

Thematic briefing: strengthening the recognition and protection of relatives of disappeared persons

On September 22nd, the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) held a briefing with the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID) to endorse effective recognition and protection of relatives and secondary victims of those who are forcibly disappeared around the world.

As documented by the WGEID, enforced disappearances is a global problem, with hundreds of thousands of individuals disappeared during conflicts or periods of repression.

The medico-legal community has recurrently acknowledged the need to recognise the suffering inflicted on relatives of those forcibly disappeared as a form of torture. Nonetheless, family members continue to be systematically neglected, coerced and intimidated by

their States and criminal justice systems in the process of searching for their loved ones.

In this briefing, the main findings published in the special sections on Enforced Disappearances of the Torture Journal: Vol. 31 No. 2 (2021) and Vol. 31 No. 3 (2021) were presented by Pau Pérez-Sales, Psychiatrist, Editor-in-Chief of the Torture Journal and Clinical Director at SiRa, and Bernard Duhaime, Professor of international law at the Faculty of Law and Political Science of the University of Quebec in Montreal and former member and Chair of the WGEID. Followed by the recommendations addressed to the WGEID presented by Helena Solà Martín, Senior Legal Advisor with OMCT. A briefing note was drafted as a result of this thematic briefing presenting a summary of key findings and recommendations shared with the WGEID.