

**Committee on Enforced Disappearances**

***17th Session -* 7 October 2019**

**UNHCR Statement**

UNHCR is the UN agency with a mandate to provide international protection and to work for solutions for refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced and stateless persons. UNHCR would like to thank the Committee for this opportunity to provide an update on our work.

The world now has a population of 70.8 million forcibly displaced people. In 2018, 37,000 people were newly forcibly displaced every day. 84% of the world’s refugees were hosted in developing regions in 2018, regions which already face severe structural barriers to sustainable development and usually have the least resources to respond to the needs of people seeking refuge.

In this context, UNHCR takes this opportunity to welcome the issuance of the Committee’s Guiding principles for the search for disappeared persons, which will serve as an important tool for the international community in responding to cases of enforced disappearances. In particular, UNHCR welcomes the Committee’s attention to the particular vulnerability of asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants who cross international borders, its position that States concerned should take specific coordinated measures to prevent disappearances in such contexts, and its reminder that registration at border entry points should comply with international standards on *non-refoulement* while also producing records that allow for effective searches in cases where disappearances occur. We echo the Guiding principles’ call for cooperation agreements between States and for their establishment of competent authorities to allow for effective coordination in the search for disappeared persons in this context. We also welcome the focus on the need to avoid revictimization, and to ensure effective participation of family and community members in search processes, which may require specific mechanisms of cooperation in the cross-border context.

We continue to see that immigration detention remains one of the most opaque areas of public administration in many countries, and in some cases disaggregated immigration detention data is not produced and accurate information is not readily shared on the number of asylum-seekers being held in detention. For refugees and asylum-seekers, detention often exacerbates past traumatic experiences, as they have themselves often been subject to, or have witnessed, serious rights violations, such as torture, executions, and sexual violence. UNHCR´s position is that children should not be detained for immigration related purposes, irrespective of their legal/ migratory status or that of their parents. Detention is never in their best interests.

UNHCR also remains extremely concerned about shrinking asylum space in many states, as well as increasing reports of deportations, pushbacks, and other restrictive practices which force persons in need of protection to choose irregular and dangerous routes and which put them at heightened risk of serious human rights violations, including *refoulement* and enforced disappearances.

In order to address these and other challenges, UNHCR is currently working together with UN member states in preparation for the first Global Refugee Forum, on 17-18 December. One year after the historic affirmation of the Global Compact on Refugees, this first Global Refugee Forum is a critical opportunity to build momentum towards achieving the objectives of the Compact and to strengthen collective response to refugee situations. States and other stakeholders will have to opportunity to announce concrete pledges and contributions that will achieve tangible benefits for refugees and host communities. We would welcome an opportunity to collaborate with the Committee, as relevant, as this process advances.

We thank the Committee again for the opportunity to present today, and we look forward to our continued collaboration with you in our efforts to protect asylum-seekers, refugees, internally displaced and stateless persons are protected from enforced disappearances.