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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Enforced or involuntary disappearances

Report of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances*, **

Summary

The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances was established pursuant to resolution 20 (XXXVI) of the Commission on Human Rights and its mandate was most recently extended by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 45/3.

The mandate of the Working Group is to assist families of disappeared persons to ascertain the fate and whereabouts of their disappeared relatives; to assist States and monitor their compliance with their obligations deriving from the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and to provide States with assistance in the prevention and eradication of enforced disappearances.

Since its inception in 1980, the Working Group has transmitted a total of 59,212 cases to 110 States. The number of cases under active consideration that have not yet been clarified, closed or discontinued stands at 46,490 in a total of 95 States. During the reporting period, 376 cases were clarified.

The present report reflects the activities of and communications and cases examined by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances from 16 May 2020 to 21 May 2021.

* Agreement was reached to publish the present report after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.

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Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	3
II. Activities of the Working Group from 16 May 2020 to 21 May 2021	3
A. Activities.....	3
B. Meetings	4
C. Communications	4
D. Country visits.....	5
E. Follow-up reports and other procedures	6
F. Press releases and statements.....	6
III. Decisions taken by the Working Group on individual cases and communications transmitted to the States concerned during the reporting period	7
IV. Enforced disappearances in the context of transnational transfers	14
A. Introduction	14
B. Instances and trends of enforced disappearances in the context of transnational transfers...	14
C. Violations of human rights law.....	17
D. Impunity for enforced disappearances in the context of transnational transfers	18
E. Conclusions	18
F. Recommendations.....	19
V. Observations.....	20
VI. Conclusions and recommendations	27
Annex	
I. Country visit requests and invitations extended.....	28
II. Statistical summary: cases of enforced or involuntary disappearance reported to the Working Group between 1980 and 2021, and general allegations transmitted	30
III. Graphs showing the number of cases of enforced disappearance by country and by year according to the cases transmitted by the Working Group between 1980 and 21 May 2021 (only for countries with more than 100 cases transmitted).....	36
IV. Press releases and statements	53

I. Introduction

1. The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances was the first United Nations human rights thematic mechanism to be established with a universal mandate, by the Commission on Human Rights, pursuant to its resolution 20 (XXXVI). The mandate was most recently extended by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 45/3.
2. The primary task of the Working Group is to assist families in determining the fate or whereabouts of their family members who are reportedly disappeared. In that humanitarian capacity, the Working Group serves as a channel of communication between family members of victims of enforced disappearance and other sources reporting cases of disappearances, and the Governments concerned.
3. Following the adoption of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (General Assembly resolution 47/133), the Working Group was entrusted with monitoring the progress of States in fulfilling their obligations derived from the Declaration. The Human Rights Council, in its resolution 7/12, encouraged the Working Group to provide assistance in the implementation by States of the Declaration and of existing international rules.
4. The present report contains information on the activities of and communications and cases examined by the Working Group from 16 May 2020 to 21 May 2021. A summary of the decisions on individual cases taken by the Working Group and communications transmitted to the States concerned during the reporting period is presented in section III.
5. Since its inception, the Working Group has transmitted a total of 59,212 cases to 110 States. The number of cases under active consideration that have not yet been clarified, closed or discontinued stands at 46,490 in a total of 95 States. During the reporting period, 376 cases were clarified.

II. Activities of the Working Group from 16 May 2020 to 21 May 2021

A. Activities

6. During the period under review, the Working Group held three sessions: its 122nd session, from 21 to 30 September 2020,¹ its 123rd session, from 15 to 19 February 2021,² and its 124th session, from 17 to 21 May 2021.³ Due to the travel restrictions imposed on account of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the sessions took place remotely, by videoconference. The reports on the sessions should be considered as complementary to the present report.
7. On 21 September 2021, Luciano Hazan, then Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group, presented the annual report for the period from 23 May 2019 to 15 May 2020, and its addenda, to the Human Rights Council at its forty-fifth session, and participated in the interactive dialogue with States.
8. During the 122nd session (21–30 September 2020), Tae-Ung Baik was selected Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group and Henrikas Mickevičius was selected Vice-Chair.
9. On 18 September 2020, the Working Group issued eight [key guidelines on COVID-19 and enforced disappearances](#), jointly with the Committee on Enforced Disappearances.⁴ The guidelines aim to assist and guide States in adhering to their international obligations relating to enforced disappearance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹ See A/HRC/WGEID/122/1.

² See A/HRC/WGEID/123/1.

³ See A/HRC/WGEID/124/1.

⁴ Available from www.ohchr.org/en/issues/disappearances/pages/disappearancesindex.aspx.

10. On 23 and 25 September 2020, as part of the events to mark 40 years since its creation, the Working Group, together with the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, convened two public webinars on the search for disappeared persons and investigation of enforced disappearances. On 24 September 2020, the Working Group also convened an online expert panel on missing persons and memory governance, together with the T.M.C. Asser Institute.

11. On 19 October 2020, the Chair-Rapporteur, Tae-Ung Baik, addressed the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session and participated in the interactive dialogue with Member States.

12. On 3 March 2021, the Working Group, together with the Committee on Enforced Disappearances and the International Coalition against Enforced Disappearances, held a joint [webinar](#) on sharing experiences and positive outcomes of actions taken to promote the ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the way forward.

13. On 15 March 2021, Bernard Duhaime participated on behalf of the Working Group in a Security Council briefing on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

14. On 26 March 2021, the Working Group held an informal private meeting with the Committee on Enforced Disappearances to exchange information and views and discuss matters of mutual concern.

15. On 22 April 2021, the Working Group participated, with the Committee on Enforced Disappearances and the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, in a joint meeting on enforced disappearance in the context of migration and the contribution of international human rights mechanisms, hosted by the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights.

16. The Working Group's practice of holding one of its sessions each year outside Geneva was exceptionally suspended during the reporting period, in view of the travel restrictions imposed on account of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Working Group looks forward to resuming that practice as soon as circumstances allow.

17. During the reporting period, all the members of the Working Group carried out a number of activities connected to enforced disappearances, which included participating in conferences, consultations, seminars, training events, workshops and lectures organized by Governments and civil society organizations.

18. During its sessions, the Working Group discussed the issue of enforced disappearances occurring in the context of transnational transfers and decided to devote section IV of the present report to that matter.

19. The Working Group is thankful for the continuous support, including through voluntary contributions, provided by donor States, notably France, Japan, Lithuania and the Republic of Korea.

B. Meetings

20. During the period under review, representatives of Governments attended sessions of the Working Group – specifically, the Governments of Algeria (123rd session), Armenia (124th session), Colombia (122nd session), Cyprus (124th session), the Gambia (124th session), Japan (122nd, 123rd and 124th sessions), Kenya (124th session), Pakistan (124th session) and Portugal (124th session). A number of informal meetings were also held with representatives from various States. The Working Group expresses its appreciation to those Governments for the meetings and emphasizes the importance of cooperation and dialogue.

C. Communications

21. During the reporting period, the Working Group transmitted 651 new cases of enforced disappearance to 30 States.

22. The Working Group transmitted 86 of the above-mentioned cases under the urgent action procedure to 19 States.

23. In September 2019, the Working Group announced that it would start documenting violations tantamount to enforced disappearance perpetrated by non-State actors.⁵ During the reporting period, the Working Group transmitted 16 cases tantamount to enforced disappearance, namely concerning Libya (2 cases) and Yemen (14 cases).

24. The Working Group clarified 396 cases in 17 States. Of those cases, 325 were clarified on the basis of information provided by Governments and 71 on the basis of information provided by sources.

25. The Working Group transmitted four prompt intervention communications addressing allegations of harassment of and/or threats to human rights defenders and relatives of disappeared persons in India (1), the Lao People's Democratic Republic (1), Pakistan (1) and Sri Lanka (1).

26. It transmitted 35 urgent appeals concerning persons who had been arrested, detained, abducted or otherwise deprived of their liberty or who had been forcibly disappeared or were at risk of disappearance in Albania (1), Armenia (1), Azerbaijan (1), Bahrain (1), Cambodia (2), Cameroon (3), the Comoros (1), Egypt (3), Honduras (1), India (1), Iran (Islamic Republic of) (4), Iraq (2), Kenya (1), Madagascar (1), Morocco (1), Myanmar (1), Pakistan (1), Panama (1), the Russian Federation (1), Saudi Arabia (1), Thailand (2), Turkey (1), the United Arab Emirates (2) and the United States of America (1).

