![ICMP - International Commission on Missing Persons]

MISSING MIGRANTS PROGRAM

OVERVIEW

Around the world, more than 32,000 migrants were reported dead or missing between the start of 2014 and the middle of 2019. Of these, nearly 18,600 were lost in the Mediterranean. More than 2,200 died trying to cross the Mediterranean in 2018; more than 600 died in the first half of 2019. Under domestic and international law, states have an obligation to investigate the fate and whereabouts of missing persons in an effective way, including the circumstances of their disappearance.

PROGRAM

The International Commission on Missing Persons' (ICMP) Missing Migrants Program (MMP) is designed to strengthen the capacity of government authorities to address the issue of missing migrants. Meeting in Rome at ICMP's invitation on 11 June 2018, Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta launched a Joint Process to enhance domestic capabilities and expand cooperation. The participating states issued a statement outlining their immediate objectives: to assess the scope and extent of existing investigatory capacities, to propose strategies to redress possible shortcomings, and to enhance cooperation.

Following agreements in Rome, ICMP conducted an assessment and produced a draft set of "Proposals for Action," which were presented at the second Joint Process meeting, at ICMP Headquarters in The Hague on 13 June 2019. Next steps include the creation of focal points, which will facilitate cooperation between states and support a process of outreach to families of missing migrants. In addition, ICMP and the Italian Special Commissioner are exploring avenues for cooperation based upon an agreement signed in 2016 to assist in the specific cases of shipwreck victims.

The Joint Process countries recognize the importance of support from international and other organizations, and participation in the Joint Process by other European states and by countries of origin is being sought.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- Enhance cooperative efforts to account for missing migrants
- Secure the rights of relatives who have missing loved ones
- Address obstacles and possible gaps in domestic capacity and resources
- Secure participation of third countries & families of the missing in efforts to account for missing migrants
- Increase awareness and understanding of the issue
- Provide technical assistance, including data systems support and technical assistance through ICMP's DNA laboratory standing capacity
- Report publicly on progress

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

Strengthening the cooperation of government authorities necessitates the support of international organizations whose mandates touch on the issue of missing migrants. ICMP is the only international organization in the world that focuses exclusively on missing persons from all involuntary causes, including conflict, human rights abuses, disasters, and migration. In January 2016, ICMP and the UK mission to the UN brought together senior diplomats and experts at the Security Council to discuss the global challenge of missing persons, including missing migrants. This was the first time the Security Council had ever exclusively discussed the issue of missing persons. Since then, ICMP has conducted regular interagency meetings with international organizations whose mandates are relevant to the issue of missing persons. The missing migrants consultative group consists of IOM, UNHCR, Frontex, Eurojust, Interpol, Europol, UN OHCHR, the European Network of Forensic Science Institutes (ENFSI), the ICRC, UNICEF and the ICC, all of which have expressed support for the Joint Process.

ABOUT ICMP

ICMP is a treaty-based intergovernmental organization with Headquarters in The Hague. Its mandate is to secure the cooperation of governments and others in locating missing persons from conflict, human rights abuses, disasters, organized crime, irregular migration and other causes and to assist them in doing so. It is the only international organization tasked exclusively to work on the issue of missing persons. ICMP operates the world's largest high-throughput DNA laboratory for human identification, and pioneered database technology that makes it possible to use DNA to identify large numbers of people who have gone missing in conflict. ICMP works with families of the missing to advocate for their rights, and helps governments to develop legislation and establish institutions that can sustain a long-term missing persons process.