



# INTERNATIONAL COALITION AGAINST ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

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## *ICAED STATEMENT ON THE 4TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONVENTION ON ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES*

Today, 23 December 2014 marks the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the entry into force of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (Convention) after the 20<sup>th</sup> instrument of ratification was deposited by Iraq. Four years after the entry into force of the Convention, this treaty, whose provisions originate from the concrete sufferings of the families of the disappeared, has garnered 44 ratifications and 94 signatories, with Slovakia being the most recent State Party and Angola as the most recent signatory. Yet of the 94 States Parties, only 18 States have recognized the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED).

With the 84 states having outstanding cases submitted to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, universal ratification of the Convention is far from being realized. The United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (UN WGEID) reports of 42,889 active cases it has received from 84 states. Multiplied by the number of family members, relatives and friends who suffer from the effect of enforced disappearance, each case is not just part of statistics but it signifies tremendous human sufferings caused by states which are supposed to be protectors of human rights.

The Convention on Enforced Disappearances has become as relevant as ever with the unresolved and continuing cases of enforced disappearances occurring in various parts of the world.

This year, the international community was and continues to be outraged by the disappearance of 43 Mexican students, travelling to Mexico City and attacked by police forces in the southern state of Guerrero. Perpetrators from suspected gang members confessed to have burned the victims' bodies and have scattered the remains into a nearby river. It was one of the most heinous cases of enforced disappearance *en masse* recorded in history, which ironically occurred in a country whose government ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

This record surpassed that of 19 disappeared opposition student activists in Bangladesh in 2013 who were taken by state agencies according to investigation by media agency, New Age. All of the students were picked up in a period of over two weeks, taking place between 28 November and 11 December 2013 at a time when the Awami League government was battling the strikes and blockades launched by opposition BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami to press their demand for an interim election-

time government.

In Asia and Euro Mediterranean regions, where enforced disappearances continue to occur in huge numbers, ratification and implementation of the Convention and the recognition of the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances remain a challenge. A number of these countries are members of the UN Human Rights Council. Some of them pledged to sign and ratify the Convention, but have not yet fulfilled their promises, but instead, in the name of national security, they continue committing enforced disappearances without let-up, resulting in an atmosphere of fear and terror and untold sufferings of the concerned families and communities. Worse still, human rights defenders working on the issue are being persecuted, some of them are themselves made to disappear.

The Convention is a strong instrument for protection from enforced disappearances. It provides specific rights to truth and the right not to be subjected to enforced disappearance. It provides that States parties to the Convention are obliged to codify the offense. Stemming from the true-to-life experience of families of the disappeared, it has strong provisions on truth, justice, reparation, memory and guarantees of non-recurrence. It is important that it soon achieves universal ratification and implementation as it will certainly contribute to the eradication of the malady of enforced disappearance from the face of the earth.

Thus, the 52 member-organizations of the International Coalition Against Enforced Disappearances (ICAED), once again call on members of the United Nations to listen to the cry of the disappeared and their families:

NO to enforced disappearances!

Respect the Right Not to be Subjected to Enforced Disappearances!

Ratify the Convention Against Enforced Disappearances NOW.

Recognize the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances NOW.



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