27. The Working Group transmitted 79 joint allegation letters, with other special procedure mandate holders, concerning Angola (1), Bangladesh (3), Belarus (2), Brazil (1), Burundi (1), Cambodia (1), the Central African Republic (1), China (4), Colombia (4), the Comoros (1), Côte d'Ivoire (1), the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (1), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2), Djibouti (1), Egypt (4), El Salvador (1), Guatemala (1), Honduras (1), India (1), Indonesia (1), Iran (Islamic Republic of) (1), Iraq (1), the Lao People's Democratic Republic (3), Madagascar (1), Mauritania (1), Mexico (3), Myanmar (1), Pakistan (4), Paraguay (1), Peru (2), the Russian Federation (2), Rwanda (1), Sri Lanka (2), the Syrian Arab Republic (2), Thailand (1), Tunisia (1), Turkey (2), Turkmenistan (1), Uganda (1), Ukraine (1), the United Arab Emirates (2), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (1), the United Republic of Tanzania (2), the United States of America (2), Uzbekistan (1), Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) (3), Viet Nam (1), Yemen (1) and Zimbabwe (1). In addition, five letters were addressed to the following non-State actors: Lobaye Invest (1), Keenie Meenie Services (1), the de facto authorities in Sana'a (2) and the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (1). It transmitted three other letters, concerning bills, laws, policies and practices that do not comply with international human rights law and standards, to Mexico (2) and Saudi Arabia (1).

28. The Working Group transmitted five general allegations relating to obstacles in the implementation of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, to the Governments of Colombia (2), Mexico (1), Nepal (1) and the Syrian Arab Republic (1).

D. Country visits

29. During the reporting period, the Working Group regrettably did not carry out any country visits, mostly because of the COVID pandemic. It hopes to be able to resume this activity soon, as it is essential to duly fulfil its monitoring mandate.

⁵ A/HRC/42/40, para. 94. In doing so, the Working Group acts pursuant to its humanitarian mandate to address a growing protection gap affecting disappeared individuals and their relatives who have been denied information on the fate and the whereabouts of their loved ones. In implementing this practice, the Working Group underscores that the cases transmitted to non-State actors do not in any way imply the expression of an opinion concerning the legal status of any territory, city or area, or of its authorities.

30. The Working Group thanks the Governments of Cyprus, Ghana, Kenya and Senegal, which extended invitations to the Working Group during the reporting period to visit their countries.

31. The Working Group regrets that the visit scheduled to take place to Cyprus from 21 to 30 June 2021 did not ultimately materialize. The Working Group hopes that it can take place before the end of 2021, in full compliance with its mandate and the existing practice.

32. During the reporting period, the Working Group requested a visit to Colombia. In addition to this new request, the Working Group reiterated during the reporting cycle its request to Nepal, to which it has still not received a positive response.

33. Furthermore, during a meeting held with Algeria at the 123rd session, the Working Group discussed the possibility of a visit. It hopes that the visit, initially agreed to by the Government of Algeria in 2014, can finally materialize.

34. The Working Group looks forward to receiving confirmation from the Government of Kenya that the visit can take place before the end of 2021.

35. The Working Group invites all States that have received a request for a visit by the Working Group to respond favourably to it, in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 21/4.⁶

E. Follow-up reports and other procedures

36. The Working Group has prepared a follow-up report on the implementation of recommendations made following its visits to Albania and the Gambia, which will be contained in an addendum to the present report. The Working Group encourages the Governments of Albania and the Gambia to implement the outstanding recommendations.

F. Press releases and statements

37. Annex IV contains the full list of press releases and statements issued by the Working Group during the reporting period.

⁶ See annex I for country visit requests and invitations extended.

	Number of cases transmitted to the Government during the reporting period		Number of cases clarified during the reporting period by:		Number of cases of possible clarification by the Government (six-month rule)	Number of outstanding cases at the end of the reporting period	Number of communications sent during the reporting period					Number of communications received during the reporting period					
	Number of outstanding cases at the beginning of the reporting period	Urgent procedures	Standard cases	Government			Sources	Prompt intervention letter	Urgent appeal	Allegation letter	General allegation	Other letter	Response to prompt intervention letter	Response to urgent appeal	Response to allegation letter	Response to general allegation	Response to other letter
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	28					28											
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1					1											
Brazil	13					13		1					1				
Burundi	238		12			250		1									
Cambodia	1					1	2	1				2	1				
Cameroon	16	3	1			20	3										
Central African Republic	3					3		1					1				
Chad	23					23											
Chile	785					785											
China	98	2	62	10	10	1		4					3	1			
Colombia	943					943		4	2				3	2			
Comoros							1	1									
Congo	89					89											
Côte d'Ivoire						1		1									
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	316		14			330		1					1				
Democratic Republic of the Congo	48					48		2									
Djibouti	2					0		1									

	Number of cases transmitted to the Government during the reporting period		Number of cases clarified during the reporting period by:		Number of cases of possible clarification by the Government (six-month rule)	Number of outstanding cases at the end of the reporting period	Number of communications sent during the reporting period					Number of communications received during the reporting period					
	Number of outstanding cases at the beginning of the reporting period	Urgent procedures	Standard cases	Government			Sources	Prompt intervention letter	Urgent appeal	Allegation letter	General allegation	Other letter	Response to prompt intervention letter	Response to urgent appeal	Response to allegation letter	Response to general allegation	Response to other letter
Jordan	2					2											
Kenya	88	1				89	1										
Kuwait	1					1											
Lao People's Democratic Republic	2	4				6	1	3									
Lebanon	315		1	5	1	310											
Libya ¹⁰	58	1				59											
Madagascar								1	1								
Malaysia	3					3											
Maldives	1					1											
Mauritania	6					6			1								
Mexico	357					357		3	1	2				1		1	
Morocco	153					153	1					1					
Mozambique	3					3											
Myanmar	3	1	14			18	1	1									
Namibia	2					2											
Nepal	479		1			480		1	1				1				
Nicaragua	103					103											
Nigeria	7					7											
Oman	1					1											

¹⁰ During the reporting period, the Working Group transmitted two cases to the Libyan National Army. These cases are not counted in the statistics of Libya. The Working Group stresses that the cases addressed to the Libyan National Army do not in any way imply the expression of any opinion concerning the legal status of any territory, city or area, or of its authorities.

	Number of outstanding cases at the beginning of the reporting period	Number of cases transmitted to the Government during the reporting period		Number of cases clarified during the reporting period by:		Number of cases of possible clarification by the Government (six-month rule)	Number of outstanding cases at the end of the reporting period	Number of communications sent during the reporting period					Number of communications received during the reporting period				
		Urgent procedures	Standard cases	Government	Sources			Prompt intervention letter	Urgent appeal	Allegation letter	General allegation	Other letter	Response to prompt intervention letter	Response to urgent appeal	Response to allegation letter	Response to general allegation	Response to other letter
Pakistan	813	29	151	242	33	23	718	1	1	4				1	1		
Panama									1								
Paraguay										1							
Peru	2 361						2 361			2				1			
Philippines	606			16			590										
Qatar		2					2										
Republic of Korea	4						4										
Russian Federation	867	2	29	1	1		896		1	2			1	2			
Rwanda	25	1					26			1							
Saudi Arabia	14	5	6		2	1	23		1							1	
Serbia			1				1										
Seychelles	3						3										
Somalia	1						1										
South Africa	2						2										
South Sudan	3						3										
Spain	6						6										
Sri Lanka	6 117		142				6 259	1		2							
Sudan	177						177										
Syrian Arab Republic	485		56		2		539			2	1						
Tajikistan	1						1										
Thailand	75						75	2		1			2	1			
Timor-Leste	428						428										

<i>Number of outstanding cases at the beginning of the reporting period</i>	<i>Number of cases transmitted to the Government during the reporting period</i>		<i>Number of cases clarified during the reporting period by:</i>		<i>Number of cases of possible clarification by the Government (six-month rule)</i>	<i>Number of outstanding cases at the end of the reporting period</i>	<i>Number of communications sent during the reporting period</i>					<i>Number of communications received during the reporting period</i>							
	<i>Urgent procedures</i>	<i>Standard cases</i>	<i>Government</i>	<i>Sources</i>			<i>Prompt intervention letter</i>	<i>Urgent appeal</i>	<i>Allegation letter</i>	<i>General allegation</i>	<i>Other letter</i>	<i>Response to prompt intervention letter</i>	<i>Response to urgent appeal</i>	<i>Response to allegation letter</i>	<i>Response to general allegation</i>	<i>Response to other letter</i>			
State of Palestine	4					4													

IV. Enforced disappearances in the context of transnational transfers¹²

A. Introduction

38. The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances has recently documented several cases in which States resorted to extraterritorial transfers that led to enforced disappearances with the participation, support or acquiescence of other States, in an attempt to capture their nationals or third country nationals, often as part of purported counter-terrorism operations.¹³ The vast majority of these cases appear to have contravened national and international law, including the prohibition of enforced disappearances, as provided for in the Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance.¹⁴

39. The Working Group has referred to this concerning issue in previous reports,¹⁵ and decided during its 122nd session to further examine it.¹⁶ The Working Group recalls the 2010 joint study on global practices in relation to secret detention in the context of countering terrorism¹⁷ and hopes that with the present thematic analysis, it can also contribute to follow-up to that study.

