

Statement by the Policy Coordination Group On the Issue of Missing, Disappeared and Detained Persons From the Syrian Conflict

With an estimated [130,000 missing](#) – mostly at the hands of the Syrian government – the situation of the missing and disappeared in Syria is among the most pressing and difficult issues facing the country. Without a set of unified policy recommendations and a framework for a future political settlement, the issue of the missing and disappeared risks being overlooked. This would have negative implications for a sustainable peace.

The Policy Coordination Group for Syria's Missing and Disappeared (PCG) – consisting of Syrians representing family associations, victims' groups, civil society, lawyers and human rights activists – was formed in partnership with the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) to address this issue. The PCG seeks first and foremost to unite Syrian voices through policy papers that outline necessary measures to address the plight of Syria's missing and disappeared.

Over the past 18 months, the PCG has provided a detailed analysis of the situation of the missing and disappeared – including an examination of legislative practices and institutional mechanisms. It has submitted a [report](#) to the UN Human Rights Council for its universal periodic review of Syria; it has developed an [Ethical Charter](#) on data collection and documentation for organizations and individuals working on missing persons cases; and it has proposed [constitutional principles](#) on Syria's missing and disappeared to be included in a new constitution. The PCG has provided a [framework](#) for a future law on missing and disappeared persons that will focus on the central role of families in the process and that will guarantee their rights. It is also developing a legislative framework related to investigations into mass and clandestine graves.

The PCG's recommendations and policy proposals have been developed as both reactive and preemptive measures, to protect the rights of the missing, disappeared and detained and their families, and to prevent future transgressions that result in persons going missing or being disappeared. These recommendations should eventually be used to help guide political negotiations, including the current constitutional talks, and a hoped-for future political settlement and/or legal reform.

The PCG calls for a strengthening of efforts to account for Syria's missing and disappeared and the release of illegally detained persons. This requires that the plight of the missing and disappeared be given the greatest attention by Syrian and international stakeholders, including the creation of a mechanism that supports the process of locating missing persons and investigating their disappearance.

