



# GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR THE MISSING

## Joint Statement

**On the occasion of the informal meeting of the UN General Assembly on Missing Persons convened by the PGA at 10am, 2 April 2025, New York.**

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Global Alliance for the Missing, a cross-regional group of States comprised of Argentina, Azerbaijan, Colombia, Croatia, Estonia, Kuwait, Mexico, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Republic of Korea, The Gambia and my own country Switzerland.

The Global Alliance aims to promote international attention to the work needed to prevent and respond to the occurrence of missing persons. We thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this first meeting mandated under the biennial resolution on missing persons to discuss contemporary challenges relating to missing persons. We also thank High Commissioner Turk for his briefing, including the concerning trends he has highlighted.

We share the concern expressed by the High Commissioner over the vast numbers of people that continue to go missing in armed conflicts and the often insufficient efforts to prevent or address this tragedy. The number of new missing persons registered by the ICRC in 2024 was 56,559 persons, a sharp increase from the previous year. As conflicts rage across some 120 contexts around the world, the magnitude of suffering reflected in this number should give pause to all of us.

International Humanitarian Law provides the legal framework to reduce this suffering. Across the conflicts being fought around the world today, the lack of respect and adherence to international humanitarian law results in exacerbated suffering, particularly among civilian populations caught up in conflict. As regards missing persons, IHL provides clear rules, which, when respected, help both prevent and minimise the occurrence of missing persons. These cover the obligations of parties to the conflict to prevent persons from going missing, to take all feasible measures to account for persons reported missing and provide their families with any information available on their fate, as well as to investigate and where appropriate prosecute war crimes resulting in persons going missing or being forcibly disappeared.

We know that the best way to avoid this often toxic and lasting legacy of war is to prevent persons going missing in the first place. States and parties to conflict should undertake as priority the actions identified in the UN Secretary-General's report A/79/282 and the most recent UNGA resolution on missing persons 79/173, and in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, to prevent persons going missing. This includes the

establishment of national information bureaux or their equivalents as part of broader preparedness strategies. We would also like to highlight the importance of casualty recording, the adequate, respectful and dignified management of the dead, as well as ensuring the registration of detainees and respecting their human rights.

That said, the current global situation requires concerted attention to the many situations where far too many people have gone missing. We know, from the first-hand experience of some of our Global Alliance members, that the task of resolving complex caseloads of missing persons requires a long term multi-disciplinary approach backed by enduring political will and resources. The Global Alliance therefore encourages States to take specific measures to implement the recommendations of the UN Secretary-General's report, which cover the vast range of multi-disciplinary actions that are needed for an effective missing persons response.

Mr. President,

The Global Alliance engaged with families of missing persons at the ICRC-convened 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference of Families of Missing Persons in November 2023. Families urged us to ensure that they are central to any process involving them, that their multifaceted needs are met, and that their agency is recognised and supported. We therefore call upon States to include families in search processes affecting them, to support families that seek to convene through associations to represent themselves, and to ensure that their specific needs and vulnerabilities are reflected in national legislation and policies.

We underline that an important feature of obligations under IHL regarding missing persons is that some obligations endure beyond the end of hostilities. In this context, it was encouraging to hear at the UN Security Council's Arria Formula meeting last June from a number of countries, even those that are decades beyond their conflict situations, are still able to provide individualised answers to families through their consistent work on missing persons among other legacies of conflict. Such cases highlight the importance of providing answers to families for helping them and societies to move on beyond the distrust of conflict and towards a pathway to sustainable peace. In addition, bilateral, regional and international cooperation and exchange of information, including allowing the access to relevant archives remains of significant importance in determining the fate of missing persons.

Finally, the Global Alliance for the Missing hopes that this first meeting of the UNGA on this theme will encourage States to undertake the necessary commitments in order to move forward on the issue of missing persons.

I thank you.