B. Instances and trends of enforced disappearances in the context of transnational transfers

40. Serious allegations of gross human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, were reported to the Working Group shortly before, during or in the immediate aftermath of alleged transnational transfers from [Afghanistan](#),¹⁸ [Albania](#),¹⁹ [Azerbaijan](#),²⁰ [Cambodia](#),²¹ [Gabon](#),²² [Kazakhstan](#),²³ [Kenya](#),²⁴ [Lebanon](#),²⁵ [Malaysia](#),²⁶ [Pakistan](#),²⁷

¹² The Working Group considers this category to encompass extraterritorial abductions and forced returns, including expulsions, often undertaken in undercover operations in cooperation between two or more States, on the pretext of combating terrorism and protecting national security. Individuals often disappear during these operations or once they arrive in the country of destination. See, for example, A/HRC/45/13, para. 46, A/HRC/42/40, para. 56, and OHCHR, “UN experts deeply concerned by ‘new practice’ of State-sponsored abductions”, 18 October 2018.

¹³ For references to similar practices in the past, see A/HRC/36/39/Add.2, paras. 17–19.

¹⁴ Adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/133 of 18 December 1992.

¹⁵ A/HRC/33/51, para. 68, A/HRC/36/39/Add.2, paras. 77, 81, 83, 90 and 92, A/HRC/39/46, para. 63, A/HRC/42/40, para. 56, A/HRC/45/13, para. 97, and A/HRC/45/13/Add.3, para. 57.

¹⁶ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26338&LangID=E.

¹⁷ A/HRC/13/42.

¹⁸ See AL TUR 5/2020. All the communications from special procedures referred to in the present report are available from <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/Tmsearch/TMDocuments>.

¹⁹ See UA ALB 1/2020 and UA ALB 2/2020.

²⁰ See AL AZE 1/2019.

²¹ See AL KHM 7/2020.

²² See AL GAB 2/2018.

²³ See AL TUR 5/2020.

²⁴ A/HRC/WGEID/124/1, para. 59.

²⁵ See AL TUR 5/2020.

²⁶ See A/HRC/WGAD/2020/51.

²⁷ See A/HRC/WGAD/2018/11.

Panama²⁸ and Uzbekistan,²⁹ as well as from Kosovo,³⁰ to Turkey;³¹ from Egypt,³² Myanmar³³ and the United Arab Emirates³⁴ to China; from Cambodia,³⁵ the Lao People's Democratic Republic³⁶ and Viet Nam³⁷ to Thailand; from Thailand³⁸ to the Lao People's Democratic Republic; from Malaysia to Egypt;³⁹ from Egypt to Yemen;⁴⁰ from Lebanon to the Syrian Arab Republic;⁴¹ from Ukraine⁴² to Uzbekistan;⁴³ from France and Germany to the Russian Federation;⁴⁴ from the United Republic of Tanzania⁴⁵ to Burundi;⁴⁶ from Kenya to South Sudan;⁴⁷ from Afghanistan and Pakistan to the United States of America and subsequently to the United Arab Emirates;⁴⁸ from Senegal via Tunisia to Libya;⁴⁹ and from the United Republic of Tanzania via Afghanistan and Djibouti to Yemen.⁵⁰ It is noteworthy that these cases are not emblematic of the real extent of the phenomenon. Rather, they are a snapshot of what appears to be the increasing practice of forcible repatriations or involuntary returns by States acting on national security grounds at the expense of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the alleged victims.⁵¹

41. Some of these cases of enforced disappearances occurred within the context or at the margins of regular expulsion procedures, while others were carried out as part of covert extraterritorial operations, including so-called extraordinary renditions.⁵² Irrespective of the nature of the procedure, in most cases the documented circumstances resulted in the violation of the non-refoulement obligations of the host State, including as enshrined in article 8 of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.⁵³

42. When resorting to covert operations, often in cooperation with law enforcement agencies from host States, including intelligence agencies and the police, States reportedly capture and detain individuals abroad and transfer them under their jurisdiction. This would primarily include swift illegal actions to place individuals outside the protection of the law and facilitate their subsequent transfer. In some cases, these acts appeared to directly contravene judicial orders against illegal deportation.⁵⁴

²⁸ See [UA PAN 2/2020](#).

²⁹ A/HRC/WGEID/123/1, para. 163.

³⁰ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). See [AL KSV 1/2018](#).

³¹ See [AL TUR 5/2020](#).

³² See [UA CHN 7/2017](#).

³³ See [UA CHN 12/2015](#).

³⁴ A/HRC/WGEID/114/1, para. 155.

³⁵ See [UA KHM 4/2020](#).

³⁶ See [AL LAO 4/2020](#).

³⁷ See [AL VNM 4/2020](#).

³⁸ See [AL THA 8/2020](#).

³⁹ A/HRC/WGEID/118/1, para. 47.

⁴⁰ A/HRC/WGEID/122/1, para. 173.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, para. 102.

⁴² See [AL UKR 3/2020](#).

⁴³ See [AL UZB 1/2020](#).

⁴⁴ A/HRC/WGEID/124/1, para. 88.

⁴⁵ See [AL TZA 1/2021](#).

⁴⁶ See [AL BDI 1/2021](#).

⁴⁷ See [UA KEN 4/2017](#).

⁴⁸ See [UA ARE 3/2020](#).

⁴⁹ A/HRC/WGEID/116/1, para. 96.

⁵⁰ See [AL DJI 1/2020](#).

⁵¹ This trend continues even after the reporting period and new relevant cases will be reflected in the forthcoming post-sessional document on the 125th session of the Working Group, to be held in September 2021.

⁵² This expression, while not defined in international law, has been used to describe “the apprehension of a person often sponsored by one State in the territory of another State, with or without that State’s cooperation, and the subsequent extrajudicial transfer of the person from the territory in which the person was abducted to another State for detention and interrogation” (A/HRC/43/35, para. 11).

⁵³ See also the Model Law on Extradition (2004), available at www.unodc.org/pdf/model_law_extradition.pdf, and [UA PAN 2/2020](#).

⁵⁴ See [UA ALB 1/2020](#), [AL AZE 1/2019](#) and [A/HRC/WGAD/2019/10](#).

43. With a view to facilitating these operations, a number of States have allegedly sought to sign bilateral security cooperation agreements, which often contain broad and vague references to combating terrorism and transnational crime. The agreements are reportedly phrased ambiguously to allow for expulsion or abduction of anyone deemed to be a “security risk” from countries party to the agreements.

44. Furthermore, in order to comply with these bilateral security cooperation agreements, host States reportedly conduct round-the-clock surveillance, followed by house raids and arbitrary arrests, often in undercover operations conducted by plain-clothed law enforcement or intelligence officers. The individuals’ names are said to be cross-checked against prepared lists before the individuals are taken by force to unmarked vehicles. In almost all the instances reported, the arrests seem to have been carried out without any legal basis; the arresting officers did not identify themselves; no arrest warrants were presented; no explanations were provided to clarify or justify the arrests; the persons were taken by force from their home or in the street; and in a number of cases, they were blindfolded, hooded and handcuffed.⁵⁵

45. In several of the cases examined, the targeted individuals remained forcibly disappeared for a period of between 24 hours and three weeks in secret detention prior to deportation. During that period, they were reportedly often subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment aimed at obtaining their consent to voluntary return and at extracting confessions that would inform criminal prosecution upon arrival in their country of origin. At that stage, they were reportedly often denied access to medical care and legal representation and were unable to challenge the lawfulness of detention before a competent court, effectively placing them outside the protection of the law. Their family members were unaware of their fate and whereabouts.

