and to unveil the truth about their fate and whereabouts, as well as to ensure that the families of disappeared persons obtain adequate reparation.<sup>21</sup>

59. The Working Group is also concerned about reported acts of harassment of relatives of disappeared persons and human rights defenders and associations working to establish the truth,<sup>22</sup> and refers to article 13 (3) and (5) of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which provides that steps shall be taken to ensure that “all involved in the investigation, including the complainant, counsel, witnesses and those conducting the investigation, are protected against ill-treatment, intimidation or reprisal” and that “any ill-treatment, intimidation or reprisal or any other form of interference on the occasion of the lodging of a complaint or during the investigation procedure is appropriately punished”. The Working Group looks forward to receiving a response from the Government to the general allegation submitted after its 130th session, held in May 2023, and reiterates its availability and willingness to support the Government in overcoming any obstacles that it may encounter in the implementation of the Declaration.<sup>23</sup>

60. The Working Group looks forward to continuing the discussion in order to ensure that a country visit to Algeria, pending for many years, materializes in 2024, as indicated by the Government.<sup>24</sup>

## **Bangladesh**

61. The Working Group appreciates the strengthened engagement of the Government of Bangladesh with its mandate in terms of providing replies to cases and communications, and meeting its members during the 130th session. At the same time, the Working Group continues to be concerned about the reported acts of harassment and intimidation of members of leading non-governmental human rights organizations in the country during the reporting period and for the alleged attempts to question the credibility of the Working Group’s procedures and activities in media outlets.<sup>25</sup>

62. The Working Group reiterates its previous recommendation to the Government that it must ensure that the relatives of disappeared persons, human rights defenders and civil society organizations working on their behalf, are protected from any threat, intimidation or reprisal, in the light of article 13 (3) and (5) of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons

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<sup>20</sup> A/HRC/WGEID/130/1, para. 15.

<sup>21</sup> A/HRC/51/31, para. 41.

<sup>22</sup> A/HRC/WGEID/130/1, para. 15, and annex I.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> A/HRC/51/31, para. 42.

<sup>25</sup> A/HRC/WGEID/129/1, para. 20.

from Enforced Disappearance, and take steps to protect and uphold the relatives' rights to truth, justice, reparations and memory.<sup>26</sup>

63. On 12 March 2013, the Working Group requested an invitation to visit the country. No response has yet been received from the Government, in spite of a number of reminders. The Working Group hopes that a positive reply will be received soon.

## Belarus

64. The Working Group has received multiple reports concerning the involvement of the Belarusian authorities in enforced disappearances perpetrated in the context of transnational transfers.<sup>27</sup> According to these reports, the Belarusian authorities have supported or acquiesced in the transfer of Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war captured by the Russian armed forces through their territory to the Russian Federation.<sup>28</sup> Information received indicates that such transfers took place between 24 February and 31 March 2022 from the northern part of Ukraine, mainly in the Kyiv region, at that time occupied by the Russian Federation.<sup>29</sup>

65. In that regard, the Working Group recalls that, in accordance with article 7 of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, no circumstances whatsoever, whether a threat of war, a state of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked to justify enforced disappearance.

66. The Working Group also notes with concern the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, released during the reporting period, which refers to newly documented cases of enforced disappearance lasting several days, perpetrated by the authorities between 9 and 14 August 2020 in the run-up to the 2020 presidential elections.<sup>30</sup>

67. On 30 June 2011, the Working Group requested an invitation to visit the country. No response has yet been received from the Government, in spite of a number of reminders. The Working Group hopes that a positive reply will be received soon.

## China

68. The Working Group reiterates the concerns expressed in two press releases issued jointly with other special procedure mandate holders on 10 June and 7 September 2022, urging the Government of China to cooperate fully with the United Nations human rights system and to grant unhindered access to independent experts who had received and were seeking to address allegations of significant human rights violations against individuals and minorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China.<sup>31</sup>

69. The Working Group is further concerned at reports of instances of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance of Tibetan Buddhists and allegations of targeting of them based on the display of their religion or belief or cultural affiliation.<sup>32</sup>

70. The Working Group reiterates that accurate information about the detention of persons deprived of liberty and their place or places of detention, including transfers, should be made promptly available to their family members, to their counsel or to any other persons having

<sup>26</sup> A/HRC/51/31, para. 44.

<sup>27</sup> A/HRC/48/57, paras. 38–60.

<sup>28</sup> A/HRC/WGEID/129/1, para. 78, and A/HRC/WGEID/128/1, para. 78; OHCHR, "Treatment of prisoners of war and persons hors de combat in the context of the armed attack by the Russian Federation against Ukraine" (March 2023), paras. 39 and 41; A/HRC/51/31, para. 46. See also A/HRC/WGEID/127/1, para. 74 and annex II; and OHCHR, "Ukraine: update to the Human Rights Council special session", 12 May 2022.

<sup>29</sup> During the reporting period the Working Group transmitted only 186 new cases, which probably does not represent the full scale of the practice.

<sup>30</sup> A/HRC/52/68, para. 22.

<sup>31</sup> A/HRC/WGEID/128/1, paras. 29 and 30, A/HRC/WGEID/129/1, para. 27, and A/HRC/WGEID/130/1, para. 24.

<sup>32</sup> A/HRC/WGEID/129/1, para. 24. See also A/HRC/51/31, para. 49.

a legitimate interest in the information (art. 10 (2) of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance) and that failure to do so amounts to an enforced disappearance.

71. On 19 February 2013, the Working Group requested an invitation to visit the country. No response has yet been received from the Government, in spite of several reminders. The Working Group hopes that a positive reply will be received soon.

### **Democratic People's Republic of Korea**

72. During the reporting cycle, the Working Group continued to transmit several cases to the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea under the humanitarian procedure and would like to reiterate its previous concerns regarding the non-substantive replies of the Government and its persistent failure to acknowledge or provide information on the numerous outstanding cases brought to its attention.<sup>33</sup>

73. On 22 May 2015, the Working Group requested an invitation to visit the country. No response has yet been received from the Government, in spite of a number of reminders. The Working Group hopes that a positive reply will be received soon.

### **Egypt**

74. The Working Group notes the technical training delivered remotely to a number of Government officials from different ministries during the 130th session in May 2023 (see para. 40 above). Training sessions are important because they may clarify some issues and improve the understanding of the relevant standards and of their effective implementation. At the same time, the Working Group remains concerned at the frequent reports of enforced disappearances received during the reporting period, including one on the very day of the training with Egyptian officials.<sup>34</sup>

75. Based on the reports received, the Working Group emphasizes that accurate information on the detention of persons deprived of liberty and their place or places of detention, including transfers, should be made promptly available to their family members, to their counsel or to any other persons having a legitimate interest in the information (art. 10 (2) of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance) and that failure to do so amounts to an enforced disappearance.

76. The Working Group expresses its hope that the training paved the way for a full-fledged country visit to Egypt, for which a request has been pending since 30 June 2011. The Working Group hopes that a positive reply will be received soon, as it considers that a visit would be a timely follow-up to the training and could be beneficial for all stakeholders.

### **El Salvador**

77. The Working Group is concerned at reported human rights violations committed in the context of the implementation of the state of exception and the related regime, and the recent reforms to criminal legislation in El Salvador. Information received by the Working Group indicates that many of the instances of detention that occurred in that context are arbitrary and some may constitute short-term enforced disappearances.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> [A/HRC/WGEID/128/1](#), paras. 33–35; [A/HRC/WGEID/129/1](#), para. 28; and [A/HRC/WGEID/130/1](#), paras. 28 and 29.

<sup>34</sup> [A/HRC/WGEID/128/1](#), paras. 37 and 30–42; [A/HRC/WGEID/129/1](#), paras. 29 and 33; and [A/HRC/WGEID/130/1](#), para. 30.

<sup>35</sup> [A/HRC/WGEID/128/1](#), para. 47; [A/HRC/WGEID/129/1](#), paras. 35–36. See also OHCHR, “El Salvador – state of emergency”, 28 March 2023, and “Extended state of emergency undermines right to fair trial, UN experts say”, 22 May 2023.



78. On 6 October 2017, the Working Group requested an invitation to visit the country. No response has yet been received from the Government, despite a number of reminders. The Working Group hopes that a positive reply will be received soon.

## Islamic Republic of Iran

79. The Working Group has continued to receive cases dating from the 1980s, in which disappeared persons were allegedly executed without adequate information being provided to their families and loved ones.<sup>36</sup> In that regard, the Working Group reiterates its concerns<sup>37</sup> about the alleged failure to comply with the Government's obligation to ensure the locating, protecting, preserving and exhuming of mass and unmarked grave sites, the investigation thereof in compliance with international standards, with a view to exhuming, respecting and identifying those buried therein, and the search for forcibly disappeared persons, in connection with the enforced disappearance and summary executions of political dissidents between July and early September 1988.<sup>38</sup>

80. During the reporting period, the Working Group has also expressed concern about the reported persecution and harassment of religious and other minorities,<sup>39</sup> as well as the human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, committed in the course of demonstrations.<sup>40</sup> It recalls that, in accordance with article 7 of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, no circumstances whatsoever, whether a threat of war, a state of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked to justify enforced disappearances.

81. The Working Group hopes that the invitation extended by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2002 may soon materialize, ideally in the course of 2024, also in the light of the standing invitation extended by the Government to all thematic special procedures.

## Libya

82. The Working Group is deeply concerned at the final report, in March 2023, of the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya, which documented the widespread practice of enforced disappearance in the country as well as the practice of detention in "secret prisons", notably of migrants.<sup>41</sup>

83. The Working Group is also concerned at the widespread impunity for cases of enforced disappearances and the lack of appropriate activities of search and investigation, including in relation to burial sites, such as Tarhuna, where extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances may have been committed.<sup>42</sup>

84. The Working Group recalls that, since its planned visit to the country in 2013 was postponed because of the security situation in the country, it has not been possible for the visit to materialize. The Working Group hopes to be able to visit the country in the not too distant future, should conditions allow it to conduct a full-fledged visit in accordance with its methods of work.

## Mexico

85. The Working Group reiterates its concerns at the reports of increased attacks on relatives of disappeared persons and members of civil society organizations, particularly

<sup>36</sup> [A/HRC/WGEID/129/1](#), para. 43; and [A/HRC/WGEID/130/1](#), para. 39.

<sup>37</sup> [A/HRC/51/31](#), para. 59.

<sup>38</sup> [A/HRC/WGEID/129/1](#), para. 47, and [A/HRC/WGEID/130/1](#), para. 39.

<sup>39</sup> [A/HRC/WGEID/128/1](#), paras. 57–58; [A/HRC/WGEID/129/1](#), para. 48, and [A/HRC/WGEID/130/1](#), para. 40.

<sup>40</sup> [A/HRC/WGEID/129/1](#), para. 45.

<sup>41</sup> See [A/HRC/52/83](#).

<sup>42</sup> [A/HRC/WGEID/128/1](#), para. 64. See also [A/HRC/52/83](#).

mothers searching for their disappeared loved ones, who have been victims of various violations, including extrajudicial killings during the reporting period.<sup>43</sup>

86. The Working Group is also concerned about issues regarding the enforced disappearances in Mexico of migrants from Mesoamerican countries, including gaps in the search, investigation and punishment of those responsible, and in ensuring that the families of the victims have adequate access to information.<sup>44</sup>

## Nicaragua

87. The Working Group is concerned at the recent findings of the Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua in relation to a pattern whereby detainees have been held in incommunicado detention and the authorities have refused to provide their relatives or legal representatives with information about their whereabouts, which may amount to enforced disappearance.<sup>45</sup>

88. The Working Group is further concerned at the increase in detentions, kidnappings and enforced disappearances of people on the move, including children, on migration routes from Nicaragua to the United States of America.<sup>46</sup>

89. On 23 May 2006, the Working Group requested an invitation to visit the country. No response has yet been received from the Government, despite a number of reminders. The Working Group hopes that a positive reply will be received soon.

## Pakistan

90. The Working Group continues to be concerned at the recurrent and numerous allegations of enforced disappearances in the country, attested to by the high number of cases transmitted during the reporting period.<sup>47</sup>

91. The Working Group reiterates its concern for the lack of reply to a number of communications transmitted to the Government of Pakistan prior to the reporting period concerning the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2021, in which several special procedure mandate holders regretted the inclusion of clauses that run contrary to the spirit and objectives of a law to criminalize enforced disappearances.<sup>48</sup>

92. The Working Group reiterates its readiness to assist the State in its efforts to strengthen the country's legislative and institutional framework, and to provide technical and other assistance, in compliance with its mandate. In that regard, the Working Group reiterates its recommendation to the Government of Pakistan to invite the mandate to visit the country, as a follow-up to the visit carried out in September 2012, as indicated in the follow-up report<sup>49</sup> and reiterated on several occasions.<sup>50</sup>

## Russian Federation

93. The Working Group continues to be deeply concerned by numerous reports it has received concerning enforced disappearances of civilians and prisoners of war perpetrated by the Russian armed forces since the beginning of the armed conflict in Ukraine in February

<sup>43</sup> [A/HRC/51/31](#), para. 64, and [A/HRC/WGEID/129/1](#), paras. 60–62.

<sup>44</sup> [A/HRC/WGEID/128/1](#), para. 67.

<sup>45</sup> [A/HRC/52/63](#), para. 50.

<sup>46</sup> See [A/HRC/WGEID/128/1](#), annex II.

<sup>47</sup> [A/HRC/WGEID/128/1](#), paras. 71–72, and annex I, pp. 20 and 21; [A/HRC/WGEID/129/1](#), paras. 67–68; and [A/HRC/WGEID/130/1](#), paras. 49–50.

