



United Nations

Press Release

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INTERNATIONAL TREATY TO OUTLAW ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES OPENS FOR SIGNATURE

NEW YORK, 6 February (OHCHR) -- A new international treaty outlawing enforced disappearances and upholding the right of victims to know the truth about the circumstances and fate of those disappeared was officially opened for signature at a ceremony in Paris today. A total of 57 countries, including the host country, France, signed the treaty.

"Far from being a tragic relic of past "dirty wars" this shameful practice still persists in all continents. This treaty closes a glaring gap in international human rights law by making explicit the prohibition on disappearances," said United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour.

"The task now is to ensure that the new Convention is promptly applied to meet the hopes and the demands for justice of the victims and their families and satisfy their "right to know".

The treaty, formally known as the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 December 2006.

Echoing the absolute prohibition on torture, the Convention states that, "No one shall be subjected to enforced disappearance" and highlights that no exceptional circumstances whatsoever may be invoked as a justification for such violation.

It calls on all States parties to ensure that enforced disappearances constitute an offence under domestic law and significantly, states that the widespread or systematic practice of enforced disappearances constitutes a crime against humanity.

The Convention affirms the right of victims -- including families of those abducted -- to know the truth about the circumstances of an enforced disappearance and the fate of the disappeared person and to claim reparation for the harm inflicted to them.

The Convention's monitoring body will be entitled to receive requests for urgent action on individual cases, to conduct visits with the agreement of States parties concerned, and, in the situation of suspected widespread or systematic cases of enforced disappearance being practiced in the territory under the jurisdiction of a State party, to urgently bring the matter to the attention of the General Assembly.

The Convention will enter into force after 20 countries ratify it.

The full text of the Convention is available at: www.ohchr.org/english/law/disappearance-convention.htm. The statement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is available at: www.ohchr.org.

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