46. Information received indicates that civilian or military intelligence services sometimes use unmarked aircraft for these operations. However, credible reports suggest that commercial airlines have also been used for such transfers, in contravention of their corporate responsibility to prevent human right abuses.⁵⁶

47. Most of the abducted individuals are reported to have been indicted upon arrival in the host State and remanded in pretrial custody pursuant to counter-terrorism legislation and emergency decrees. In some cases received by the Working Group, the whereabouts and state of health of a number of individuals were unknown for several months until the search by their relatives or public pressure prompted the authorities to acknowledge their detention.⁵⁷ In other cases, many individuals are reported to have been placed under residential surveillance at a designated location, where law enforcement agencies have been holding individuals in detention for up to six months without revealing the place of detention, depriving them of access to legal representation and family members, particularly if they are suspected of terrorism-related crimes.⁵⁸

48. In many cases, the transfers appear to have taken place shortly after the entry into force of such cooperation agreements, which would seem to indicate that both the agreements and the capture of those individuals were part of a somewhat premeditated strategy. In addition to the agreements, it appears that in some cases, the authorities orchestrating the transfers have revoked the citizenship or annulled the passport of targeted individuals with the aim of facilitating expeditious arrests abroad.⁵⁹ In this regard, the Working Group notes

⁵⁵ For example, A/HRC/WGEID/114/1, para. 145, A/HRC/WGAD/2018/11, A/HRC/WGEID/118/1, para. 47, A/HRC/WGEID/122/1, para. 173, AL OTH 1/2018, AL TUR 6/2018 and AL GAB 2/2018.

⁵⁶ See AL GAB 2/2018 and UA CHN 7/2017. See also Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework. The hijacking on 23 May of a Ryanair flight to arrest and detain Roman Protasevich, a journalist and political opponent – a blatant and extremely serious violation of international law – falls outside the scope of the present report as it did not involve the cooperation of States other than Belarus. See the [statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on the diversion of a passenger aircraft over Belarus](#), 24 May 2021.

⁵⁷ See AL TUR 5/2020.

⁵⁸ A/HRC/42/40, para. 69, A/HRC/WGEID/115, annex I, A/HRC/39/46, para. 88, A/HRC/45/13/Add.1, para. 53, and A/HRC/45/13/Add.2, paras. 37–38.

⁵⁹ See [UA PAN 2/2020](#).

that deprivation of nationality for the sole purpose of facilitating expulsion or removal goes against international law.⁶⁰ Further allegations were received of intimidation and harassment of the individuals' relatives because of their activism and calls for truth and justice in these cases.

49. Some enforced disappearances may be transnational in nature, even if there is no consent of the host State or transnational transfer of the victim per se. This is, for instance, the case when agents of the country of origin operate in a clandestine manner to disappear a victim in another country, as attested by the enforced disappearance of Jamal Khashoggi.⁶¹

C. Violations of human rights law

50. The transfers described above occur in different legal contexts and, as such, may be characterized differently according to the circumstances. The Working Group reiterates that, however it is qualified, the practice of States resorting to the deprivation of liberty of individuals and refusing to acknowledge it or to disclose the fate or whereabouts of the individual concerned, for whatever purpose or duration and in whatever context, constitutes an enforced disappearance,⁶² in violation of *jus cogens* norms of international human rights law.⁶³

51. The Working Group underlines that procedural safeguards upon arrest and during the first hours of deprivation of liberty are essential to prevent possible violations, including torture.⁶⁴ These safeguards include immediate registration, judicial oversight of the detention, notification of family members as soon as an individual is deprived of liberty, and the availability of a defence lawyer of one's choice.⁶⁵

52. It is also a matter of concern that bilateral security cooperation agreements seem to have been used by several States in order to bypass the conditions and safeguards provided under regular extradition and deportation processes, often in violation of non-refoulement obligations.⁶⁶

53. The Working Group, jointly with other special procedure mechanisms, has also stressed that any inter-State agreements or arrangements, the execution of which may result in substantial interference with human rights, must be publicly accessible.⁶⁷ Secret agreements fall short of this requirement and appear to be prima facie in contravention of a State's obligation to ensure legal certainty under international human rights law.⁶⁸

54. The Working Group also echoes the recommendation cautioning States against the imprecise or vague use of reference to "terrorism threats" as a basis to deny individuals their fundamental non-derogable rights.⁶⁹

⁶⁰ For example, International Law Commission, draft articles on the expulsion of aliens, *Yearbook of the International Law Commission 2014*, vol. II (Part Two), para. 35, art. 8, and A/HRC/25/28, para. 26.

⁶¹ A/HRC/WGEID/117/1, paras. 8, 109 (b), 110, 116 and 118–119, A/HRC/WGEID/118/1, para. 95, and A/HRC/42/40, paras. 45 and 56.

⁶² A/HRC/7/2, para. 26, and *Yrusta and Del Valle Yrusta v. Argentina* (CED/C/10/D/1/2013), para. 10.3.

⁶³ Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Gelman v. Uruguay*, Judgment of 24 February 2011 (Merits and Reparations).

⁶⁴ For example, A/HRC/45/13/Add.2, para. 17, and A/HRC/33/51/Add.1, para. 54.

⁶⁵ Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, art. 10, E/CN.4/1997/34, paras. 22–30; Human Rights Committee, general comments No. 35 (2014), para. 15, and No. 32 (2007), para. 37, and *Marques de Morais v. Angola* (CCPR/C/83/D/1128/2002), para. 6.5.

⁶⁶ Inter-American Juridical Committee, Legal opinion on the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States of America, CJI/res. II-15/92.

⁶⁷ See AL TUR 5/2020.

⁶⁸ E/CN.4/2006/98, para. 46, and *Agiza v. Sweden* (CAT/C/34/D/233/2003), para. 13.4.

⁶⁹ A/73/361, para. 34.

D. Impunity for enforced disappearances in the context of transnational transfers

55. Common to the aforementioned cases reported to and examined by the Working Group is the disregard for the rule of law and legal safeguards aimed at protecting rights and the lack of accountability for the alleged violations. In many cases, impunity for past human rights violations has been among the main factors preventing accountability for these forms of enforced disappearances.⁷⁰ While there are various factors that foster a culture of impunity in the criminal justice system, the lack of judicial independence and impartiality is reported to have been among the most critical ones.⁷¹

56. As illustrated by the responses of some Governments with respect to the allegations of arbitrary arrest, detention and enforced disappearance, it appears that, in most cases, no effective investigation has been conducted and no one has been held accountable for the reported human rights violations.⁷² In response to the allegations, the authorities have either denied that the operations took place or maintained that they were necessary, legal and proportionate to the need to neutralize an imminent threat to national security.⁷³ In this regard, the Working Group regrets that States have largely failed to meaningfully engage with the special procedure mechanisms to effectively address the aforementioned concerns raised in a number of joint communications or under separate procedures of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

57. The implications of enforced disappearance, torture and arbitrary detention as part of the so-called war on terror for the protection of human rights have been closely examined by the special procedures.⁷⁴ Despite repeated calls for greater accountability in these cases, the Working Group regrets that States have largely denied victims and their families the right to an effective remedy, which should, at a minimum, guarantee cessation of violations, restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition.

E. Conclusions

58. **The Working Group reiterates its concern at the number of reports indicating an increase in the tendency to resort to transnational transfers that circumvent due process and procedural safeguards to deprive of liberty individuals present in other countries. It recalls that these transfers meet all the elements of the crime of enforced disappearance when before, during or after them information on the fate or**

⁷⁰ For example, A/HRC/45/13/Add.4, paras. 7–8 and 17.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, para. 17 and p. 37.

⁷² Contained in A/HRC/WGAD/2018/11 and A/HRC/WGAD/2019/10, respectively. See also <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=35946> in response to AL UKR 3/2020; <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=33714> in response to UA CHN 7/2017; <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=35335> in response to AL TUR 5/2020; and the response from the Government of Turkey in A/HRC/WGAD/2020/51, paras. 37–59.

⁷³ For example, see <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=35335> in response to AL TUR 5/2020. On 5 July 2021, President Erdogan delivered a public statement in which he commended the Turkish intelligence services for having ensured the forcible repatriation of more than 100 individuals from multiple States. See www.rferl.org/a/kyrgyzstan-turkey-in-andi-disappearance/31347063.html and www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-aciklama-yapiyor-593498.html?_n_pid=3147 (in Turkish).