<sup>48</sup> [A/HRC/51/31](#), para. 66; [A/HRC/WGEID/125/1](#), paras. 105–108; and [A/HRC/WGEID/126/1](#), paras. 104–107. See also communications PAK 7/2021, PAK 11/2021 and PAK 12/2021.

<sup>49</sup> [A/HRC/33/51/Add.7](#), para. 38.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, [A/HRC/45/13](#), para. 81, and [A/HRC/51/31](#), para. 67.

2022,<sup>51</sup> as attested to by the very large number of cases transmitted under its humanitarian procedure during the reporting period.<sup>52</sup>

94. The Working Group regrets that there has been no meaningful interaction with the Russian Federation during the reporting period, and it hopes that the situation will improve. That would be particularly beneficial for any individual under Russian jurisdiction, for the Working Group remains one of the few international mechanisms left that is available for victims of enforced disappearances, including those predating the conflict, in the light of the exclusion of the Russian Federation from the Council of Europe and the fact that it has ceased to be a party to the European Convention on Human Rights.

95. On 2 November 2006, the Working Group requested an invitation to visit the country. No response has yet been received from the Government, despite a number of reminders. The Working Group hopes that a positive reply will be received soon.

## Saudi Arabia

96. The Working Group expresses its concern at reported cases of enforced disappearances during the reporting period, which seem to be targeted, insofar as they lead to the arrest and enforced disappearance of various members of the same family.<sup>53</sup> The Working Group is alarmed at these acts, which are allegedly a pretext to punish or intimidate dissidents. The Working Group recalls that no circumstances whatsoever, whether a threat of war, a state of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked to justify enforced disappearances.

## Sri Lanka

97. The Working Group continues to be concerned at numerous reports of acts of harassment and intimidation of relatives of disappeared persons and human rights defenders.<sup>54</sup>

98. The Working Group refers to article 13 (3) and (5) of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which provides that steps shall be taken to ensure that “all involved in the investigation, including the complainant, counsel, witnesses and those conducting the investigation, are protected against ill-treatment, intimidation or reprisal” and that “any ill-treatment, intimidation or reprisal or any other form of interference on the occasion of the lodging of a complaint or during the investigation procedure is appropriately punished”. In that regard, the Working Group also recalls its thematic report on standards and public policies for an effective investigation of enforced disappearances<sup>55</sup> and principle 14 of the Guiding Principles for the Search for Disappeared Persons issued by the Committee on Enforced Disappearances.<sup>56</sup>

99. The Working Group is further concerned at the scarce progress made by the Office on Missing Persons in delivering on its mandate to help families searching for their loved ones and establish the truth, which has resulted in families and related associations losing trust and confidence in it.<sup>57</sup> The Working Group reiterates the recommendations made in its visit and

<sup>51</sup> A/HRC/51/31, para. 68.

<sup>52</sup> A/HRC/WGEID/128/1, paras. 77–84; A/HRC/WGEID/129/1, paras. 77–78 and 80–83. See also OHCHR, *Detention of Civilians in the Context of the Armed Attack by the Russian Federation against Ukraine*, (June 2023), paras. 36 and 86. The OHCHR report was released after the reporting period but it covers the period from 24 February 2022 to 23 May 2023.

<sup>53</sup> A/HRC/WGEID/128/1, para. 86; and A/HRC/WGEID/129/1, para. 84.

<sup>54</sup> A/HRC/51/31, para. 72, and A/HRC/WGEID/129/1, para. 90. See also A/HRC/51/5, paras. 30–32 and 39.

<sup>55</sup> A/HRC/45/13/Add.3, paras. 63–68.

<sup>56</sup> CED/C/7, annex.

<sup>57</sup> A/HRC/51/5, paras. 40–45.

follow-up reports,<sup>58</sup> notably in relation to an effective and meaningful implementation of the mandate of the Office on Missing Persons.

## **Sudan**

100. The Working Group is gravely concerned that the practice of enforced disappearance, reported in a general allegation transmitted during the reporting period,<sup>59</sup> is at risk of being perpetuated in the further worsened human rights situation in Sudan. The Working Group reiterates the concerns it has expressed regarding the conduct of the Sudanese armed forces, the police and the General Intelligence Service, which operate in a climate of impunity, whereby the authorities have failed to search for disappeared persons and hold perpetrators accountable.

101. The Working Group is concerned at the deteriorated security and political situation in the country in the context of the ongoing conflict, which favours the perpetration of enforced disappearances and of acts tantamount to them by all parties involved.

102. On 20 November 2005, the Working Group requested an invitation to visit the country. A visit, scheduled for November 2017, was postponed due to a lack of understanding about the terms of reference.<sup>60</sup> In spite of a preliminary visit undertaken by the Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group in order to clarify the terms of reference on 5 and 6 December 2017 and an agreement in principle about the new dates in March 2018, the Government has never officially accepted the visit.<sup>61</sup> The Working Group hopes that a visit can materialize soon.

## **Syrian Arab Republic**

103. The Working Group continues to be concerned at the plight of victims of enforced disappearances and of acts tantamount to them in the Syrian Arab Republic and, in the light of the little progress made in the past 12 years and violence and conflict in the country, highlights the urgent need to end the anguish of families. In that respect, the Working Group has supported the initiative to create a specific body, with an international mandate, to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing and forcibly disappeared persons and provide support to their families.<sup>62</sup> The Working Group is pleased that the new institution was created by the General Assembly in resolution 77/301 and stands ready to provide advice on its establishment and implementation, within the framework of its mandate.

104. The Working Group also regrets the lack of effective search activities and investigations by the Syrian authorities in the face of the increasing number of enforced disappearances, as well as the lack of accountability for perpetrators and redress for victims and their families.<sup>63</sup>

105. On 19 September 2011, the Working Group requested an invitation to visit the country. No response yet has been received from the Government, in spite of a number of reminders. The Working Group hopes to receive a positive reply soon.

## **Uganda**

106. The Working Group is concerned at the lack of reply from the Government in relation to a general allegation transmitted last year about a massive campaign against those opposed to the Government, which included a series of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions,

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<sup>58</sup> [A/HRC/33/51/Add.2](#) and [A/HRC/42/40/Add.1](#).

<sup>59</sup> [A/HRC/WGEID/128/1](#), para. 90 and see also general allegation, Sudan, 128th session.

<sup>60</sup> [A/HRC/42/40](#), para. 33.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> [A/HRC/51/31](#), para. 76.

<sup>63</sup> [A/HRC/WGEID/129/1](#), para. 97 and annex I, pp. 26–27.

enforced disappearances, abductions and acts of excessive use of force against several government critics before, during and after the general election held in January 2021.<sup>64</sup>

## Yemen

107. The Working Group continues to be concerned at allegations of enforced disappearances carried out by the Government of Yemen and of acts tantamount to them by the de facto authorities in Sana'a.<sup>65</sup> In that respect, it refers to a general allegation transmitted after the 130th session, indicating a reported increase in the commission of gross human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, in the context of the armed conflict in Yemen since 2015, and in particular in the period from January 2017 to December 2022.<sup>66</sup>

108. The Working Group urges all parties to the conflict to stop disappearances, disclose information on the fate and whereabouts of those deprived of liberty and conduct transparent, independent and effective investigations into the allegations.

## VII. Conclusions and recommendations

109. **The Working Group would like to reiterate the expression of its solidarity and admiration for the relatives of disappeared persons, the organizations that support them, human rights defenders and lawyers who, despite the difficulties and the hostile and dangerous environment in which they often operate, continue their struggle for truth, justice, reparations, memory and non-repetition. The Working Group was created 43 years ago precisely to address the plight of relatives of disappeared persons across the world and respond to their anguish and sorrow, and stands ready to continue supporting them.**

110. **The Working Group has continued to receive reports regarding countries where the deteriorated security and political situations have favoured the perpetration of enforced disappearances. In those contexts, the families of disappeared persons and organizations supporting them have too often not been able to lodge complaints or have access to proper remedies, including effective search activities and independent investigations. Extremely concerning are the continued reports of reprisals faced by the families of victims and the human rights defenders and organizations supporting them, and the increasing number of reports from various countries of enforced disappearances of journalists and media workers, which is also an unacceptable attack on freedom of expression. The Working Group calls upon States to take effective measures to prevent acts of intimidation and reprisal, protect those working on cases of enforced disappearances and punish the perpetrators, in accordance with article 13 (1) and (3) of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and principle 14 of the Guiding Principles for the Search for Disappeared Persons.**

111. **The Working Group is concerned at the worrying number of situations in which States try to justify the commission of enforced disappearance in the context of anti-terrorism measures or operations to counter organized crime. The Working Group stresses once again the absolute nature of the prohibition of enforced disappearance, which has indeed attained the status of *jus cogens*. Pursuant to article 7 of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, no circumstances whatsoever, whether a threat of war, a state of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked to justify enforced disappearances.**

112. **The Working Group is also concerned that, unfortunately, impunity for enforced disappearances remains rampant, including in some cases because of amendments to the domestic legal framework that are at odds with international law. The Working**

<sup>64</sup> A/HRC/WGEID/127/1, para. 117 and annex III, p. 33.

<sup>65</sup> A/HRC/51/31, para. 79.

<sup>66</sup> A/HRC/WGEID/130/1, para. 80 and annex I.

Group recalls that properly investigating enforced disappearances is not only essential to combat impunity but is also a measure of prevention to guarantee the non-recurrence of this heinous crime.

113. During the reporting period, some cases were clarified due to the prompt response received from the Member State concerned. Learning the truth about the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones has brought immediate solace to families that were caught between hope and despair. In some cases, they were able to establish contact with their loved ones, in others, they could grieve for them and perform the last rituals according to their religion, customs or beliefs. The Working Group wishes that more Member States would engage in swift, transparent and meaningful dialogue in response to its communications on individual cases, contributing to the fulfilment of its humanitarian mandate and putting an end to the suffering of victims.

114. Country visits are an integral part of the mandate of the Working Group. Visits allow the Working Group to highlight country practices in addressing enforced disappearances, assist States in reducing obstacles to implementing the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and ensure direct contact with the family members of victims. The Working Group recognizes the support provided by the Governments of Uruguay and Honduras during the visits carried out in July 2022 and March 2023 respectively. It sincerely hopes that the Government of Kenya will agree to dates for a visit to take place before the end of 2023, in order to deliver on its pledge. The Working Group stands ready to discuss dates and modalities for the visit with the Government of Kenya (see para. 33 above).

115. During the reporting period, the Working Group requested a visit to Angola. In addition to this new request, the Working Group has requested visits to the following countries, without having yet received a positive response: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brazil, Burundi, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, El Salvador, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Russian Federation, Rwanda, South Africa, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Yemen and Zimbabwe. There are other countries that in the past have invited the Working Group to visit and/or accepted the visit in principle, but either have not officially confirmed the invitations or for various reasons have not allowed the visit to materialize in practice and/or agreed on dates. These include Algeria, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Libya, Mali, South Sudan and Sudan. The Working Group therefore calls upon all States with pending requests for visits to respond favourably to them in the light of Human Rights Council resolutions 7/12 and 45/3 and, for those that have agreed to visits, to respond as soon as possible with specific dates.

116. The Working Group reiterates its previous call to ensure adequate follow-up to the findings of commissions of inquiry and other fact-finding or investigative bodies created by the Human Rights Council or the General Assembly insofar as they relate to enforced disappearance.

117. The Working Groups thanks all States and stakeholders that provided inputs for the study on new technologies and enforced disappearances. It invites States to implement the recommendations contained in the report, also strengthening the coordination and cooperation between different stakeholders to forge alliances to detect risks concerning new technologies and enforced disappearances, devise mitigation strategies and effective measures to overcome the obstacles identified and promote tools to support those directly affected, including human rights defenders and relatives of disappeared persons. Moreover, States should adopt measures to include new technologies in search activities and criminal investigations, cooperating and affording one another the greatest measure of assistance in those domains.

