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LIGUE ITEKA
LIGUE AFRICAINE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME - ITEKA



GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Joint declaration by the organisations participating in the First World Congress on Enforced Disappearances

JANUARY 16, 2025

All over the world, there is unanimous agreement that enforced disappearances are on the rise. Whether these acts target political opponents, journalists, human rights defenders, ordinary citizens or migrants, they constitute a serious violation of fundamental rights and a direct threat to the rule of law and democracy. The use of these practices, sometimes justified under the guise of combating insecurity or terrorism, is absolutely unacceptable.

Every day, on an international scale, people disappear without a trace, victims of state forces that enjoy total impunity. The families of missing persons, plunged into pain and anguish, between hope and despair, are often confronted with the indifference of the authorities, a complicit silence and the absence of effective remedies.

We want to remind the world that these acts, which create a climate of terror within societies, constitute crimes against humanity if practised on a widespread or systematic basis. Under this legal framework, these crimes have no statute of limitations and must be prosecuted until justice is done.

At the end of this World Congress, we reaffirm several principles that will guide our joint action and our collective commitments:

1. Commitment to truth and justice : Every victim of enforced disappearance deserves to be found, and those responsible for these crimes must be tried and held accountable for their actions. We demand independent investigations, rigorous prosecutions and full transparency in the judicial process.

2. Protection of human rights defenders : Throughout the world, human rights defenders - journalists, lawyers, activists - are often themselves victims of disappearances and reprisals. We call for greater protection for human rights defenders and stronger action by the authorities to ensure their safety and freedom of action.

3. State responsibility : States must guarantee the security of all their citizens and all persons residing or transiting on their territory, without exception. Those responsible for enforced disappearances must be brought to justice, and monitoring and prevention mechanisms must be put in place to prevent such abuses in the future. States must be held responsible when they cover up and/or participate in enforced disappearances through migration policies that violate human rights.

4. Support for the families of disappeared persons : The families of victims of enforced disappearances must receive immediate and ongoing psychological, legal and social support. States must guarantee their right to the truth and give them access to effective legal remedies.

5. Regional and international cooperation : Unity and solidarity between countries are essential in the fight against impunity. We call for strengthened cooperation between governments for the universal ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the inclusion of its principles in national legislation and the implementation of the latter.

Signatory organisations :

1. CCFD-Terre Solidaire
2. FEMED (Fédération Euro-Méditerranéenne contre les Disparitions Forcées)
3. FIACAT
4. FNDC
5. FOCODE
6. Klikaktiv
7. Observatoire Kisal
8. Ligue Iteka
9. Nophotozone
10. Tournons La Page