⁷⁴ The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention is also currently examining the issue of forcible transfers of individuals and prohibition of arbitrary detention. In addition, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism is preparing a report on related issues in an effort to follow up on the 2010 joint study. See also OHCHR, “Guantánamo Bay, 14 years on – Rights experts urge the US to end impunity and close the detention facility”, 11 January 2016, and “UN experts deeply concerned by ‘new practice’ of State-sponsored abductions”, 18 October 2018.

whereabouts of the individual concerned is not revealed or disclosed, even for a short period of time.⁷⁵

59. The Working Group also observes that these transfers embody a denial of justice insofar as individuals are deprived of liberty in the form of secret detention and are removed from the protection of the law. They are, as such, deprived of the rights to an effective remedy and fair trial, in denial of the presumption of innocence. In addition, the individuals concerned are unable to challenge the lawfulness of their detention, denied access to legal representation, and often induced to forced confession of guilt under duress. The Working Group recalls that such practices can also facilitate the perpetration of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and can in itself constitute a form of such treatment under certain circumstances.⁷⁶

F. Recommendations

60. The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances recommends that States:

- (a) Cease justifying enforced disappearances on the grounds of protecting national security, combating terrorism and tackling extremism;
- (b) Review and repeal laws and agreements that contravene the international human rights obligations of States regarding involuntary transfers of individuals;
- (c) Recognize, in law and in practice, that a failure by State agents to acknowledge deprivation of liberty and a refusal to acknowledge detention constitute an enforced disappearance, even if it is of a short duration;
- (d) Ensure that any inter-State agreements or arrangements which may result in substantial interference with human rights be made publicly accessible so as to allow individuals to take cognizance of the terms of such agreements and to regulate their conduct accordingly;
- (e) Ensure that such agreements and their implementation are in full compliance with the human rights obligations of States, including the principle of non-refoulement;
- (f) Fully implement procedural safeguards and guarantees upon arrest and during the first hours of deprivation of liberty with the aim of preventing enforced disappearance and other human rights violations. These safeguards should include immediate registration and judicial oversight of the detention, notification of family members as soon as an individual is deprived of liberty, the availability of a defence lawyer of one's choice, and lawyer-client privilege;
- (g) Strengthen and fully comply with oversight and procedural safeguards prior to extradition, deportation, expulsion and return processes;
- (h) Consistently carry out comprehensive individual assessments to determine whether individuals may face risks to their rights upon return to their countries of origin and to ascertain what those risks may be;
- (i) Conduct independent and effective investigations into possible violations, hold perpetrators accountable and provide victims and their families with the right to an effective remedy;

⁷⁵ International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, arts. 1 and 7.

⁷⁶ *Mojica v. Dominican Republic* (CCPR/C/51/D/449/1991), para. 5.7. See also Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 36 (2018), para. 58. The suffering of relatives in cases of enforced disappearance may also amount to torture or ill-treatment, see Human Rights Committee, *Almeida de Quinteros v. Uruguay*, communication No. 107/1981, para. 14.

(j) **Ensure that relatives, lawyers and human rights defenders are not subjected to any form of intimidation, harassment or reprisal because of their activism and their calls for truth and justice in these cases;**

(k) **Effectively strengthen parliamentary, judicial or other relevant mechanisms that exercise oversight and control over intelligence services and other security agencies suspected of facilitating, aiding or abetting transnational transfers.**

V. Observations

61. The Working Group remains concerned by the lack of engagement and cooperation from a number of countries. It has also become increasingly difficult for the Working Group to receive positive replies to its visit requests.

62. In addition to these observations and those formulated in its post-session documents (see para. 6 above), the Working Group makes the following country-specific observations in relation to situations that are of particular concern.

Belarus

63. The Working Group is concerned that the Government of Belarus has resorted to enforced disappearances of peaceful protestors and opposition leaders in order to stifle dissent and sow fear, as in the case of the prominent opposition leader Maria Kalesnikava.⁷⁷ The Working Group calls on the Belarusian authorities to immediately stop and prevent enforced disappearances, initiate impartial and independent investigations into these allegations, and protect the rights of the alleged victims and their families to truth, justice and reparations.

Bangladesh

64. The Working Group reiterates its concern regarding the situation of enforced disappearance in Bangladesh, which it has been raising in similar reports for several years, with scarce engagement by the Government.⁷⁸ In this regard, the Working Group notes that it has not received replies to any outstanding cases during the reporting period and that only one case has been clarified by the Government since the Working Group transmitted the first case to it in 1996. The Working Group hopes to receive information on the outstanding cases as soon as possible. Allegations of enforced disappearances, notably those carried out by members of the Rapid Action Battalion, should be promptly investigated and those responsible prosecuted.⁷⁹

65. The Working Group reiterates its interest in undertaking a visit to Bangladesh, as expressed in several communications transmitted since 2013.

Burundi

66. The Working Group reiterates its endorsement⁸⁰ for the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi to establish, with the support of the international community, an independent body with a mandate to investigate the cases of disappearance reported since April 2015, to locate potential mass graves and to exhume and identify the remains.⁸¹

⁷⁷ OHCHR, “UN human rights experts: Belarus must release opposition leader Maria Kalesnikava”, 25 September 2020.

⁷⁸ A/HRC/45/13, para. 51.

⁷⁹ CAT/C/BGD/CO/1, para. 18.

⁸⁰ A/HRC/45/13, para. 58.

⁸¹ A/HRC/45/32, annex III, para. 121 (c).

67. The Working Group is alarmed at consistent reports of a policy of forced repatriation of Burundian refugees with the cooperation of the Government of Burundi and neighbouring countries hosting Burundian refugees.⁸² The Working Group is concerned that refugees are not only forcefully returned to Burundi, but also subjected to reprisals once in Burundi, including arbitrary and incommunicado detention and enforced disappearance.

68. On 27 May 2009, the Working Group requested an invitation to visit the country. It reiterated the request on 18 January 2019.

Cameroon

69. The Working Group is concerned at increasing reports⁸³ of enforced disappearances targeting Cameroonians in the English-speaking regions of the country. Victims have reportedly been held in incommunicado detention for prolonged periods of time without any information being provided to their relatives or legal counsels as to their fate or whereabouts following an abduction, an arrest without a warrant or any explanation for an arrest. In one case examined by the Working Group during the reporting period, the victim was killed in custody.⁸⁴ It is also concerned at restrictions on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and the excessive use of force during peaceful demonstrations.⁸⁵

70. On 12 April 2019, the Working Group requested an invitation to visit the country. While no response has yet been received from the Government, the Working Group hopes that a positive reply will be received soon.

China

71. The Working Group remains concerned at the continued allegations of enforced disappearances of Chinese nationals of Uighur ethnicity residing in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, which seem to particularly target individuals with relatives residing abroad and have led to reprisals against individuals whose relatives are attempting to obtain information or establish contact with them from abroad.⁸⁶ The Working Group also remains concerned at the continued use of residential surveillance in a designated location.⁸⁷

72. The Working Group underlines the fact that families should be protected from ill-treatment and intimidation (art. 13 of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance). It also reiterates that accurate information on the detention of persons deprived of liberty and their place or places of detention, including transfers, should be made promptly available to their family members, to their counsel or to any other persons having a legitimate interest in the information (art. 10 (2) of the Declaration) and that failure to do so amounts to an enforced disappearance.

73. On 19 February 2013, the Working Group requested an invitation to visit the country. No response has yet been received from the Government in spite of several reminders, the most recent of which was sent on 11 March 2020. The Working Group hopes that a positive reply will be received soon.

Colombia

74. The Working Group remains concerned at information received concerning the excessive use of force and firearms by police and members of the police Mobile Anti-Riot Squad against demonstrators and human rights defenders who have been peacefully

⁸² A/HRC/WGEID/123/1, paras. 158 and 160.

⁸³ See UA [CMR 4/2020](#), UA [CMR 3/2020](#) and UA [CMR 2/2020](#).

⁸⁴ See UA [CMR 2/2020](#).

⁸⁵ OHCHR, “Cameroon: UN human rights experts call for end to detention and intimidation of peaceful protesters”, 12 October 2020.

⁸⁶ A/HRC/WGEID/122/1, paras. 54–58, A/HRC/WGEID/123/1, paras. 32–33, and A/HRC/WGEID/124/1, para. 30.

⁸⁷ A/HRC/WGEID/124/1, para. 30.

protesting since April 2021.⁸⁸ The allegations received referred to the arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances of demonstrators, including at least 151 individual cases submitted for urgent action to the Committee on Enforced Disappearances.⁸⁹

75. The Working Group calls on the Government to take all necessary measures to swiftly locate all persons who are still reported disappeared, in close consultation with the concerned family members and relevant civil society organizations.

76. The Working Group recalls its request for a visit, made on 22 October 2020. It believes a visit to Colombia would be both timely and beneficial in the current context and hopes that the Government will reply positively soon.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

77. The Working Group again reiterates its serious concern regarding the lack of cooperation from the Government and emphasizes the importance of providing the Working Group with precise information on the efforts made and the results of the investigations carried out, including searches, in order to clarify the fate or whereabouts of disappeared persons.⁹⁰

78. The Working Group also reiterates the call made during the reporting period, on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the Korean war, to repatriate hundreds of people abducted during and after that war and thus end decades of anguish for the families of those taken.⁹¹

79. On 22 May 2015, the Working Group requested an invitation to visit the country. No response has yet been received from the Government, in spite of several reminders. The Working Group hopes that a positive reply will be received soon.