118. The Working Group calls on all stakeholders concerned to regularly engage and cooperate with it and report on the negative impacts of new technologies in the enjoyment of human rights, especially for human rights defenders and relatives of

**disappeared persons, as well as on progress made regarding the use of new technologies in the search for disappeared persons and in the investigation and promotion of accountability.**

119. **The Working Group calls upon States to contribute to the forthcoming call for written inputs from various stakeholders (foreseen for the fall of 2023) to inform its next thematic report on enforced disappearances and elections (see paras. 50–54 above).**

120. **The Working Group reiterates its call upon all States to ratify or accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance without delay and accept the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances under articles 31 and 32 of the Convention to receive and consider communications.**

## Annex I

### Country visit requests and invitations extended

#### *Invitations extended to the WGEID*

<i>Country</i>	<i>Date</i>
Algeria	To be determined
Burkina Faso	Last quarter of 2019 (did not take place)
Ghana	Last quarter of 2021 (did not take place)
Kenya	Last quarter of 2023
Libya	To be determined, postponed
Mali	26 August–3 September 2019 (did not take place)
Senegal	To be determined
South Sudan	Last quarter of 2016 (did not take place)
Sudan	20 to 29 November 2017 (did not take place)

#### *Visits requested by the WGEID*

<i>Country</i>	<i>Request sent</i>	<i>Last reminder sent</i>
Afghanistan	17 April 2019	24 April 2020
Angola	23 May 2023	-
Bahrain	27 October 2014	7 January 2022
Bangladesh	12 March 2013	23 April 2020
Belarus	30 June 2011	8 February 2019
Brazil	8 April 2020	26 May 2023
Burkina Faso	2 April 2019	-
Burundi	27 May 2009	7 January 2022
Cameroon	12 April 2019	7 January 2022
China	19 February 2013	7 January 2022
Colombia	22 October 2020	-
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	22 May 2015	11 March 2020
Democratic Republic of the Congo	17 May 2017	7 July 2023
Egypt	30 June 2011	7 January 2022
El Salvador	6 October 2017	7 January 2022
Guatemala	30 May 2018	7 January 2022
India	16 August 2010	7 January 2022
Indonesia	12 December 2006	26 May 2023
Lao PDR	6 May 2020	26 May 2023



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*Visits requested by the WGEID*


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<i>Country</i>	<i>Request sent</i>	<i>Last reminder sent</i>
Lebanon	27 November 2015	7 January 2022
Nepal	12 May 2006	27 July 2020
Nicaragua	23 May 2006	7 January 2022
Nigeria	23 January 2019	7 January 2022
Pakistan	14 November 2019	7 January 2022
Philippines	3 April 2013	26 May 2023
Russian Federation	2 November 2006	23 January 2019
Rwanda	27 October 2014	7 January 2022
South Africa	28 October 2014	7 January 2022
South Sudan	29 August 2011	8 February 2019
Sudan	20 December 2005	16 September 2021
Syrian Arab Republic	19 September 2011	18 January 2019
Thailand	30 June 2011	11 March 2020
Tunisia	7 January 2022	
Turkmenistan	18 November 2016	24 February 2020
United Arab Emirates	13 September 2013	7 January 2022
Uzbekistan	30 June 2011	23 January 2019
Venezuela	28 November 2019	7 January 2022
Yemen	31 October 2017	-
Zimbabwe	20 July 2009	7 January 2022

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## Annex II

**Statistical summary: cases of enforced disappearance and general allegations transmitted by the Working Group between 1980 and 2023**

States/entities	Cases transmitted to the Government				Cases clarified by:		Status of person at date of clarification				General allegation		
	Outstanding cases		Total		Government	Sources	At liberty	In detention	Dead	Discontinued cases	Closed cases	GA sent	Response
	Cases	Female	Cases	Female									
Afghanistan	20	0	21	0	1	0	0	0	1				
Albania	1		1										
Algeria	3 287	20	3 316	23	9	20	11	10	8			2013/2018/2020/2023	Yes (2013); No (2018); No (2023)
Angola	0		12	1	9				9	3			
Armenia	38	2	38	2	0	0	0	0	0				
Argentina	3 065	728	3 444	775	301	78	39	5	335				
Azerbaijan	19		21		1	1	1	1	0				
Bahrain	0		20	2	5	15	3	16				2014/2018	Yes (2014); No (2018)
Bangladesh	70	1	88	2	11	7	10	5	0			2011/2017/2019	No
Belarus	4		5	1	1	0	0	1	0				
Bhutan	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	28	3	48	3	19	1	19		1				
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1		1		0	0	0	0	0			2009/2011/2014	Yes
Brazil	16	3	66	7	46	4	1		49			2019/2022	Yes
Bulgaria	0		3		3	0	0	0	3				
Burkina Faso	0		3		3				3				
Burundi	250	9	251	9	0	1	1	0	0			2018	
Cambodia	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	2			
Cameroon	18	1	25	1	5	2	6	1				2016	No

States/entities	Cases transmitted to the Government				Cases clarified by:		Status of person at date of clarification					General allegation	
	Outstanding cases		Total		Government	Sources	At liberty	In detention	Dead	Discontinued cases	Closed cases	GA sent	Response
	Cases	Female	Cases	Female									
Central African Republic	3		3		0	0	0	0	0			2013	No
Chad	24		35		3	8	9	1	1				
Chile	786	63	909	64	101	22	2		121				
China	168	31	304	46	100	36	95	38	4			2010/2011/2018/2019	Yes; No (2018)
Colombia	944	96	1 287	126	275	68	160	24	159			2012/2013/2015/2016/2017/2020/2021	Yes; No (2017)
Congo	89	3	91	3	0	0	0	0	0	2			
Cuba	0		4	1	3	1	0	3	0				
Czechia	0		0		0	0	0	0	0			2009	Yes
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	404	60	404	60	0	0	0	0	0				
Democratic Republic of the Congo	48	11	58	11	6	4	10	0	0			2015/2019	Yes; No (2019)
Denmark	0		1		0	1	0	1	0			2009	No
Djibouti	0		1			1							
Dominican Republic	2		5		2	0	2	0	0	1			
Ecuador	5		27	2	18	4	12	4	6				
Egypt	275	9	892	10	408	181	137	430	21	12		2011/2016/2017	Yes; No (2017)
El Salvador	2 284	296	2 675	333	318	73	196	175	20			2015/2015/2022	No
Equatorial Guinea	11		11		0	0	0	0	0				
Eritrea	63	4	63	4								2012/2017	No
Ethiopia	113	2	120	3	3	4	2	5					
France	1		1		0	0	0	0	0				

States/entities	Cases transmitted to the Government				Cases clarified by:		Status of person at date of clarification					General allegation	
	Outstanding cases		Total		Government	Sources	At liberty	In detention	Dead	Discontinued cases	Closed cases	GA sent	Response
	Cases	Female	Cases	Female									
Gambia	13	2	21	2	0	8	8	0	0				
Georgia	0		1		1	0	0	0	1				
Greece	1		3		0	0	0	0	0	2			
Guatemala	2 897	372	3 154	390	177	80	187	6	64			2011/2013/2022	Yes
Guinea	37	2	44	2	0	7	0	0	7				
Guyana	1		1	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Haiti	38	1	48	1	9	1	1	4	5				
Honduras	130	21	210	34	37	43	54	8	18			2021/2022	Yes; No (2022)
India	445	10	529	13	68	16	51	8	23			2009/2011/2013/2019	No
Indonesia	178	5	182	5	3	1	3	1	0			2011/2013/2017	No
Iran (Islamic Republic of Iran)	569	109	599	109	21	9	13	4	11			2017	No
Iraq	16 428	2 300	16 576	2 317	117	31	122	17	9			2020	
Ireland	0		0		0	0	0	0	0			2009	No
Israel	3		4			1			1				
Japan	0		0		0	0	0	0	0				
Jordan	0		9		2	5	4	3	0	2			
Kazakhstan	1		3		0	2	0	2	0				
Kenya	90	1	90									2011/2014/2016/2017	No
Kuwait	0		3			2	1	1		1			
Lao People's Democratic Republic	6	4	15	5	0	8	0	7	1	1			
Latvia	2		2		0	0	0	0	0	0			
Lebanon	311	19	321	19	2	8	9	1					
Libya	54		74	1	5	13	7	10	1	2		2014/2018	No
Lithuania	0		0		0	0	0	0	0	0		2012	Yes
Malaysia	4	1	6	1	0	1	0	1	0	1			

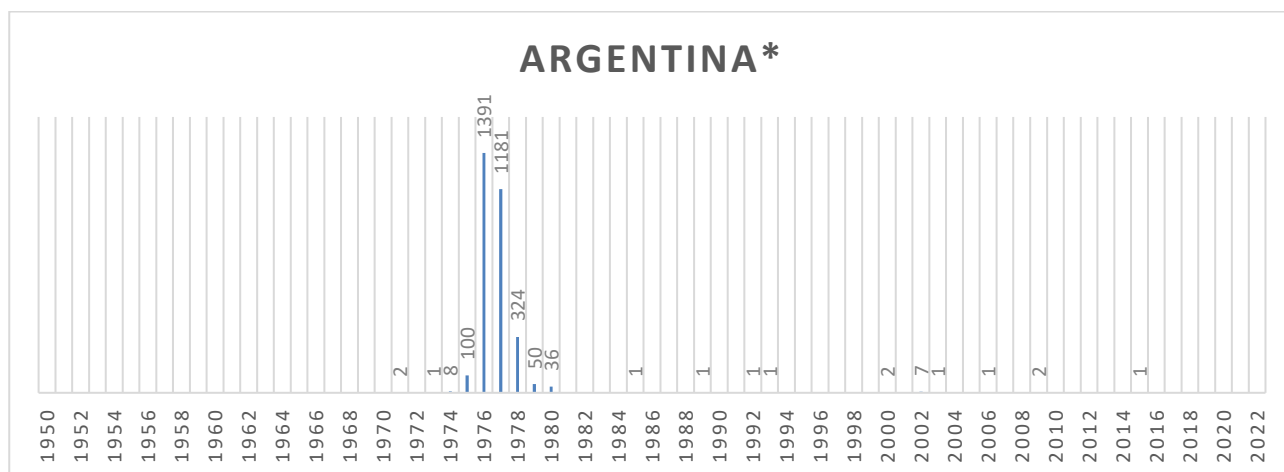
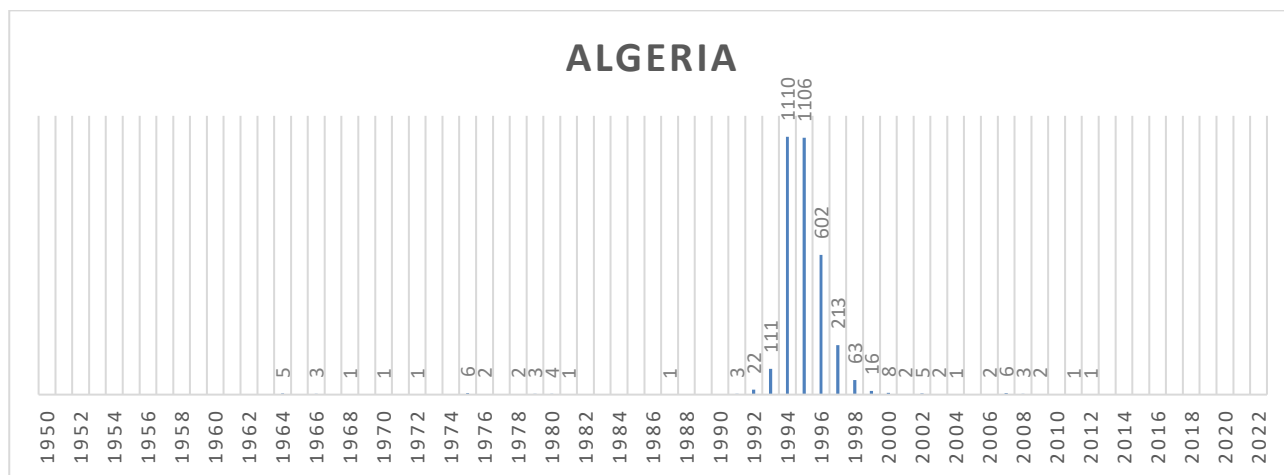
States/entities	Cases transmitted to the Government				Cases clarified by:		Status of person at date of clarification					General allegation	
	Outstanding cases		Total		Government	Sources	At liberty	In detention	Dead	Discontinued cases	Closed cases	GA sent	Response
	Cases	Female	Cases	Female									
Maldives	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
Mauritania	6		7		1			1					
Mexico	357	26	563	45	134	41	83	18	74	31		2013/2014/2017/2017/2017/ 2022/2023	Yes (2022, 2023); No (2014, 2017 and 2021)
Montenegro	0		15	1	1	0	0	1	0		14		
Morocco	153	9	409	31	170	53	141	16	74	33		2013/2020	Yes
Mozambique	5		5										
Myanmar	20	4	27	9	7	0	5	2	0			2017	No
Namibia	2		3				1	1					
Nepal	480	60	694	76	135	79	153	60	1			2021	
Nicaragua	103	2	239	7	112	24	45	16	75			2022	No
Nigeria	7	1	17	3	6	4	10	0	0			2021	
North Macedonia	0		0									2009	
Oman	1		2		0	1	1	0	0				
Pakistan	843	5	1 635	11	595	171	489	239	18			2015/2017/2019	No (2017); Yes (2019)
Paraguay	0		23		20	0	19	0	1	3		2014	Yes
Peru	2 361	224	3 003	284	254	388	450	85	107				
Philippines	590	67	779	94	142	47	133	19	37			2009/2012	No
Qatar	2		2										
Romania	0		1		1	0	1	0	0				
Republic of Korea	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Russian Federation	1 721	58	1 768	61	6	38	30	12	2			2016/2018/2022	Yes (2016); No (2018 and 2022)
Rwanda	28	3	31	3		2	1	1		1			
Saudi Arabia	27	4	74	9	17	28	14	29	4	2		2020	No
Serbia	1		2		1		1						
Seychelles	3		3										

States/entities	Cases transmitted to the Government				Cases clarified by:		Status of person at date of clarification					General allegation	
	Outstanding cases		Total		Government	Sources	At liberty	In detention	Dead	Discontinued cases	Closed cases	GA sent	Response
	Cases	Female	Cases	Female									
Somalia	1		1										
South Africa	2	1	13	2	3	2	1	1	3	6			
South Sudan	3		3		0	0	0	0	0				
Spain	6		9		3	0	0	0	3			2014	Yes
Sri Lanka	6 264	193	12 855	262	6 551	40	118	27	6 446			2011/2014/2022	Yes
Sudan	177	5	394	39	206	11	214	3				2022/2023	No
Switzerland	0		1		1	0	0	1					
Syrian Arab Republic	644	42	707	47	17	46	33	23	7			2011/2011/2019/2021/2023	Yes (2011); No (2019, 2021, 2023)
Tajikistan	1		8		5	2	1	0	6				
Thailand	77	6	93	9	7	1	4	1	3	8		2008/2018	No
Timor-Leste	428	29	504	33	58	18	51	23	2				
Togo	10	2	11	2		1	1						
Tunisia	13		30	1	12	5	2	15					
Türkiye	84	3	240	15	94	61	77	36	41			1 2022	No
Turkmenistan	4		9		5			4	1			2018	No
Uganda	22	2	29	4	2	5	2	5					
Ukraine	6		13		3	1	2		2	3			
United Arab Emirates	11	1	51	5	9	31	11	29				2022/2023	No
United Republic of Tanzania	2		4		2	0	0	2	0				
United States of America	4		5		1	0	1	0		0		2019	Yes
Uruguay	19	3	34	8	14	1	5	4	6			2013/2015/2018	Yes (2013)
Uzbekistan	11		26		14	1	2	13	0			0	

