

SUMMARY REPORT ON THE CREATION OF THE DATABASE OF ACTIVE MISSING PERSONS CASES FROM CONFLICTS ON THE TERRITORY OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

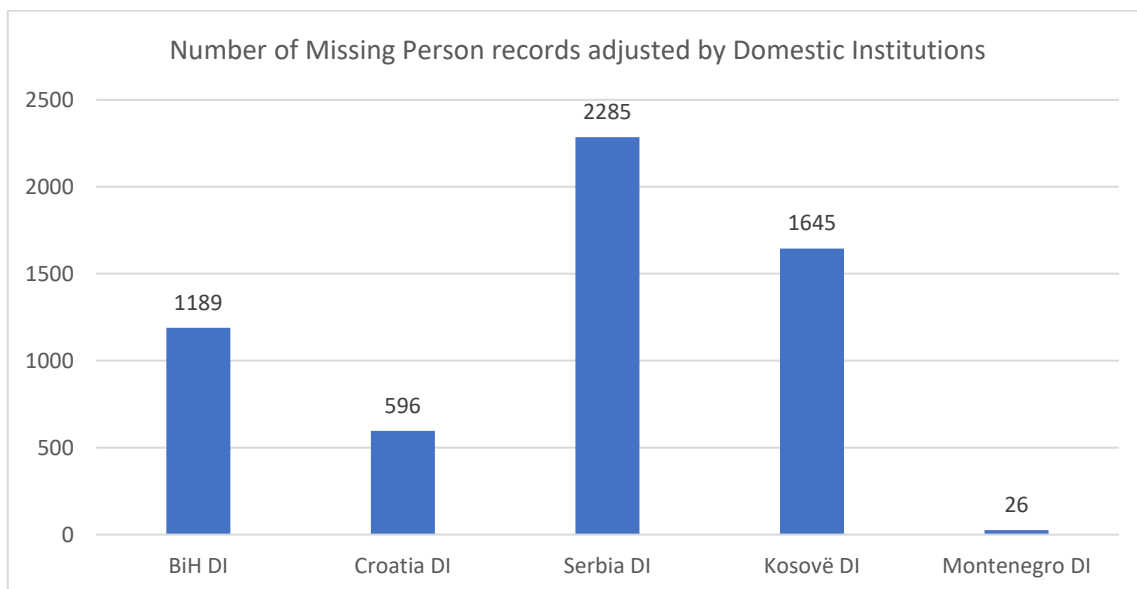
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1. Accounting for large numbers of persons missing for involuntary reasons as a consequence of violations of international law requires the collection, analysis, and pooling of accurate personal data and other data sets.
2. More than 40,000 persons went missing during the armed conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. The domestic institutions that are responsible for missing persons issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo*, Montenegro and Serbia¹ each established their own official records on missing persons that were either reported to them directly by relatives of missing persons, or based on missing persons cases that were reported to national Red Cross committees, the International Committee of the Red Cross or the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP).
3. Because of the interconnected nature of the armed conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, many citizens of one republic disappeared on the territory of another. Moreover, citizens with missing relatives that disappeared on one territory moved during the war, and now live elsewhere. These factors resulted in missing persons being reported to the authorities in more than one country, with relatives of the missing providing sometimes varying information about the same missing person to one or more national authority. To enhance the effectiveness of investigations into missing persons cases, the need to pool, harmonize and establish accurate data held by multiple national authorities has been crucial.
4. The Database of active missing persons cases from the armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia (the Database), launched in the public domain in November 2022, is the product of more than a decade of combined endeavor by the domestic institutions that are responsible for missing persons issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia, with the support of ICMP, to establish a unified and accurate record of all active missing persons cases.
5. In 2011, ICMP proposed the creation of the regional Database, with the aim of enhancing cooperation through the exchange of information on active missing persons cases. Following several regional meetings, ICMP concluded agreements with domestic institutions for missing persons on the creation of the Database in 2016 and 2017. By the end of 2017, all participating domestic institutions for missing persons had submitted their data on active missing persons cases to ICMP for the purpose of creating the Database.
6. In 2018, in line with the Western Balkans Berlin Process London Declaration on Missing Persons, the domestic institutions responsible for missing persons issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia signed the Framework Plan to Address the Issue of Persons Missing from Conflicts on the Territory of the former Yugoslavia (the Framework Plan), and in so doing formed the Missing Persons Group (MPG). One of the core components of the Framework Plan is sharing data on missing persons cases among MPG members, and with families of the missing by means of the Database. In the Framework Plan, the MPG committed to launch the Database in the public domain, upon the harmonization of data across missing persons records.
7. At the first meeting of the Missing Persons Group (MPG), which took place in December 2018 in Montenegro, the MPG established the Database Operational Group. Its tasks:

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

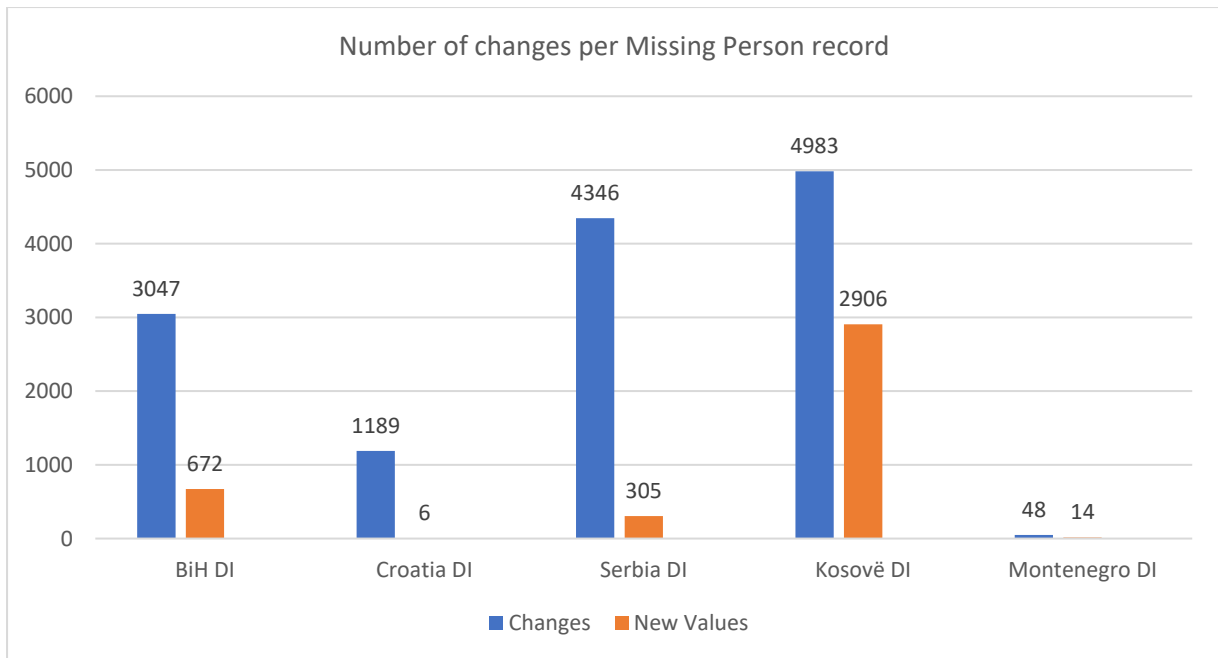
¹ DIs are: The Missing Persons Institute of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Directorate for Detained and Missing of the Republic of Croatia, the Kosovo Government Commission on Missing Persons, the Commission on Missing Persons of Montenegro, the Government Commission on Missing Persons of the Republic of Serbia.

- Update records on missing persons cases, i.e. open newly reported cases and close identified or accounted for cases in the Database;
 - Harmonize data values for duplicate records on missing persons cases in the Database;
 - Augment the content of the Database by adding additional documents that are relevant to verified records on missing persons cases, and which may assist in the search for missing persons.
8. Since it was established, the Database Operational Group has harmonized data values in 5,741 individual missing persons records that were submitted to the Database by two or more domestic institutions, through intensive comparison of ante-mortem data.
 9. To ensure transparency in the data harmonization of records among all MPG members, ICMP created new functionalities, including an automated notification update system for MPG members, so that whenever a change is made in the Database by any one MPG member, all members of the MPG receive notifications of this change.
 10. In 2021 and 2022, MPG members met on no fewer than 12 occasions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia, to share information about missing persons cases, based on ante-mortem data in their possession, for the purpose of harmonizing data in records in the Database. At bilateral, trilateral and multilateral data harmonization sessions, MPG members adjusted 5,741 records on missing persons to enhance the accuracy of the data in each record. See graphic 1 below.



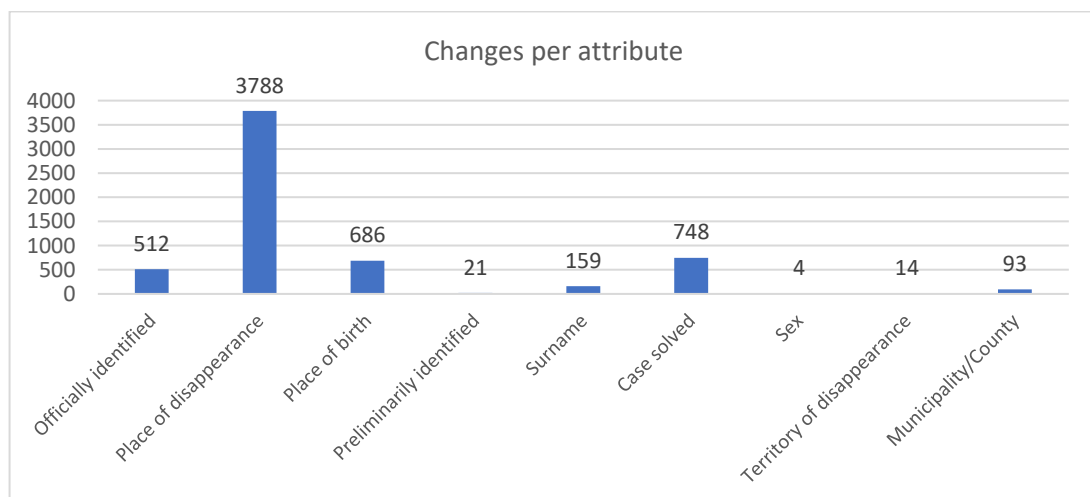
*Graphic 1:
Number of missing person records adjusted by domestic institutions*