Egypt

80. The Working Group acknowledges the engagement of the Government and its replies to the communications of the Working Group. However, the Working Group remains concerned that during the reporting period, it continued to review numerous allegations of enforced disappearance occurring in Egypt and transmitted to the Government 36 new cases, including 16 under the urgent action procedure. The Working Group regrets the apparent targeting of human rights defenders and civil society activists.⁹²

81. During the reporting period, the Working Group noted in several instances that there was a significant discrepancy between a first reply from the Government, which indicated that there was no trace of the arrest of the concerned individuals, and a second reply from the Government, received several months later, confirming the detention of the concerned individuals.⁹³ In this regard, the Working Group recalls articles 9, 10 and 12 of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

⁸⁸ OHCHR, "Colombia: UN and OAS experts condemn crackdown on peaceful protests, urge a thorough and impartial investigation", 14 May 2021.

⁸⁹ See AL COL 6/2021. On 7 July 2021, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights presented a report containing its observations and recommendations following a working visit to Colombia from 8 to 10 June, during which it also received reports of persons reported missing in the context of the protests. According to the report, information provided by the Attorney General's Office indicated that, as at 15 June 2021, the urgent search mechanism remained active in 84 cases. See www.oas.org/es/cidh/informes/pdfs/ObservacionesVisita_CIDH_Colombia_SPA.pdf, para. 33 (in Spanish).

⁹⁰ A/HRC/WGEID/123/1, para. 43.

⁹¹ OHCHR, "UN experts urge DPRK to repatriate abductees on 70th anniversary of the Korean War", 25 June 2020.

⁹² See UA EGY 2/2021.

⁹³ A/HRC/WGEID/123/1, para. 53.

82. The Working Group also continued to receive allegations of enforced disappearances that are perpetrated during the process of release.⁹⁴ It recalls that persons deprived of their liberty should be released in a manner permitting reliable verification that they have actually been released, and in conditions in which their physical integrity and ability to fully exercise their rights are assured (art. 11 of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance).

83. The Working Group recalls its request for a visit, initially made in 2011 and reiterated annually thereafter; the most recent reminder was sent on 18 January 2019. It recommends that the Government accept its request, as a visit is extremely important, would be timely and could be beneficial for all stakeholders.

Iran (Islamic Republic of)

84. The Working Group reiterates the concerns expressed⁹⁵ about the ongoing concealment of burial sites of those forcibly disappeared and allegedly executed between July and September 1988 across the country.⁹⁶ The Working Group recalls that an enforced disappearance continues until the fate and whereabouts of the individuals concerned are established and joins the call for an international investigation into the matter.

Libya

85. The Working Group continues to be concerned at reports of ongoing serious human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, occurring in Libya with complete impunity.⁹⁷ The Working Group further echoes concern as to the slow identification process of the 115 sets of human remains that have been exhumed in and around Tarhunah.⁹⁸

86. The Working Group supports the conclusions of the Second Berlin Conference on Libya,⁹⁹ stressing the need to hold accountable all those who have violated international law, as set forth in relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1970 (2011), and stressing that special attention is needed with regard to documenting cases of those who are missing and forcibly disappeared, and prosecuting perpetrators.

Mexico

87. The Working Group welcomes the decision of the Mexican Senate to recognize the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances to examine individual complaints, in line with recommendations made to Mexico by the Working Group and other international human rights mechanisms.¹⁰⁰

88. The Working Group remains concerned about the new Law of the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic, adopted on 17 March 2021 by the Senate, and the related amendments to various laws concerning enforced disappearances. The law and the related amendments constitute a significant setback in terms of the rights of victims of human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, hinder efforts to end impunity and weaken the inter-institutional coordination necessary to address these challenges.¹⁰¹

89. In this regard, the Working Group recalls articles 13 and 19 of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and also recalls that public accountability mechanisms and related procedures should be established with the active

⁹⁴ A/HRC/WGEID/122/1, para. 79.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 92.

⁹⁶ See AL IRN 20/2020.

⁹⁷ S/2021/62, paras. 34 and 58.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 34.

⁹⁹ “[Second Berlin Conference on Libya, 23 June 2021](#) – conference conclusions”, para. 52.

¹⁰⁰ OHCHR, “Enforced disappearances: UN Committee welcomes Mexico’s decision on individual complaints”, 4 September 2020.

¹⁰¹ See OL MEX 1/2021.

participation of victims and their families, as well as national human rights institutions and civil society organizations.

Mozambique

90. The Working Group is concerned at the deteriorating security situation in a context of increased repression against civil society, human rights defenders and journalists, including cases of enforced disappearance.¹⁰² The Working Groups calls on Mozambique to investigate promptly, effectively, impartially and independently all alleged cases of enforced disappearance and to bring the perpetrators to justice.¹⁰³ Mozambique should also establish a national registry of missing persons that includes information to help locate detainees and victims of enforced disappearances.

Myanmar

91. The Working Group is seriously alarmed by the military takeover and the removal of the civilian government in Myanmar, including allegations of enforced disappearances of journalists, protesters and political figures since the coup d'état on 1 February 2021.¹⁰⁴ It strongly urges an immediate return to democracy.

92. The Working Group continues to regret the lack of reply to the general allegation transmitted on 9 June 2017, relating to allegations of widespread enforced disappearances of Rohingya men, women and children during and following the Tatmadaw-led “clearance operations” in Rakhine State.¹⁰⁵ It requests that a reply be provided soon.¹⁰⁶

Nepal

93. The Working Group expresses its concern about the independence of the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal in the wake of the recent appointment of new members, which appears to be at odds with international standards.¹⁰⁷ It has also expressed concern at the reported lack of progress in addressing the enforced disappearances perpetrated by State forces throughout the 1996–2006 civil war in Nepal, compounded by loopholes in national legislation to address enforced disappearances.¹⁰⁸

94. The Working Group reiterates its request to visit Nepal and hopes to receive a positive reply soon (see para. 32 above).

Pakistan

95. The Working Group reiterates its appreciation for the cooperation of the Government during the reporting period, which made it possible to clarify a high number of cases.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, the Working Group expresses concern about the consistently high number of new allegations of enforced disappearance in Pakistan, which reveals an alarming pattern of enforced disappearances of individuals belonging to minorities, political activists, journalists

¹⁰² A/HRC/WG.6/38/MOZ/3, para. 44.

¹⁰³ See AL [MOZ 1/2021](#).

¹⁰⁴ OHCHR, “[Myanmar: Military must restore democracy, allow people to protest and express themselves, say UN experts](#)”, 26 February 2021.

¹⁰⁵ A/HRC/WGEID/112/1, paras. 72–73.

¹⁰⁶ A/HRC/45/13, para. 75.

¹⁰⁷ OHCHR, “[Nepal: UN experts express concerns for independence and integrity of the NHRC](#)”, 27 April 2021.

¹⁰⁸ A/HRC/WGEID/124/1, annex II.

¹⁰⁹ A/HRC/WGEID/122/1, para. 117, A/HRC/WGEID/123/1, para. 102, and A/HRC/WGEID/124/1, para. 79.

and human rights defenders.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, the Working Group notes that impunity for enforced disappearances is rampant, which shows the lack of effective measures to prevent this practice and guarantee its non-recurrence.

96. The Working Group welcomes the recent decision by the Government of Pakistan to introduce a bill criminalizing enforced disappearances. It reiterates its willingness to assist the State in its efforts to strengthen the country's legislative and institutional framework and to provide technical and other assistance. The Working Group also reiterates its recommendation to the Government of Pakistan to consider extending it an invitation to conduct a follow-up visit to the visit carried out in September 2012, as indicated in the follow-up report¹¹¹ and reiterated on several occasions.¹¹²

Russian Federation

97. The Working Group notes with regret that the Government has not submitted any information during the reporting period that the Working Group determines to be sufficient to clarify the fate and whereabouts of disappeared persons, particularly from the North Caucasus. While the information received contains references to ongoing or suspended criminal investigations, the Working Group regrets that no information was provided regarding the search for disappeared persons or their remains, efforts to exhume and identify remains, or to return them to the relatives for burial.¹¹³

98. The Working Group hopes that the Government will soon reply positively to its request to conduct a country visit, first transmitted on 2 November 2006 and thereafter through subsequent reminders.