<i>States/entities</i>	<i>Cases transmitted to the Government</i>				<i>Cases clarified by:</i>		<i>Status of person at date of clarification</i>					<i>General allegation</i>	
	<i>Outstanding cases</i>		<i>Total</i>		<i>Government</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>At liberty</i>	<i>In detention</i>	<i>Dead</i>	<i>Discontinued cases</i>	<i>Closed cases</i>	<i>GA sent</i>	<i>Response</i>
	<i>Cases</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Cases</i>	<i>Female</i>									
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	28	3	39	4	10	2	2	6	3			2019	No
Viet Nam	2	1	6	1	3	1	2	2	0				
Yemen	29		187		135	9	66	5	73	14		2023	No
Zambia	0		1	1		1		1					
Zimbabwe	5	1	7	2	1	1	1		1			2009	No
State of Palestine	4	1	5	1		1	1						

## Annex III

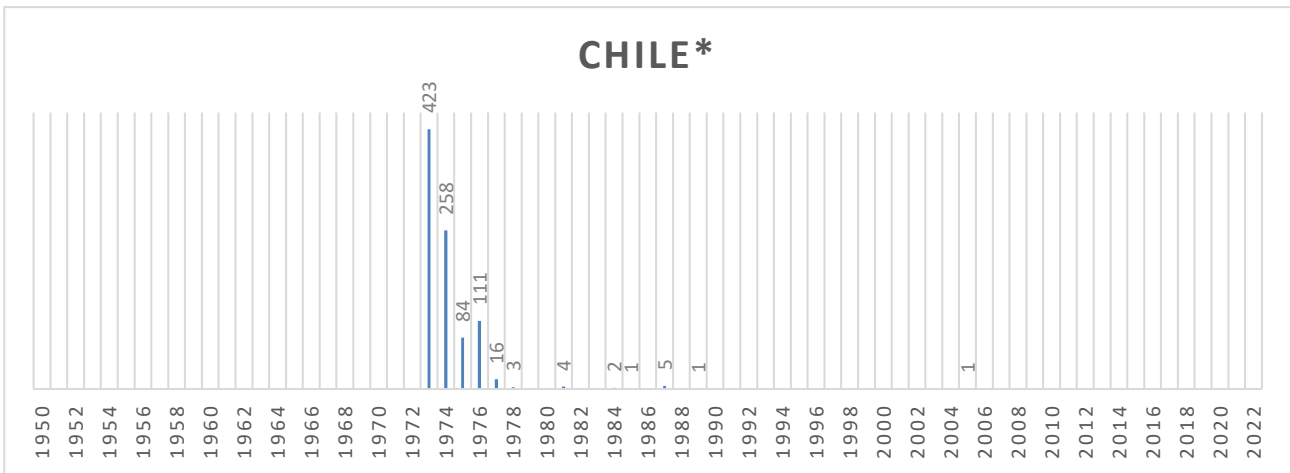
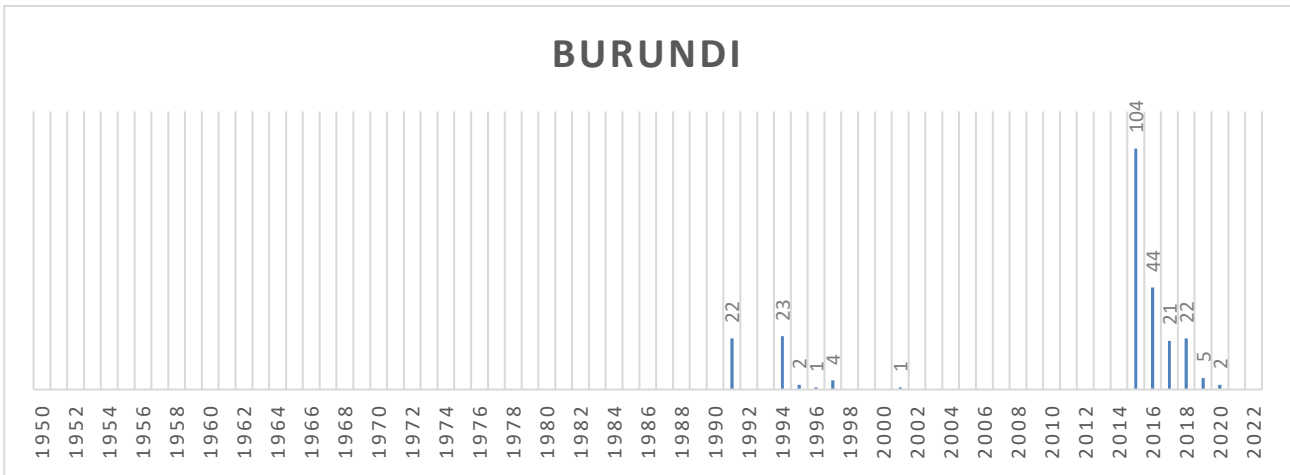
Graphs showing the number of cases of enforced disappearance by country and by year according to the cases transmitted by the Working Group between 1980 and 12 May 2023 (only for countries with more than 100 cases transmitted)<sup>67</sup>



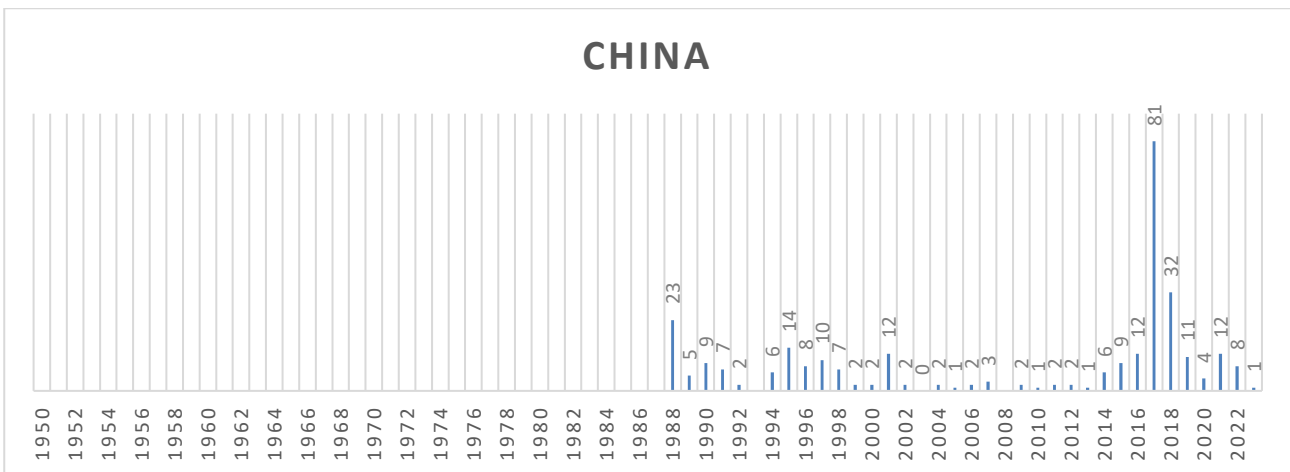
\* Ratified the Convention in 2007.

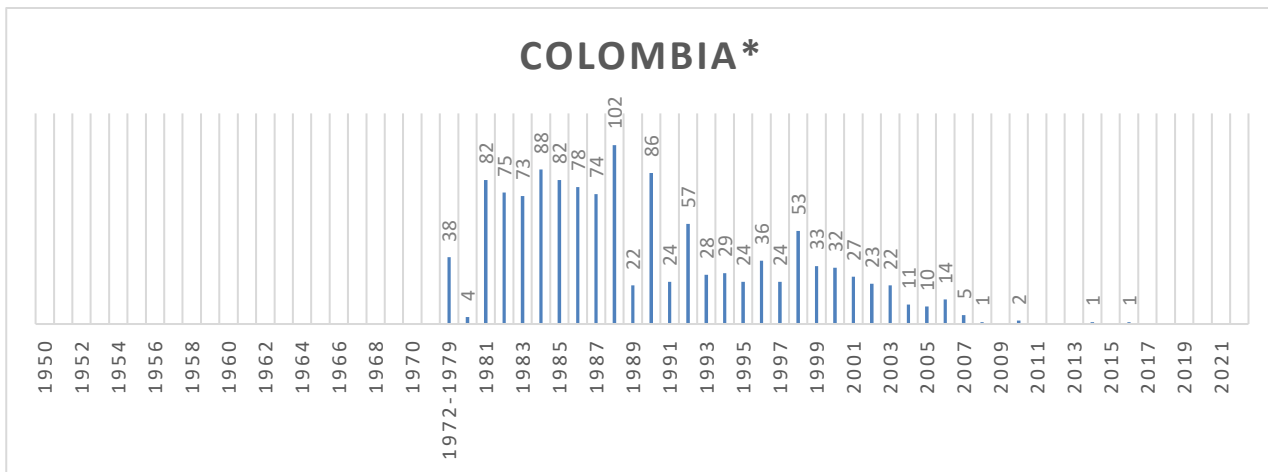
<sup>67</sup> The statistics for the countries marked with asterisk (\*) may be not representative since their ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, for the cases of enforced disappearance that occurred afterwards would be dealt with by the Committee on Enforced Disappearances.



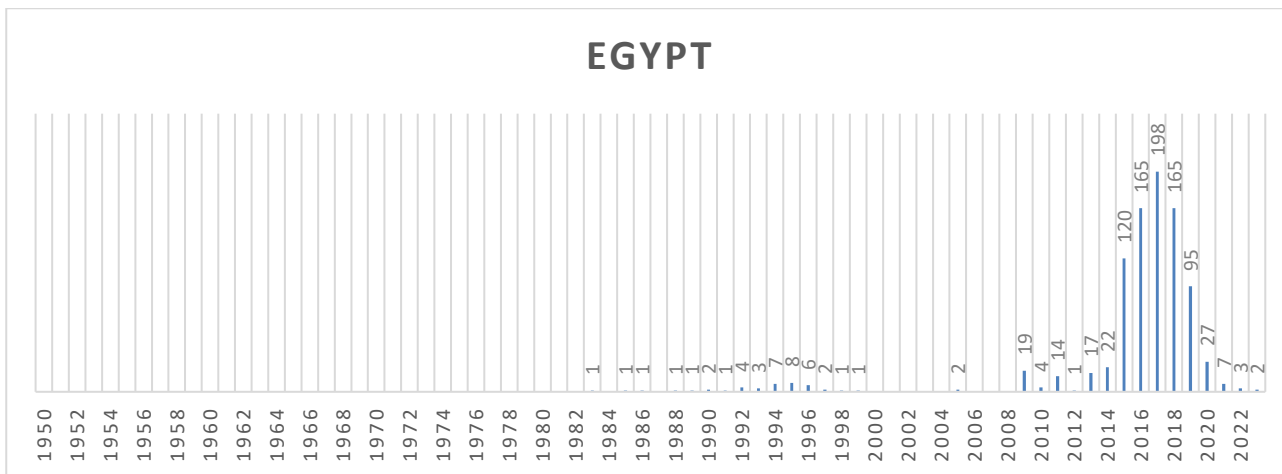
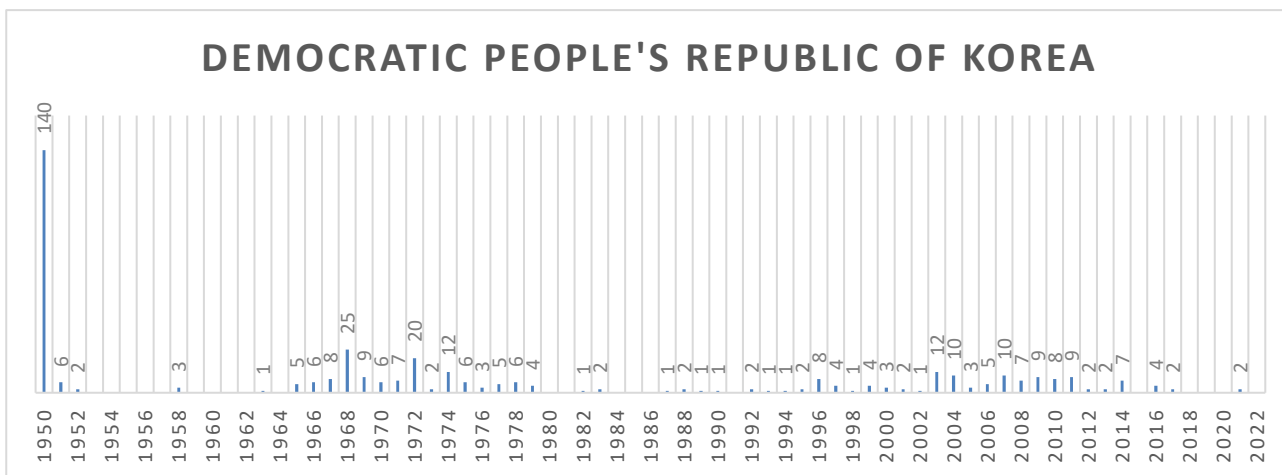


\* Ratified the Convention in 2009.

