



ICRC

**Conference of States Parties to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from
Enforced Disappearance**

19 December 2016

Statement by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

Ten years ago, the adoption of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance marked a turning point for victims and their families. Alongside many committed States and many devoted family associations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) worked hard to make the Convention a reality. Since then, we have seized every opportunity to encourage States to ratify it, to implement it and to recognize the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances.

The ICRC knows how much law matters. We also know that ensuring that the law is implemented and enforced matters even more. The Convention marked an important milestone in the fight to prevent and eradicate enforced disappearance. The States Parties play an essential role in this fight, as do those who monitor the implementation of the Convention. We therefore welcome the decision made today by this Conference to ensure that the Committee continues playing its role. This combination of forces is critical for the Convention to work.

Enforced disappearance is a violation of international human rights law and – when it occurs in armed conflict – of international humanitarian law. Crucially, both bodies of law enshrine protection against enforced disappearance. The ICRC strongly believes in and values the complementary nature of our work with that of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. While our mandates and approach are distinct, we all share the same goals: to prevent enforced disappearance and to uphold the families' right to know the fate and whereabouts of their missing relatives.

The ICRC will continue following the work of both the Committee and the Working Group. We also stand ready to continue assisting States in their efforts to implement the Convention. Our *Guiding Principles / Model Law on the Missing* have already served as an inspiration to several States working to integrate the Convention in their domestic frameworks.

Every day, ICRC delegates around the world are working to prevent people from going missing and to help clarify what happened to those who did. This might involve visiting places of detention, hospitals or morgues, or providing forensic services to identify the dead. Our staff also work with families to ensure their needs are fully met, including through psychological support. We see daily proof of the terrible impact that disappearances have on families and entire communities as they struggle to deal with the uncertainty of not knowing the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones.

For their sake, the ray of hope that emerged ten years ago must continue to shine bright.