Sri Lanka

99. The Working Group reiterates its concern and recommendations, expressed in a communication and press release issued jointly with other special procedure mechanisms, to the Sri Lankan authorities to stop rolling back the progress made in recent years in rebuilding democratic institutions and ensure accountability for past crimes, justice for victims and reconciliation among communities.¹¹⁴ The Working Group also shares the concerns expressed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights at the beginning of the forty-seventh session of the Human Rights Council in relation to the recent appointments to the Office of Missing Persons and the Office for Reparations of individuals suspected of having been involved in past violations, which could be perceived as a step to discourage investigations into past crimes and disempower victims.¹¹⁵

Syrian Arab Republic

100. The Working Group continues to observe the persistence with which enforced disappearances are perpetrated with impunity throughout the Syrian Arab Republic in clear violation of international law.¹¹⁶

101. On 15 March 2021, the Working Group participated in a Security Council briefing¹¹⁷ on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic,

¹¹⁰ A/HRC/WGEID/122/1, paras. 113–114, A/HRC/WGEID/123/1, paras. 98–99, and A/HRC/WGEID/124/1, paras. 82–83.

¹¹¹ A/HRC/33/51/Add.7, p. 38.

¹¹² For example, A/HRC/45/13, para. 81.

¹¹³ A/HRC/WGEID/123/1, paras. 121–123.

¹¹⁴ OHCHR, “Sri Lanka: Experts dismayed by regressive steps, call for renewed UN scrutiny and efforts to ensure accountability”, 5 February 2021.

¹¹⁵ OHCHR, “47th session of the Human Rights Council. Item 2: Human rights update by the High Commissioner”, 21 June 2021.

¹¹⁶ A/HRC/WGEID/123/1, paras. 138–143, and A/HRC/WGEID/122/1, paras. 142–145.

¹¹⁷ See <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1j/k1j8lzqkbc> and para. 13 above.

highlighting the plight of victims and emphasizing that all duty bearers must ensure full transparency and accountability in relation to persons in their custody, account for their fate and whereabouts to relatives, and ensure that due process and fair trial rights are respected and protected. The Working Group also stressed that all places of detention, official and unofficial, should be disclosed with complete lists of names and formal registration of all those held in these facilities, and that the Government should ensure that persons are held in recognized facilities only. The experts also joined the call for the creation of an independent mechanism with an international mandate to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing and disappeared persons, locate mass graves, exhume and identify human remains of these individuals, and return them to their relatives with due respect for cultural customs.¹¹⁸

102. On 19 September 2011, the Working Group requested an invitation to visit the country. No response yet has been received from the Government, in spite of several reminders. The Working Group hopes to receive a positive reply soon.

Turkey

103. The Working Group reiterates its concern about the continued justification of extraterritorial abductions and forced returns under the pretext of combating terrorism and protecting national security,¹¹⁹ as also highlighted in the present report (see sect. IV above). In this regard, the Working Group urges the Government of Turkey to prevent and terminate enforced disappearances, as stipulated in article 2 of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. The Working Group recalls that no circumstances whatsoever, whether a threat of war, a state of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked to justify enforced disappearances.

Uganda

104. The Working Group is concerned that several months after the violence that occurred in the lead-up to and aftermath of the January 2021 general elections, it has not received any information regarding investigations and prosecution of the grave human rights violations, including cases of enforced disappearances, that were brought to the attention of the Government on 31 March 2021.¹²⁰

United Republic of Tanzania

105. The Working Group is alarmed at continued reports of human rights violations of Burundian refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania, including enforced disappearance and forced returns.¹²¹ The Working Group calls on the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania to observe its obligations under international law and to ensure the full protection of Burundian refugees and asylum seekers in the United Republic of Tanzania. The Working Group has received highly disturbing allegations regarding the cooperation agreements reached between the Governments of Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania for the surveillance of Burundian refugees in Tanzanian camps, as well as the arbitrary arrest and forceful return of persons of interests to Burundi.¹²²

¹¹⁸ OHCHR, “Syria: Truth and justice needed more than ever after 10 years of conflict – Bachelet”, 11 March 2021.

¹¹⁹ A/HRC/45/13, para. 46.

¹²⁰ See AL UGA 1/2021 and OHCHR, “Uganda: UN experts extremely concerned at serious rights violations linked to general elections”, 13 April 2021.

¹²¹ A/HRC/WGEID/123/1, paras. 158 and 160.

¹²² See AL TZA 1/2021.

Yemen

106. The Working Group continues to be concerned at allegations of enforced disappearances carried out by both the Government of Yemen and the de facto authorities in Sana'a.¹²³ The Working Group urges all parties to the conflict to stop disappearances, disclose information on the fate and the whereabouts of those deprived of liberty and conduct transparent, independent and effective investigations into these allegations.¹²⁴

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

107. The Working Group suspended the practice of holding one session each year outside Geneva due to the COVID-19 outbreak. It hopes to receive invitations from countries wishing to host the Working Group for a session so that it is able to resume that practice in the near future.

108. The Working Group continued to receive reports regarding countries where the security and political situations have favoured the occurrence of enforced disappearances. In these contexts, families of disappeared persons and organizations supporting them have too often not been able to lodge complaints or to have access to proper remedies, including effective independent investigations. The continued reports of reprisals faced by families of victims and the human rights defenders and organizations supporting them are extremely concerning. The Working Group recalls that no circumstances whatsoever may be invoked to justify enforced disappearances and calls on States to take specific measures to prevent acts of intimidation and reprisals, protect those working on cases of enforced disappearances and punish the perpetrators, in accordance with article 13 (1) and (3) of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

109. The Working Group observes that enforced disappearances have occurred in transnational contexts with pervasive impunity (see sect. IV above). The Working Group recommends that States implement the recommendations contained in the thematic section of the present report.

110. The Working Group reiterates its previous call to be given a role in the follow-up to the findings of the commissions of inquiry and other fact-finding or investigative bodies created by the Human Rights Council insofar as they relate to enforced disappearances.¹²⁵

111. The Working Group reiterates its call to all States to ratify, without delay, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and to accept the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances to receive individual cases under article 31 of the Convention.

¹²³ A/HRC/WGEID/123/1, para. 171.

¹²⁴ A/HRC/45/13, para. 93.

¹²⁵ A/HRC/33/51, para. 119, A/HRC/36/39, para. 120, A/HRC/39/46, para. 150, and A/HRC/42/40, para. 95.

Annex I

Country visit requests and invitations extended

Invitations extended to the WGEID

<i>Country</i>	<i>Date</i>
Algeria	TBD
Burkina Faso	Last quarter of 2019 (did not take place)
Cyprus	TBD, postponed
Ghana	Last quarter of 2021
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	TBD
Kenya	Last quarter of 2021
Libya	TBD, postponed
Mali	26 August–3 September 2019 (did not take place)
Senegal	TBD
South Sudan	Last quarter of 2016 (did not take place)
Sudan	20 to 29 November 2017 (did not take place)
Uruguay	TBD

Visits requested by the WGEID

<i>Country</i>	<i>Request sent</i>	<i>Last reminder sent</i>
Afghanistan	17 April 2019	24 April 2020
Bahrain	27 October 2014	18 January 2019
Bangladesh	12 March 2013	24 April 2020
Belarus	30 June 2011	8 February 2019
Brazil	8 April 2020	-
Burkina Faso	2 April 2019	-
Burundi	27 May 2009	18 January 2019
Cameroon	12 April 2019	-
China	19 February 2013	12 March 2020
Colombia	22 October 2020	-
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	22 May 2015	11 March 2020
Democratic Republic of the Congo	17 May 2017	18 January 2019
Egypt	30 June 2011	18 January 2019
El Salvador	6 October 2017	3 April 2020

Guatemala	30 May 2018	6 April 2020
India	16 August 2010	26 February 2020
Indonesia	12 December 2006	12 March 2020
Lao PDR	6 May 2020	-
Lebanon	27 November 2015	18 January 2019
Nepal	12 May 2006	27 July 2020
Nicaragua	23 May 2006	3 April 2020
Nigeria	23 January 2019	8 April 2020
Pakistan	14 November 2019	8 April 2020
Philippines	3 April 2013	18 January 2019
Russian Federation	2 November 2006	23 January 2019
Rwanda	27 October 2014	8 April 2020
South Africa	28 October 2014	8 April 2020
South Sudan	29 August 2011	8 February 2019
Sudan	20 December 2005	8 April 2020
Syrian Arab Republic	19 September 2011	18 January 2019
Thailand	30 June 2011	11 March 2020
Turkmenistan	18 November 2016	18 January 2019
United Arab Emirates	13 September 2013	18 January 2019
Uzbekistan	30 June 2011	23 January 2019
Venezuela	28 November 2019	3 April 2020
Yemen	31 October 2017	-
Zimbabwe	20 July 2009	8 April 2020