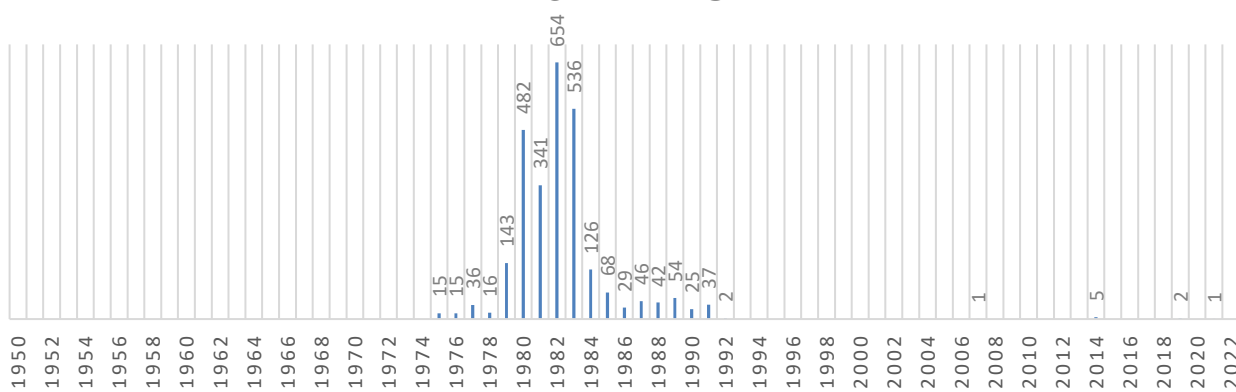




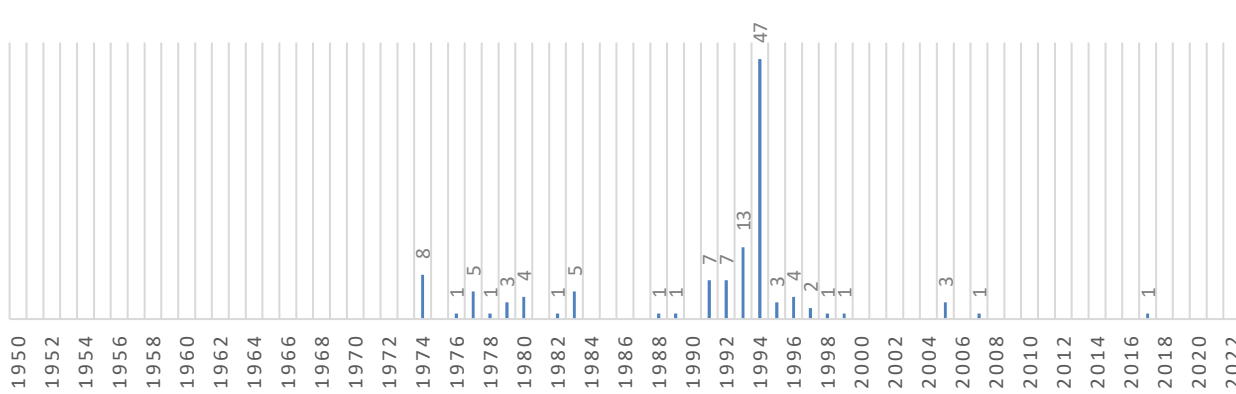
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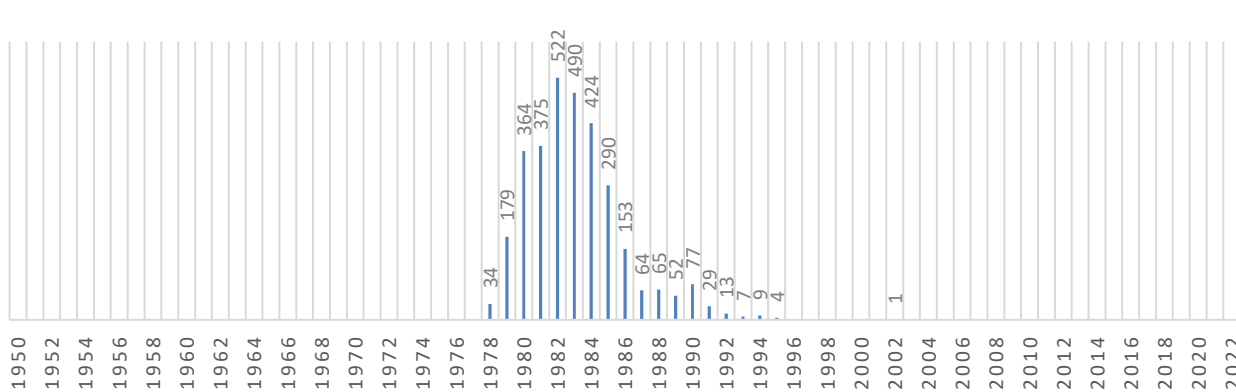
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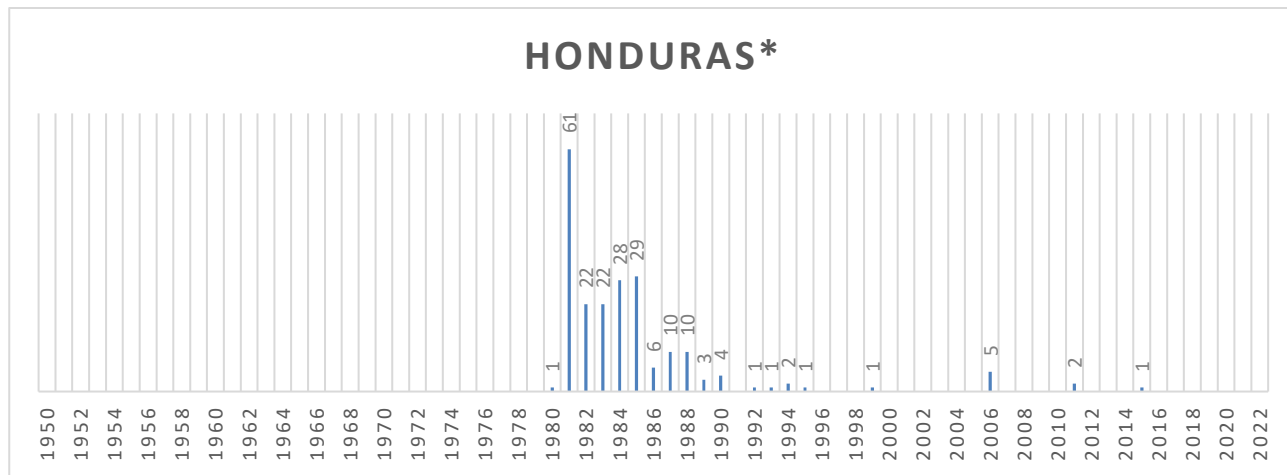


### ETHIOPIA

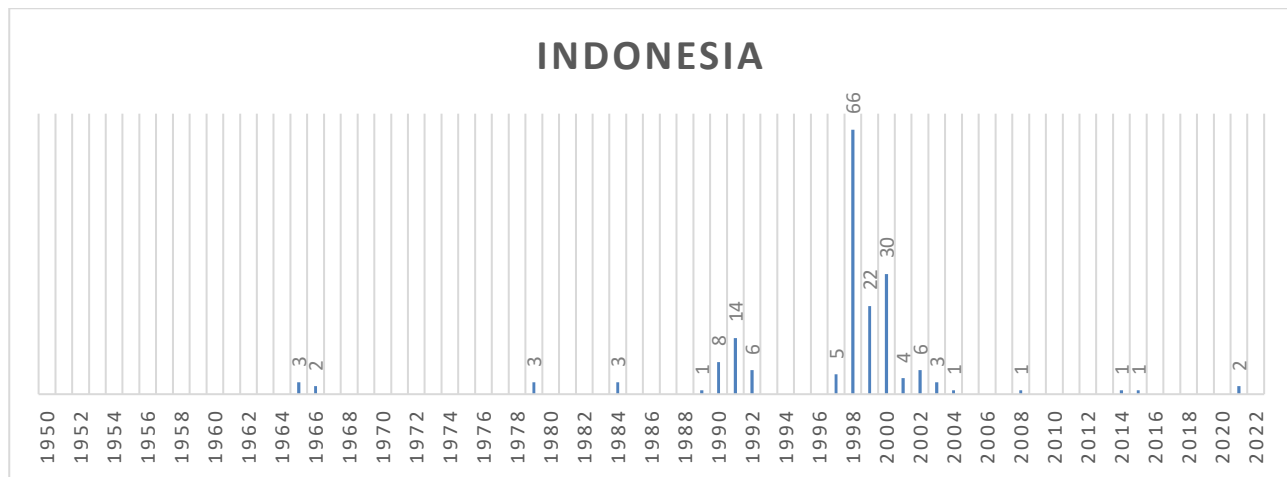
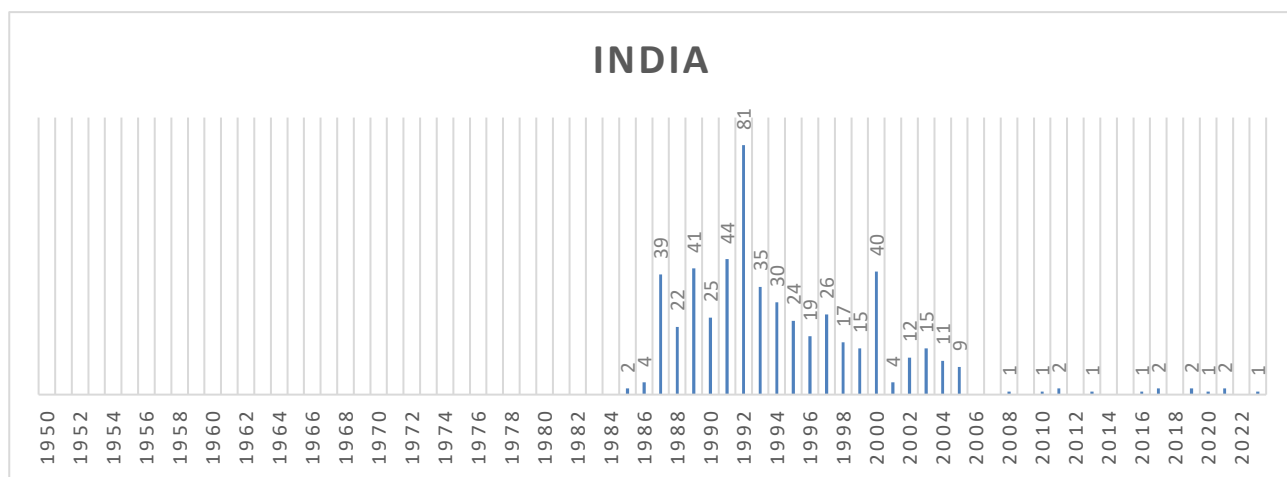


### GUATEMALA

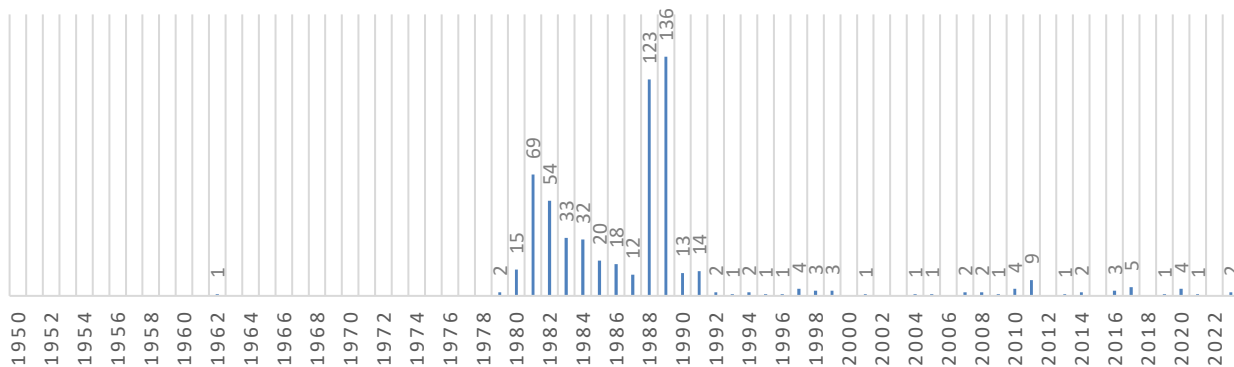




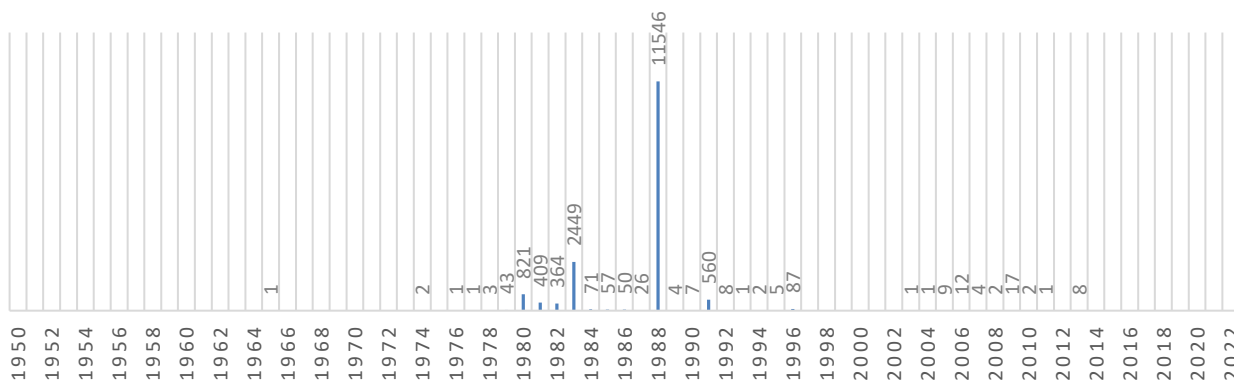
\* Ratified the Convention in 2008.



### ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

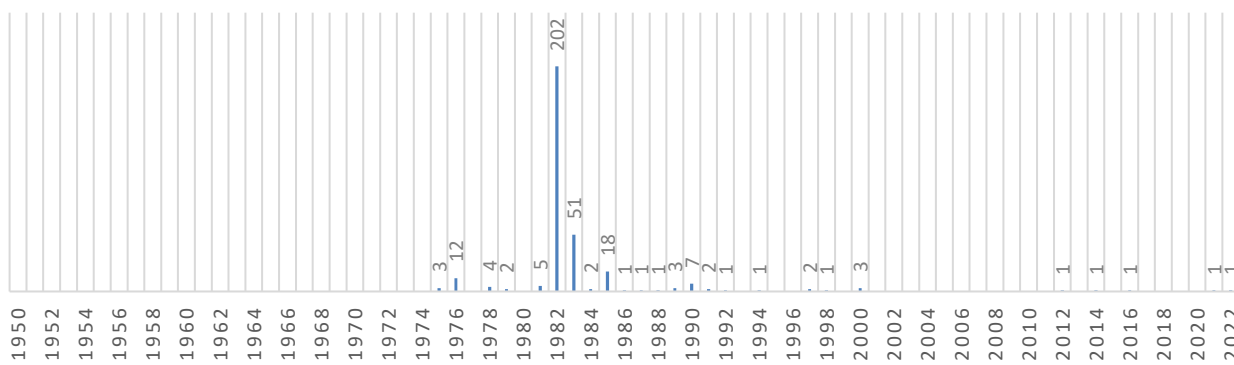


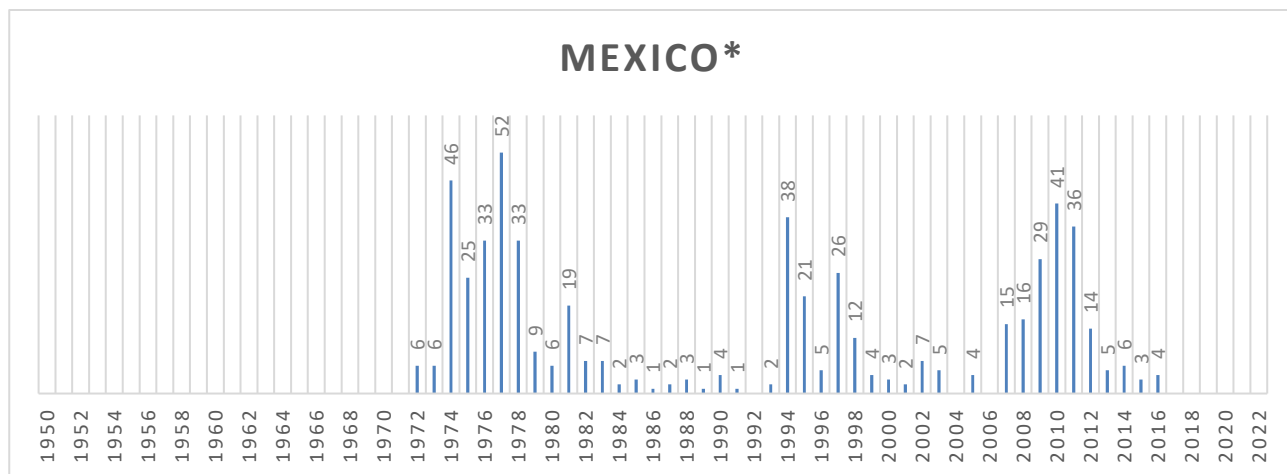
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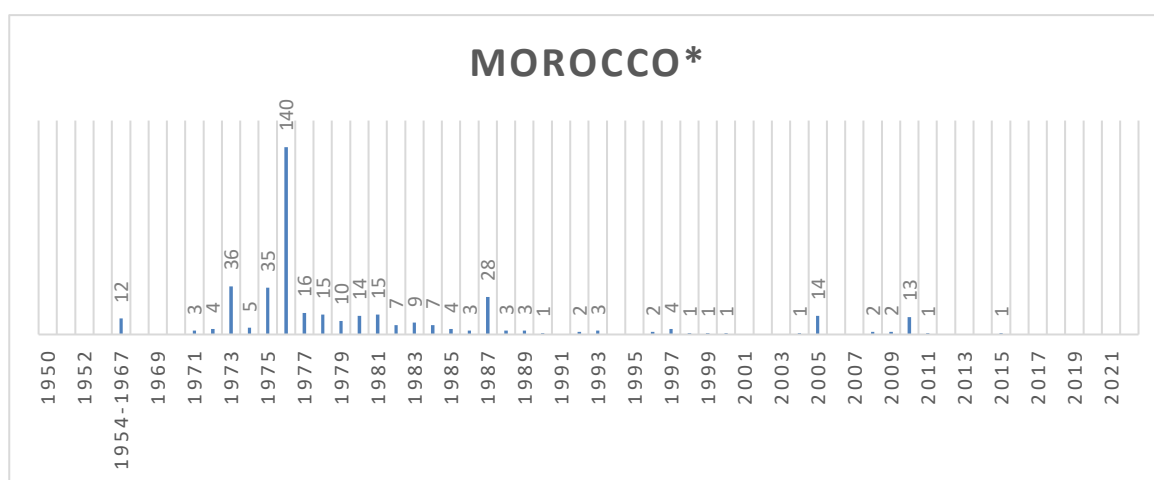
\* Ratified the Convention in 2010.

### LEBANON

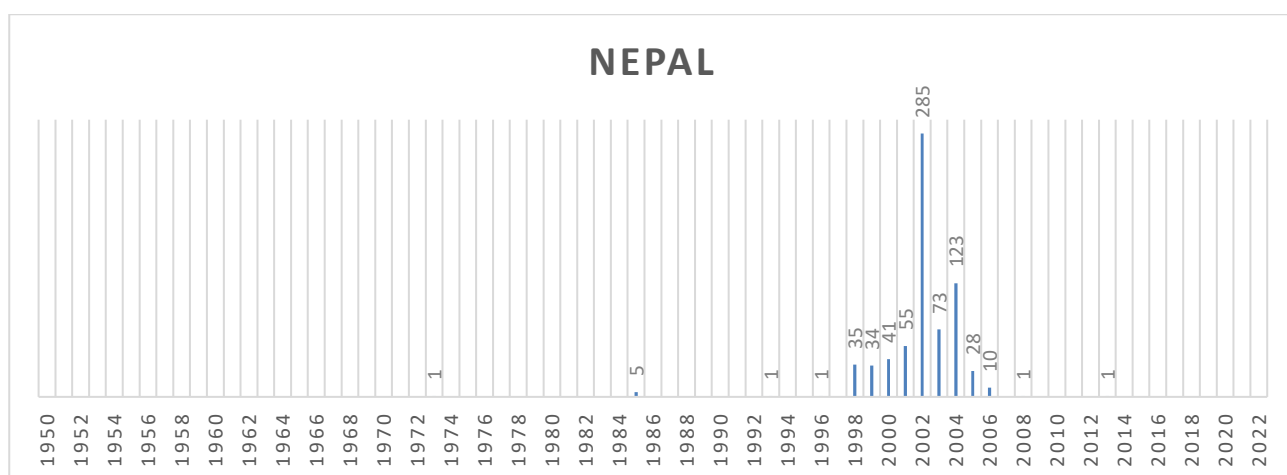


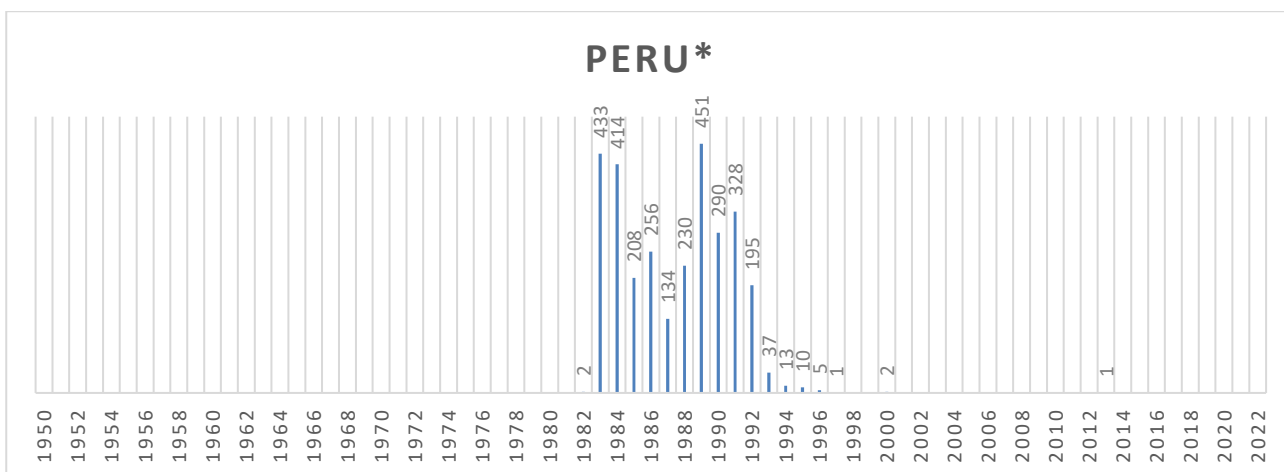
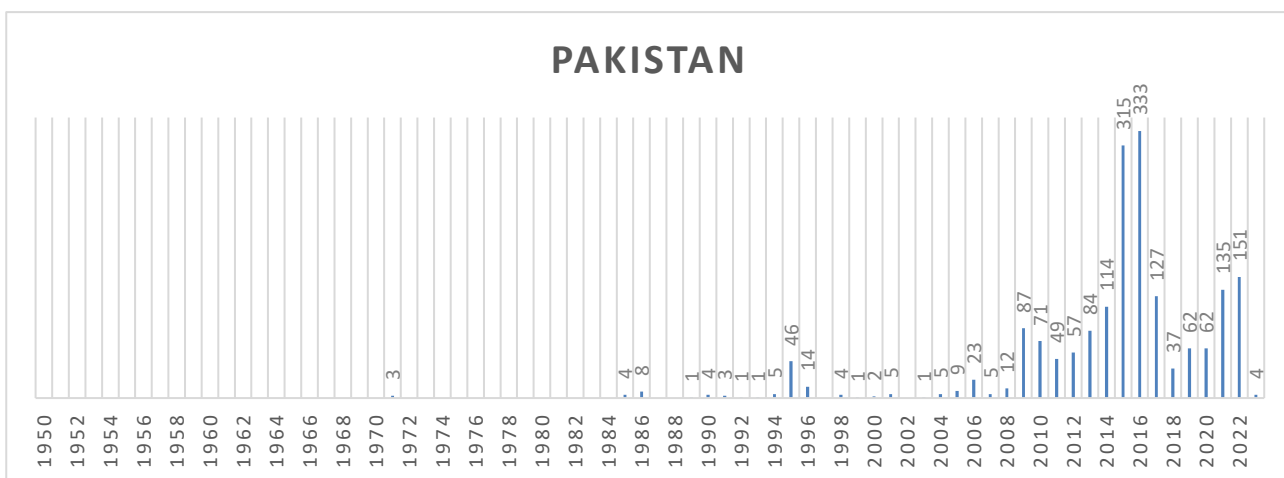
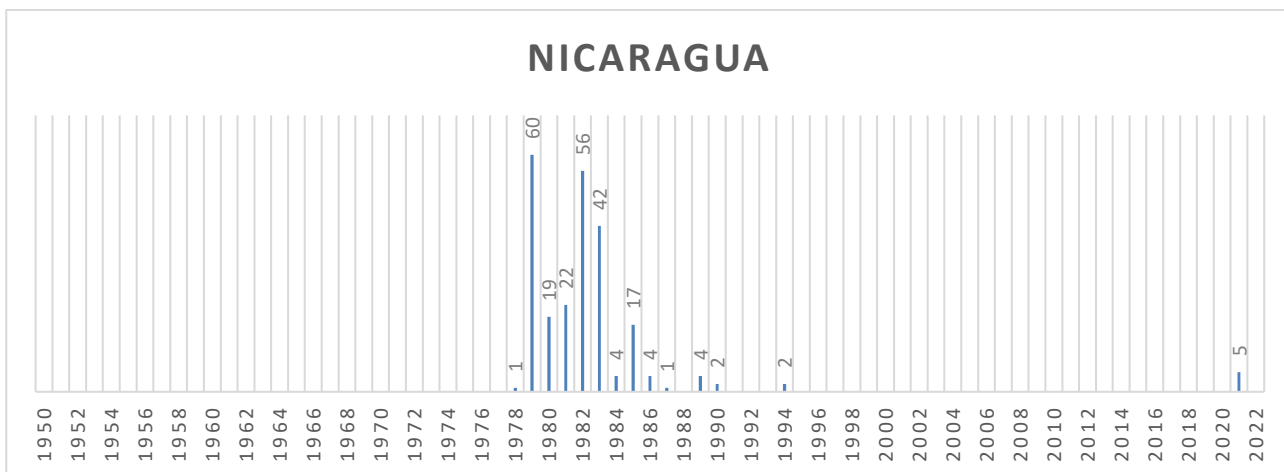


\* Ratified the Convention in 2008.

