

THE PARIS PRINCIPLES

ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF MISSING PERSONS

At the PARIS PEACE FORUM on 12 November 2018, the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) revisited the ICMP *Declaration on the Role of the State in Addressing the Issue of Persons Missing as a Consequence of Armed Conflict and Human Rights Abuse* with a view to promote the application of the Declaration's principles universally and in all circumstances where persons go missing or disappear, including disasters, organized crime, irregular migration and other causes.

The eight "Paris Principles" aim to reflect and advance a new global consensus on how to address the issue of persons going missing. The principles are as follows:

- **State responsibility**
States bear a responsibility for ensuring lasting peace, reconciliation and social cohesion – resolving the fate of missing and disappeared persons, and protecting persons against disappearance, is an integral element in securing this objective;
- **Substantive rights**
The right to dignity and to life, the right not to be subjected to torture or degrading treatment, the right to a family life and to privacy, and the right to recognition as a person before the law – are all invoked when a person goes missing or is a victim of enforced disappearance;
- **Capacities**
Investigations are credible only if they are capable of establishing the facts – adequate capacities cannot be ensured *ad hoc* or through philanthropy: they require official and sustained efforts and permanent provisions;
- **Cooperation**
The issue of missing persons does not respect borders: it has an international dimension – cooperation between states and with international institutions is an indispensable element in effective measures to account for the missing;
- **Procedural rights**
Rights have meaning only if violations and abuses are investigated. Persons who go missing or are victims of enforced disappearance are entitled to protection under the law; relatives and others close to a missing or disappeared person have the right to an effective investigation;
- **Truth**
The right to the truth means that the circumstances of disappearances are made known – including establishing cause and manner of death in cases where the missing person is deceased;
- **Justice**
Criminal activity is behind the vast majority of disappearances – the justice system must lead

efforts to investigate disappearances and prosecute those responsible; and

- **Rule of law**

Rule-of-law failures are a cause and a consequence of persons going missing or disappearing

– all measures to address the issue must uphold and advance the rule of law.

ICMP's mandate is to secure the cooperation of governments and others in locating and identifying 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.