11. Within these 5,741 records on missing persons, MPG members have made multiple adjustments in data values.
12. MPG members have made 13,613 changes where a value already existed, e.g. changing an incorrectly recorded Date of Birth in line with the birth certificate of the missing person. See blue columns in Graphic 2 below.
13. MPG members also input 3,903 new values where previously there was no data in the Database. See orange columns in Graphic 2 below.

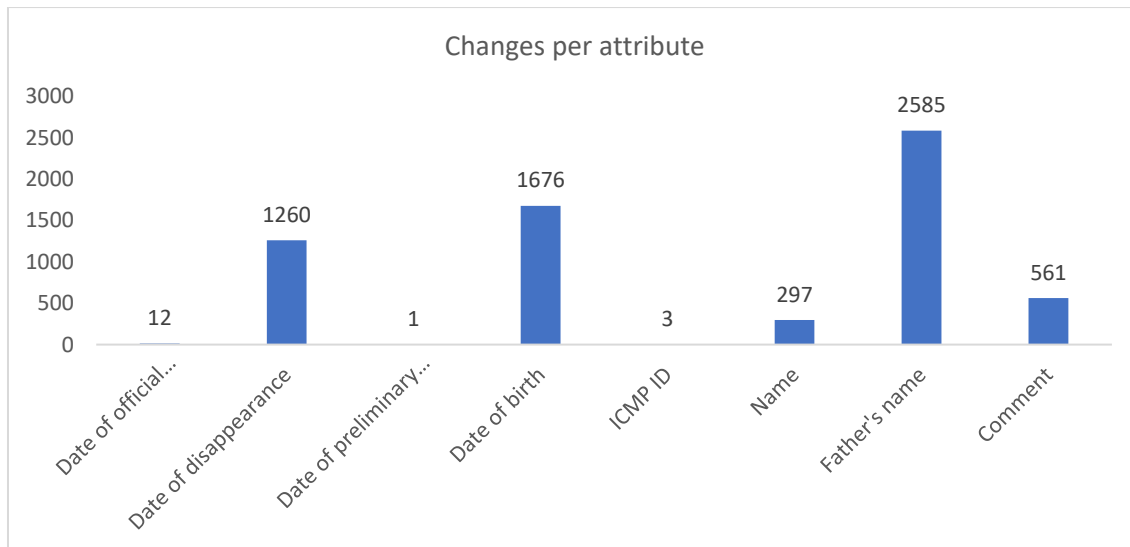


*Graphic 2:
Number of changes per missing person record*

14. Categories where MPG members either changed the value or entered a new value, where nothing was previously present, are:
Name, Father's name, Surname, Sex, Date of birth, Place of birth, Date of disappearance, Territory of disappearance (e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, etc.), Municipality/County of disappearance, Place of disappearance, Preliminarily identified (a DNA match report is submitted but the case is not officially identified), Date of preliminary identification (date the DNA match report was submitted to the relevant domestic institution for missing persons), Officially identified, Date of official identification, Case solved (e.g. the individual in question is discovered to be alive, or whose circumstances of death and place of burial is known, i.e. the individual is not a missing person), ICMP ID (a unique code linked to each missing person), and Comment.
15. MPG members made the largest numbers of changes in Place of disappearance, Date of disappearance and Date of birth. The number of changes made in the Database attest to the increased cooperation among MPG members in terms of exchange of data on missing persons cases. Please see graphic 3 and 4 below.



Graphic 3



Graphic 4

16. The Database is searchable by First name, Father's first name, Surname, and reported Territory of disappearance. The Database allows persons accessing it to provide information on specific missing persons via a feedback box. It also affords the possibility of reporting a missing person if the specific individual is not already included in the Database.
17. The Database enables the continuous exchange, verification and update of information about active missing persons cases among relevant domestic institutions from former Yugoslavia, members of the Missing Persons Group, and families of the missing through publicly available records. It is a significant and necessary element in sustaining the regional effort to account for those who are still missing from the conflicts of the 1990s and to ensure that the issue of the missing is not politicized and used to undermine efforts to consolidate peace and stability. It also stands as a unique example of countries—and key stakeholders within those countries – coming together after conflict in order to engage in a common pursuit of truth and justice.
18. The Database was created with the technical assistance of ICMP and funded by the UK Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office and the German Federal Foreign Office.

Scan to Access
the Database



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