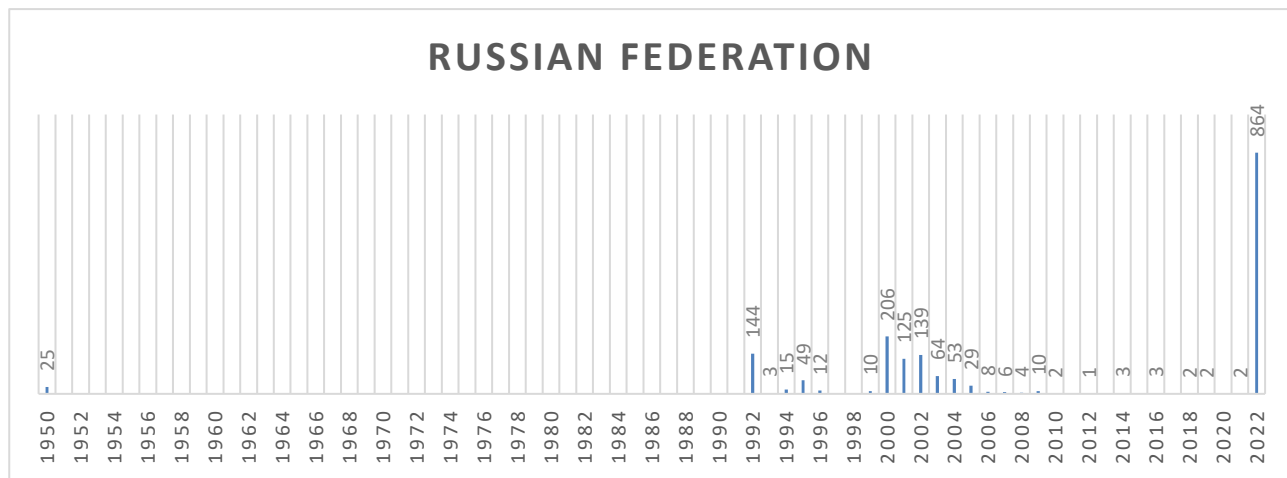
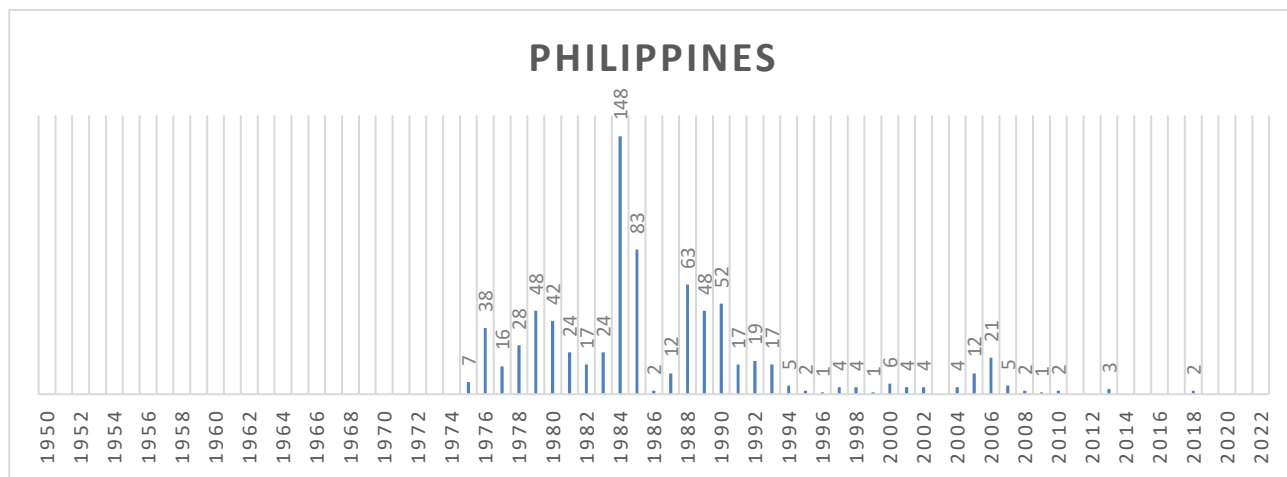


\* Ratified the Convention in 2013.

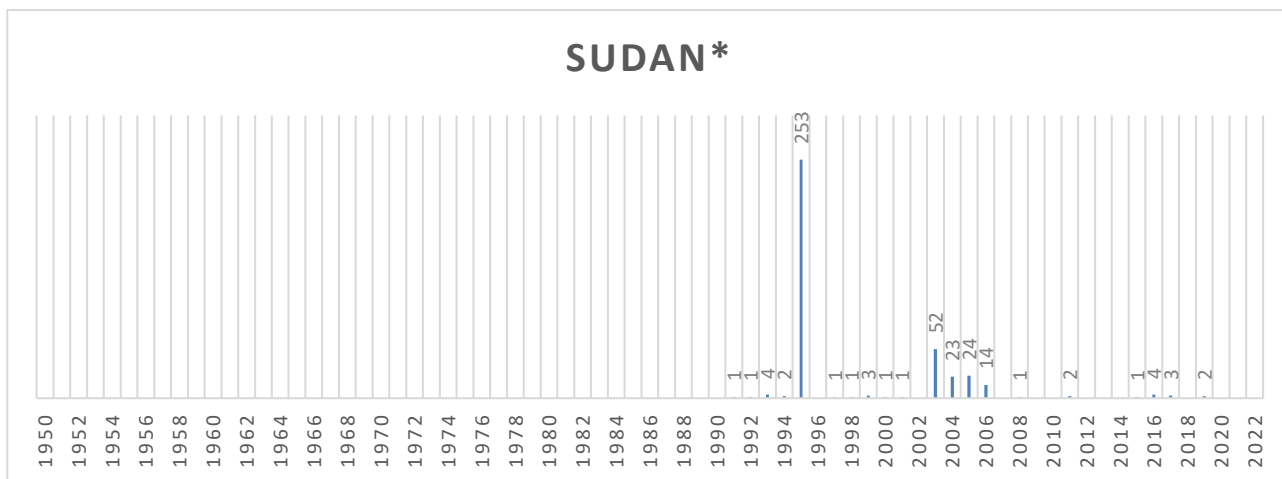




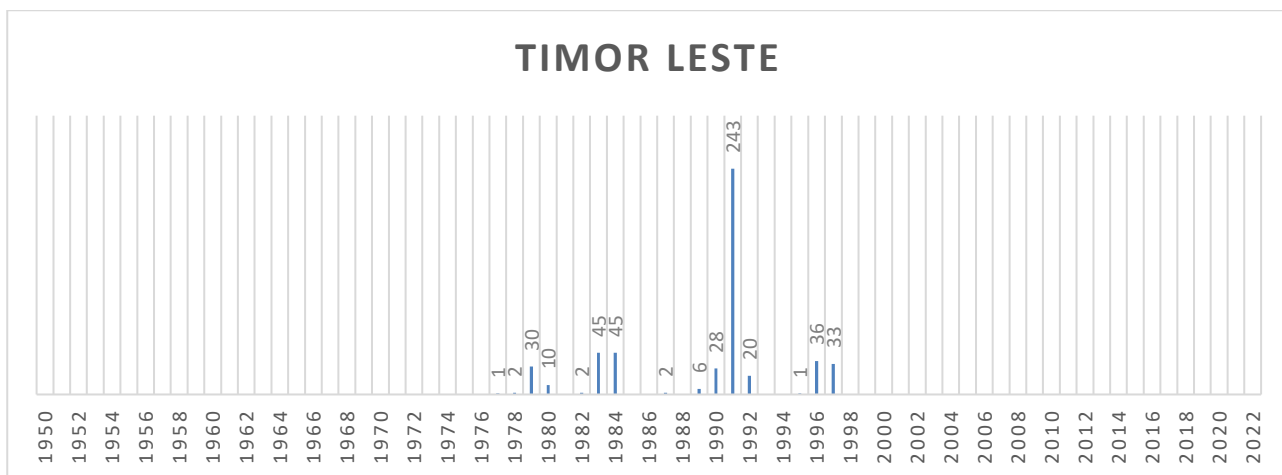
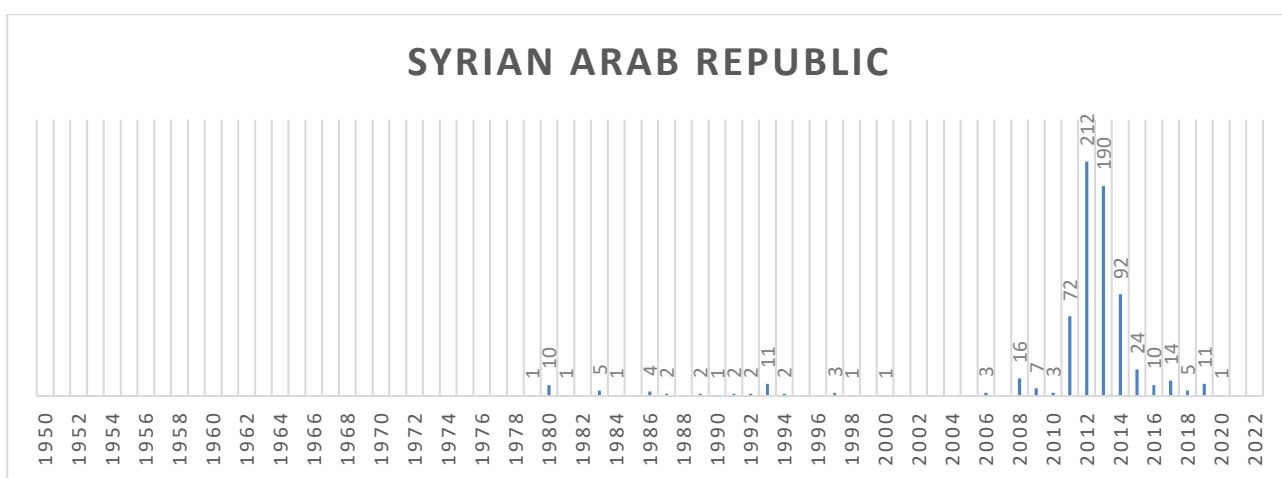
\* Ratified the Convention in 2012.

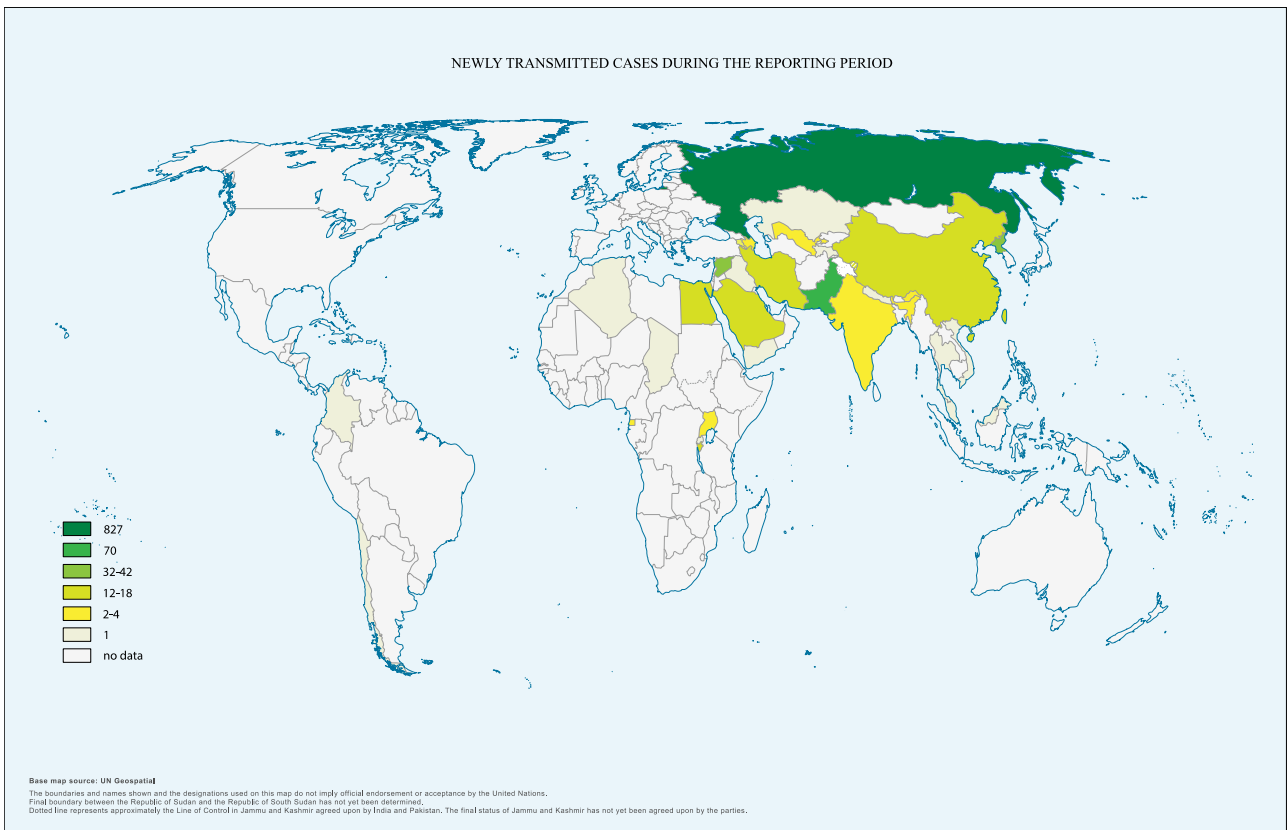
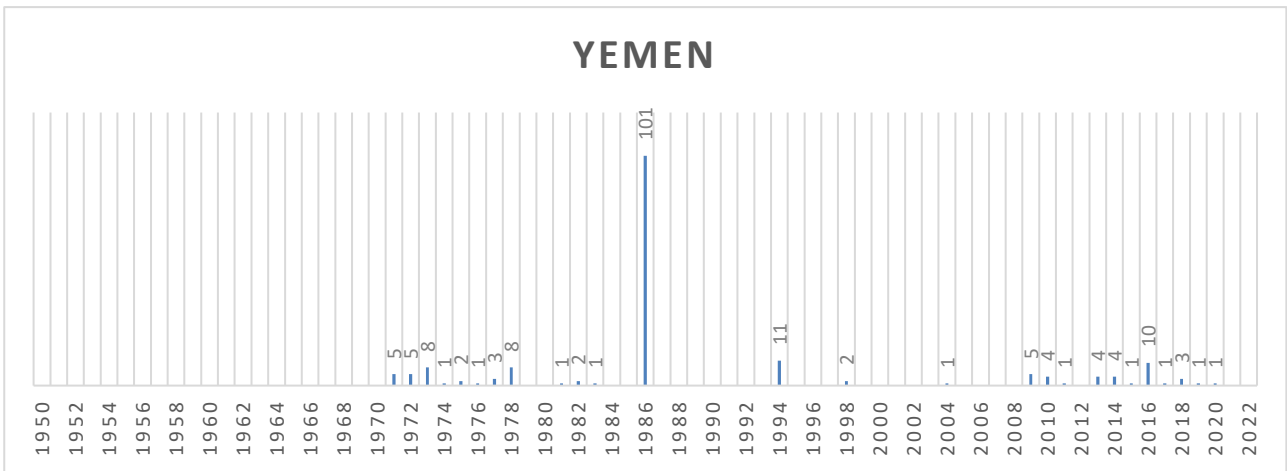
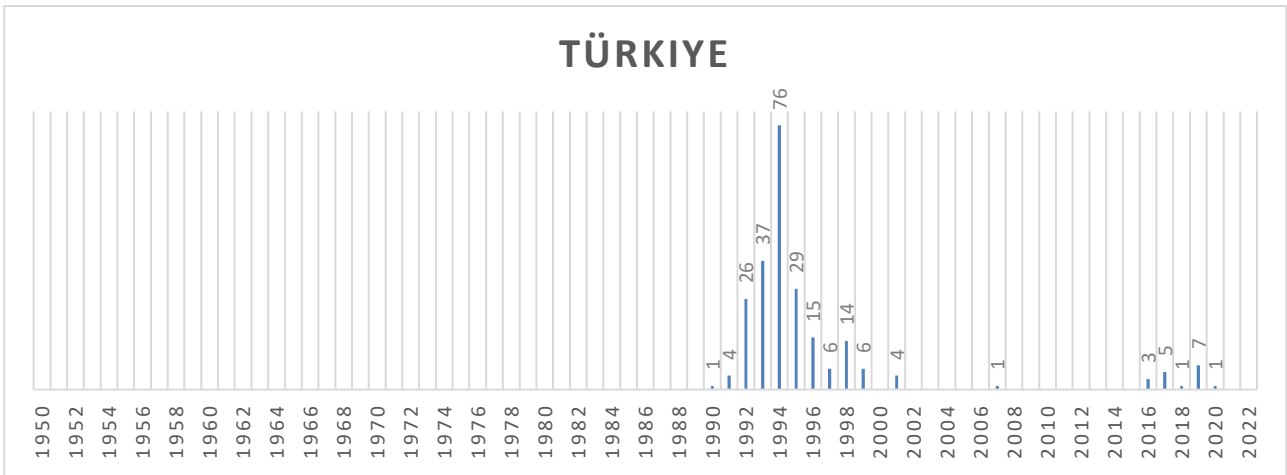




