

MISSING MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES PROGRAM

Migrants are at risk of going missing during and after their often-perilous journeys. Large numbers of migrants have been reported missing around the world, and disappearances continue. Between 2014 and the first quarter of 2020, more than 37,000 migrants were reported dead or missing, according to data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Of these, more than 20,000 were lost in the Mediterranean.

Under 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.

WORK TO ACCOUNT FOR MISSING MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

The International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) works to establish a sustainable process to account for missing migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean region.

This work includes:

- Fostering stronger cooperation among governments and others involved;
- Building the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) and families, enabling them to participate in the process to account for missing persons;
- Promoting joint solutions for the processing and exchange of collected data among government authorities, CSOs and other actors;
- Improving scientific capacity to handle the issue, including through technical assistance in DNA testing and matching.

ICMP is implementing a Syria/MENA program to collect data on missing persons from Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and Iraq and to enhance the process to account for missing migrants in Europe. This program works directly with a large migrant and refugee population, the data collected can help determine the fate of persons who went missing while attempting to reach Europe.

THE JOINT PROCESS TO ACCOUNT FOR MISSING MIGRANTS

At a meeting convened by ICMP in Rome in June 2018, four European Mediterranean countries - Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta - launched a Joint Process to expand cooperation and enhance domestic capabilities to account for missing migrants. They agreed to work with ICMP to assess their investigatory capacities, to propose strategies to redress possible shortcomings, and to enhance cooperation. After conducting an assessment of the Joint Process countries' capacities, ICMP presented a set of *Proposals for Action* at a second Joint Process meeting, held in June 2019 at ICMP Headquarters in The Hague. Actions under the Joint Process include work by Cyprus, Greece, and Malta to establish focal points to facilitate cooperation between states and support outreach to families of missing migrants, and a cooperation agreement between ICMP and the Italian Special Commissioner for Missing Persons on the identification of shipwreck victims. ICMP is also facilitating discussions to encourage other states to participate in the Joint Process.

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

ICMP promotes interagency cooperation as a core element of its work on missing persons, including missing migrants and refugees. As a follow-up to a 2016 discussion at the UN Security Council on the global challenge of missing persons, including missing migrants and refugees, ICMP conducts regular interagency meetings with international organizations whose mandates are relevant to the issue of missing migrants. Participants in these consultative discussions include: the IOM, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex),

the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust), the International Criminal Police Organisation (Interpol), the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR), the European Network of Forensic Science Institutes (ENFSI), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the International Criminal Court. All participating organizations have expressed support for the Joint Process.

ABOUT ICMP

ICMP is a treaty-based international organization mandated 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. Its Headquarters in The Hague, the Netherlands, houses an advanced DNA laboratory for human identification.