



TÉLÉCOPIE • FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

DATE: 12 April 2022

A/TO: Her Excellency Mrs. Olympia Neocleous
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus to the United Nations Office at Geneva and
other international organizations in Switzerland

FAX: +41 22 791 00 84

TEL: +41 22 566 54 10

E-MAIL: pm.geneva@mfa.gov.cy

DE/FROM: Beatriz BALBIN
Chief
Special Procedures Branch



FAX: +41 22 917 90 08

TEL: 141 22 989 94 52

E-MAIL: ohchr-wgeid@un.org

REF: INT/CV/PRT/CYP/24497

PAGES: 3 (Y COMPRIS CETTE PAGE/INCLUDING THIS PAGE)

COPIES:

OBJET/SUBJECT: **News release**

Please find attached a news release and end of mission statement from the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, which will be issued today.

UN experts: Urgent solution of the missing persons issue essential both for relatives and future of Cyprus

NICOSIA/GENEVA (12 April 2022): “Faster progress is needed to fulfil the rights of relatives of the missing in Cyprus,” a delegation* of the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances [said today](#) at the end of an official visit at the invitation of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

“While recognizing the considerable achievements, notably due to the longstanding work of the bi-communal Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus, the search progress has slowed down in recent years and significant challenges still remain,” they observed.

The experts called for urgent measures to accelerate the excavations, identification and return of the remains of the missing “as decades after the events of 1963/64 and 1974, too many relatives are passing away without knowing the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones,” noting that relevant information may be available but not fully utilised.

The Working Group emphasised in this respect that “it is essential to depoliticise the issue of missing persons in Cyprus and genuinely treat it as a human rights and humanitarian issue,” adding that more effective results can only be achieved through “an unconditional commitment among all concerned stakeholders to fully cooperate towards its solution and to give the rights of victims and their relatives top priority. Time is running out.”

“It is essential to put mistrust and resentment behind to finally put an end to the anguish and pain of all families. The initiatives and activities, notably those bicomunal, which are aimed at reconciliation and social cohesion should be fully supported,” they added.

The experts noted some recent discussions in Cyprus, especially within the civil society, on the establishment of a truth-telling mechanism, which could clarify the facts and circumstances of the disappearances.

“Virtually all stakeholders we have met have underlined the importance to establish the truth for the victims, the relatives and the society as a whole. The Working Group recommends all stakeholders to give due consideration to this idea, which could also be conducive to reconciliation.”

The experts also noted that “no progress has been made in relation to criminal investigations and prosecutions for human rights violations resulting in

individuals going missing, including possible enforced disappearances. While this is another essential pillar that needs to be addressed, together with truth, reparation and memory, there is very little emphasis in Cyprus on accountability.”

In relation to prevention of enforced disappearances, the Working Group expressed concern at information received on pushbacks both at sea and at the Green Line. While noting the challenges posed by an increased number of arrivals on the island, the Working Group recalled that “international law clearly prohibits the return of any person where there are substantial grounds to believe that they would be in danger of enforced disappearance.”

The experts further called for the creation of an adequate legal framework as a measure of prevention of enforced disappearances.

“Some of these measures can be taken swiftly, including the ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and the introduction of an autonomous crime of enforced disappearance in the penal code.”

ENDS

**The experts: [The UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances](#): Mr. Luciano Hazan (Chair-Rapporteur), Ms. Aua Baldé (Vice Chair), Ms. Gabriella Citroni, Mr. Henrikas Mickevičius and Mr. Tae-Ung Bai.*

The Working Groups are part of what is known as the [Special Procedures](#) of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

UN Human Rights, Country Page – [Cyprus](#)

Learn [how to submit a case](#) to the Working Group.

Learn [more about the work](#) of the Working Group.

For more information and media requests, please contact: Mr. Ugo Cedrangolo ugo.cedrangolo1@un.org and Mr. Vladimir Rakocevic: rakocevic@un.org or write to ohchr-wgeid@un.org

For media enquiries regarding other UN independent experts, please contact Jeremy Laurence (+ 41 22 917 7578 / jlaurence@ohchr.org)

Follow news related to the UN's independent human rights experts on Twitter [@UN_SPExperts](#).

Concerned about the world we live in?
Then STAND UP for someone's rights today.
#Standup4humanrights
and visit the web page at <http://www.standup4humanrights.org>