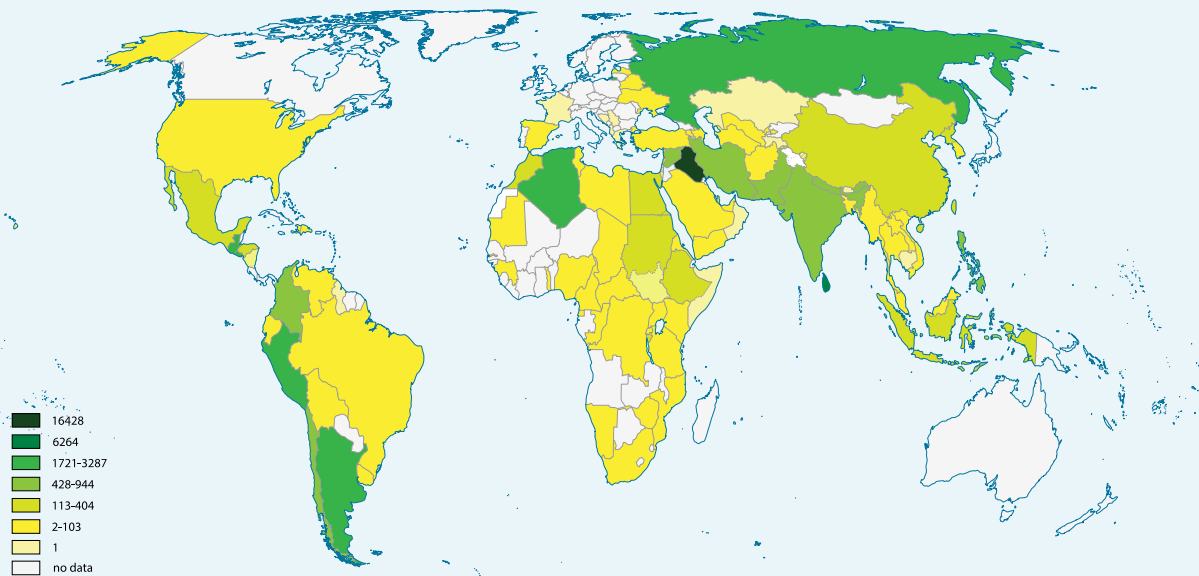


\* Ratified the Convention in 2021.



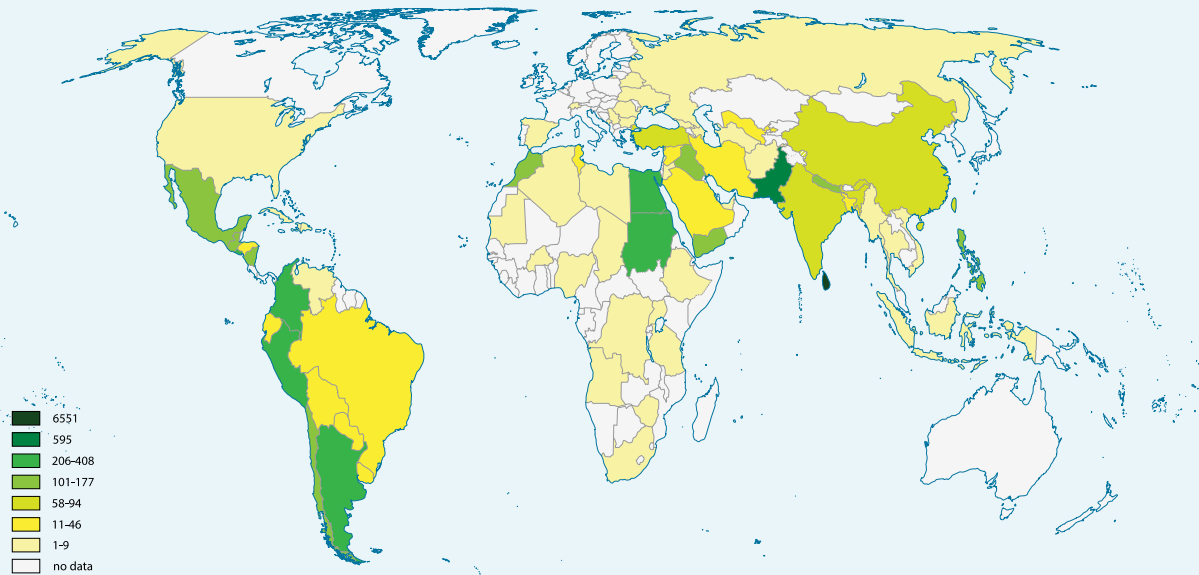


TOTAL NUMBER OF OUTSTANDING CASES BY STATES AND TERRITORIES



Base map source: UN Geospatial  
 The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.  
 Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.  
 Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.  
 A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning the sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

TOTAL NUMBER OF CASES CLARIFIED BY GOVERNMENTS



Base map source: UN Geospatial  
 The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.  
 Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.  
 Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.  
 A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning the sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

## Annex IV

### Press releases and statements

1. On 3 June 2022, the Working Group, together with other Special Procedures' mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) expressing serious concerns about the continued use of excessive force by the Sudanese authorities against peaceful protesters and called for those responsible to be held to account and justice to be served.
2. On 10 June 2022, the Working Group, together with other Special Procedures' mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) urging the Government of China to cooperate fully with the United Nations human rights system and to grant unhindered access to independent experts who had received and were seeking to address allegations of significant human rights violations and the repression of fundamental freedoms in the country.
3. On 15 July 2022, the Working Group issued a [press release](#) at the end of its country visit to Uruguay.
4. On 7 September 2022, the Working Group, together with other Special Procedures' mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) expressing profound concerns over systematic human rights violations and their widespread effects on individuals and minorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. They reiterated their call for the Human Rights Council to convene a special session on China.
5. On 22 August 2022, the Working Group, together with other Special Procedures' mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) urging the Iranian authorities to stop the persecution and harassment of religious minorities and to end the use of religion to curtail the exercise of fundamental rights.
6. On 28 September 2022, the Working Group, together with other Special Procedures' mechanisms, issued a press release demanding to halt the executions of two women sentenced to death in relation to their support for the human rights of LGBT people. One of them, Ms. Sedighi-Hamedani, was reportedly forcibly disappeared for 53 days following her arrest.
7. On 29 September 2022, the Working Group, together with other Special Procedures' mechanisms and Treaty Bodies, following the adoption of a statement, issued a [press release](#) emphasizing that illegal intercountry adoptions may violate the prohibition of abduction, sale of, or trafficking in, children and the prohibition of enforced disappearances, and urging States to take action to prevent and eradicate such illicit practices.
8. On 25 October 2022, the Working Group, together with other Special Procedures' mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) demanding effective accountability for the year-long brutal crackdown on peaceful protests against the October 2021 military coup in Sudan.
9. On 26 October 2022, the Working Group, together with other Special Procedures' mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) condemning the killings and the crackdown by security forces in Iran on protesters following the death of Ms. Jina Mahsa Amini, including alleged arbitrary arrests and detentions, gender-based and sexual violence, excessive use of force, torture, and enforced disappearance.
10. On 11 November 2022, the Working Group, together with other Special Procedures' mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) urging Iranian authorities to stop indicting people with charges punishable by death for participation, or alleged participation, in peaceful demonstrations.
11. On 11 November 2022, the Working Group, together with other Special Procedures' mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) joining the growing chorus of human rights voices expressing fears for the life of Egyptian blogger and activist Mr. Alaa Abdel Fattah and demanding his release.

12. On 22 November 2022, the Working Group, together with other Special Procedures' mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) emphasizing that the arrest and detention of Kashmiri human rights defender Mr. Khurram Parvez has a chilling effect on civil society, rights activists and journalists in the region, reiterating their call for his immediate and unconditional release by the Indian Government.

13. On 1 December 2022, the Working Group, together with other Special Procedures' mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) expressing concern that a Jordanian citizen may soon be executed for drug offences that do not meet the threshold for "most serious crimes". The experts said that, while in pre-trial detention, Mr. Abo al-Kheir was reportedly tortured, held incommunicado, forcibly disappeared and eventually forced to sign a false confession.

14. On 13 December 2022, the Working Group issued a [press release](#), jointly with other Special Procedures' mandate holders, to mark the ten-year anniversary of the enforced disappearance of development worker Mr. Sombath Somphone, urging the authorities to effectively search and thoroughly investigate all cases of enforced disappearance. The mandate holders reiterated their call upon the Laotian authorities to request international assistance and refrain from undertaking any measures that would violate the spirit and purpose of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, signed by the authorities in 2008.

15. On 17 January 2023, the Working Group issued a [press release](#), jointly with other Special Procedures' mandate holders, condemning Iran's arbitrary detention of Mr. Olivier Vandecasteele and demanding his immediate release, after the Belgian aid worker was recently sentenced to a cumulative 40-year jail term by a court in Tehran.

16. On 31 January 2023, the Working Group issued a [press release](#), jointly with other Special Procedures' mandate holders, calling for an immediate independent investigation into gross human rights abuses and possible war crimes and crimes against humanity, including enforced disappearances, committed in Mali since 2021 by Government forces and the private military contractor known as the "Wagner Group".

17. On 16 February 2023, the Working Group issued a [press release](#), jointly with other Special Procedures' mandate holders, expressing grave concern about reports that at least 10 boys, some as young as 12 years old were allegedly taken away from Camp Roj during the night of 31 January 2023 by the *de facto* authorities in North-east Syria.

18. On 20 February 2023, the Working Group issued a [press release](#), jointly with other Special Procedures' mandate holders, demanding answers about the fate and whereabouts of two disappeared Mexican human right defenders, Ricardo Lagunes and Antonio Díaz, and urging the Government of Mexico to investigate their disappearance and bring the perpetrators to justice.

19. On 6 March 2023, the Working Group issued a [press release](#), jointly with other Special Procedures' mandate holders, expressing deep concern about ongoing allegations of repression, arbitrary killings, arrests, detention, and enforced disappearances of demonstrators in Peru and urged authorities to establish a genuine dialogue with the people to end the country's political crisis and thoroughly investigate the allegations, holding perpetrators accountable.

20. On 10 March 2023, the Working Group issued a [press release](#), jointly with other Special Procedures' mandate holders, expressing alarm about the recruitment of prisoners serving sentences in Russian correctional facilities for the private military and security contractor known as the "Wagner Group".

21. On 30 March 2023, the Working Group issued a [press release](#) at the end of its country visit to Honduras.

22. On 9 May 2023, the Working Group issued a [press release](#), jointly with other Special Procedures' mandate holders, strongly condemning several recent executions and warning that executions following flawed trials were tantamount to arbitrary deprivation of life under international law. One of those executed, Mr. Habib Chaab, a Swedish-Iranian national from the Ahwazi Arab minority, was detained since October 2020 after he was

kidnapped in Turkey and transferred to the Islamic Republic of Iran, under circumstances that might amount to enforced disappearance.

23. On 11 May 2023, the Working Group issued a [press release](#), jointly with other Special Procedures' mandate holders, on the occasion of the special session of the Human Rights Council on the situation in Sudan.

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