



**International Convention for  
the Protection of All Persons  
from Enforced Disappearance**

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**Committee on Enforced Disappearances**  
**Twenty-sixth session**

**Summary record (partial)\* of the 491st meeting**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 1 March 2024, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. de Frouville

**Contents**

Closure of the session

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\* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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*The discussion covered in the summary record began at 5.35 p.m.*

### **Closure of the session**

1. **The Chair** invited Mr. Albán-Alencastro to present the Committee's informal report on the activities carried out at its twenty-sixth session.
2. **Mr. Albán-Alencastro** (Rapporteur) said that the Committee's twenty-sixth session had been held in Geneva between 19 February and 1 March 2024. The Committee had paid tribute to the victims of enforced disappearance and heard the testimony of Ms. Andrea Torres Bautista, a human rights defender whose aunt had been disappeared in Colombia in 1987 and who had spoken about the violence often faced by women who devoted themselves to searching for their disappeared loved ones.
3. The Committee had considered the initial report submitted by Cambodia under article 29 (1) and the additional information submitted by Burkina Faso and Honduras under article 29 (4) of the Convention. It had subsequently adopted concluding observations in respect of those three States parties. During the session, the Committee had also adopted lists of issues in the absence of the report of Belize due under article 29 (1) and in relation to the report submitted by Malawi under article 29 (1) of the Convention. The Committee had held productive meetings with representatives of States parties to the Convention, United Nations bodies, civil society representatives and victims of enforced disappearance.
4. The Committee had held discussions on its working methods and had amended several of its rules of procedure to reflect changes in its practice and to clarify the procedures to be followed in considering additional information submitted by States parties under article 29 (4) and in handling requests for urgent action received under article 30 of the Convention. The Committee would complete the revision of its rules of procedure relating to the handling of individual and inter-State communications at its twenty-seventh session in September 2024.
5. The Committee had adopted its report on urgent action, its annual report to the General Assembly and the provisional agenda for its twenty-seventh session. The Committee had continued to work on its statement on "short-term" enforced disappearance jointly with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. It had likewise decided to carry out a project on the impact of enforced disappearance on women and girls, and had continued, in cooperation with civil society organizations, to prepare for the World Congress on Enforced Disappearances, which was to be held in January 2025.
6. **The Chair** said that the work of the Committee was driven by the shared aim of combating enforced disappearance, which was the epitome of cruelty and injustice, and by a deep empathy for the loved ones of disappeared persons. During the session, the Committee had reviewed the situation in three States parties, from different continents, that were united by their shared experience of enforced disappearance, which was carried out in almost identical circumstances across the world. Women suffered discrimination, stigma and threats in leading the search for disappeared persons, while the perpetrators of enforced disappearance enjoyed almost complete impunity.
7. In keeping with its mandate, the Committee stood ready to listen to victims and to assist States in combating the scourge of enforced disappearance. Its recommendations were not aimed at directly punishing the offence of enforced disappearance, but at reminding States of their international obligations in that regard. All States, whether or not they were a party to the Convention, were obliged to respect the absolute prohibition of enforced disappearance under international law. Ratification of the Convention did not, therefore, entail further obligations, rather it allowed States to make a political and legal commitment to combating the phenomenon at the national and international levels. The Committee called on all States that had not already done so to ratify the Convention. The Committee, alongside the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, stood ready to assist those States and invited them to consult the practical guide to becoming a party to the Convention published by the Committee and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in September 2023.

8. The Committee called on all States to participate in the upcoming World Congress on Enforced Disappearances and to contribute to all related preparatory work, including regional consultations. An official announcement regarding the World Congress would be made in late March 2024 to coincide with the fifty-fifth session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

9. Lastly, financial resources permitting, the Committee hoped to conduct a visit to Colombia under article 33 of the Convention later in 2024.

10. After the customary exchange of courtesies, he declared the twenty-sixth session of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances closed.

*The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.*