Annex II

Statistical summary: cases of enforced or involuntary disappearance reported to the Working Group between 1980 and 2021, and general allegations transmitted

States/entities	Cases transmitted to the Government				Cases clarified by:		Status of person at date of clarification					General Allegation	
	Outstanding cases		Total		Government	Sources	At liberty	In detention	Dead	Discontinued cases	Closed cases	GA sent	Response
	Cases	Female	Cases	Female									
Afghanistan	20		21		1				1				
Albania	1		1										
Algeria	3 253	20	3 282	23	9	20	11	10	8			2013/2018/2020	Yes (2013); No (2018)
Angola	0		12	1	9				9	3			
Argentina	3 065	728	3 444	775	301	78	39	5	335				
Azerbaijan	0		1		1			1					
Bahrain	0		20		5	15	3	16				2014/2018	Yes (2014); No (2018)
Bangladesh	76	1	83	2	1	6	3	4				2011/2017/2019	No
Belarus	4		5		1			1					
Bhutan	1		1										
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	28	3	48	3	19	1	19		1				
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1		1									2009/2011/2014	Yes
Brazil	13		63	4	46	4	1		49			2019	Yes
Bulgaria	0		3		3				3				
Burkina Faso	0		3		3				3				
Burundi	250	5	251	5		1	1					2018	
Cambodia	1		3							2			
Cameroon	20		25		5		4	1				2016	No

States/entities	Cases transmitted to the Government				Cases clarified by:		Status of person at date of clarification					General Allegation	
	Outstanding cases		Total		Government	Sources	At liberty	In detention	Dead	Discontinued cases	Closed cases	GA sent	Response
	Cases	Female	Cases	Female									
Central African Republic	3		3									2013	No
Chad	23		34		3	8	9	1	1				
Chile	785	63	908	65	101	22	2		121				
China	142	27	278	42	100	36	95	38	3			2010/2011/2018/ 2019	Yes; No (2018)
Colombia	943	96	1 286	126	275	68	160	24	159			2012/2013/2015/ 2016/2017/2020/ 2021	Yes; No (2017)
Congo	89	3	91	3						2			
Cuba	0		1		1			1					
Czech Republic	0		0									2009	Yes
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	330	48	330	48									
Democratic Republic of the Congo	48	11	58	11	6	4	10					2015/2019	Yes; No (2019)
Denmark	0		1			1		1				2009	No
Djibouti	0		1			1							
Dominican Republic	2		5		2		2			1			
Ecuador	5		27	2	18	4	12	4	6				
Egypt	289	10	863	10	389	173	126	414	21	12		2011/2016/2017	Yes; No (2017)
El Salvador	2 284	296	2 675	333	318	73	196	175	20			2015/2015	No
Equatorial Guinea	8		8										
Eritrea	63	4	63	4								2012/2017	No
Ethiopia	113	1	120	2	3	4	2	5					

States/entities	Cases transmitted to the Government				Cases clarified by:		Status of person at date of clarification					General Allegation	
	Outstanding cases		Total		Government	Sources	At liberty	In detention	Dead	Discontinued cases	Closed cases	GA sent	Response
	Cases	Female	Cases	Female									
France	1		1										
Gambia	13	2	21	2		8	8						
Georgia	0		1		1				1				
Greece	1		3							2			
Guatemala	2 897	372	3 154	390	177	80	187	6	64			2011/2013	Yes
Guinea	37	2	44	2		7			7				
Guyana	1		1										
Haiti	38	1	48	1	9	1	1	4	5				
Honduras	130	21	210	34	37	43	54	8	18				
India	445	10	527	13	68	14	51	8	23			2009/2011/2013/ 2019	No
Indonesia	112	6	116	3	3	1	3	1				2011/2013/2017	No
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	548	103	574	103	20	6	10	4	11			2017	No
Iraq	16 427	2 300	16 575	2 317	117	31	122	17	9			2020	
Ireland	0		0									2009	No
Israel	3		4			1			1				
Japan	0		0	3									
Jordan	2		8		1	5	3	3					
Kazakhstan	0		2			2		2					
Kenya	89	1	89									2011/2014/2016/ 2017	No
Kuwait	1		3			1		1		1			
Lao People's Democratic Republic	6	4	15	6		8		7	1	1			
Lebanon	310	19	325	19	2	7	8	1					
Libya	59		73	1		12	7	4	1	2		2014/2018	No

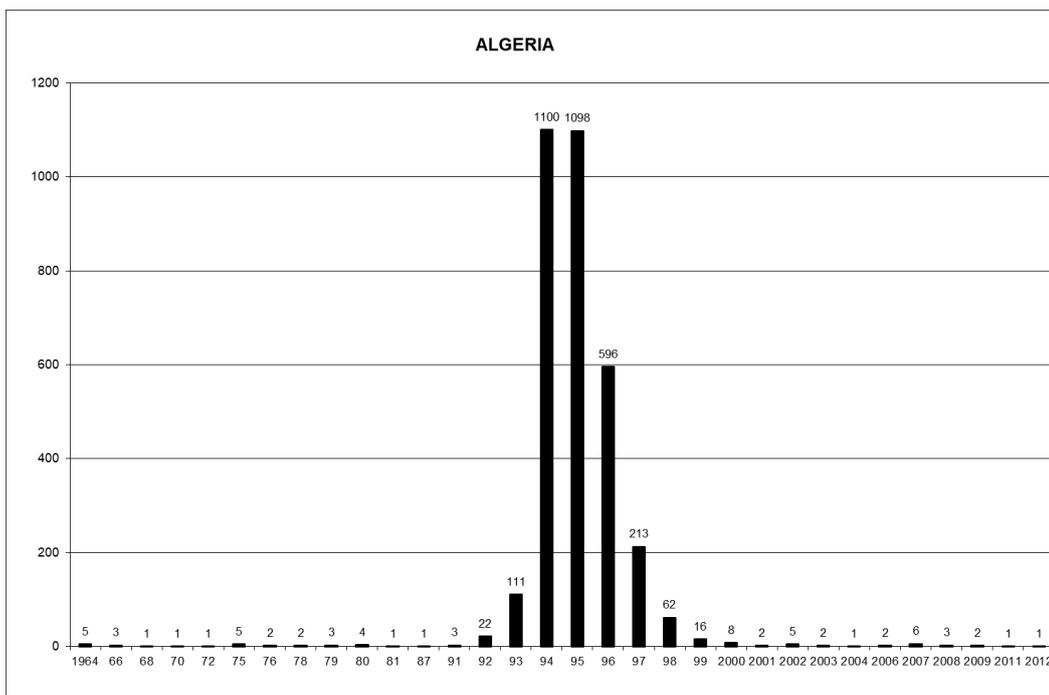
States/entities	Cases transmitted to the Government				Cases clarified by:		Status of person at date of clarification					General Allegation	
	Outstanding cases		Total		Government	Sources	At liberty	In detention	Dead	Discontinued cases	Closed cases	GA sent	Response
	Cases	Female	Cases	Female									
Lithuania	0		0									2012	Yes
Malaysia	3	1	5	1		1		1		1			
Maldives	1		1										
Mauritania	6		7		1			1					
Mexico	357	33	563	43	134	41	83	18	74	31		2013/2014/2017/ 2017/2017/2021	Yes; No (2014, 2017 and 2021)
Montenegro	0		16	1	1			1		14	1		
Morocco	153	9	409	31	170	53	141	16	74	33		2013/2020	Yes
Mozambique	3		3										
Myanmar	18	4	25	9	7		5	2				2017	No
Namibia	2		3			1	1						
Nepal	480	60	694	73	135	79	153	60	1			2021	
Nicaragua	103	2	234	4	112	19	45	11	75				
Nigeria	7	2	17		6	4	10					2021	
Oman	1		2			1	1						
Pakistan	718	9	1 444	10	577	149	460	234	12			2015/2017/2019	No (2017); Yes (2019)
Paraguay	0		23		20		19		1	3		2014	Yes
Peru	2 361	236	3 003	311	254	388	450	85	107				
Philippines	590	74	779	94	142	47	133	19	37			2009/2012	No
Qatar	2		2										
Romania	0		1		1		1						
Republic of Korea	4		4										
Russian Federation	896	39	911	40	3	12	13	2				2016/2018	No (2018)
Rwanda	26	3	29	2		2	1	1		1			
Saudi Arabia	23	1	54		10	19	8	22	1	2		2020	
Serbia	1		2		1		1						

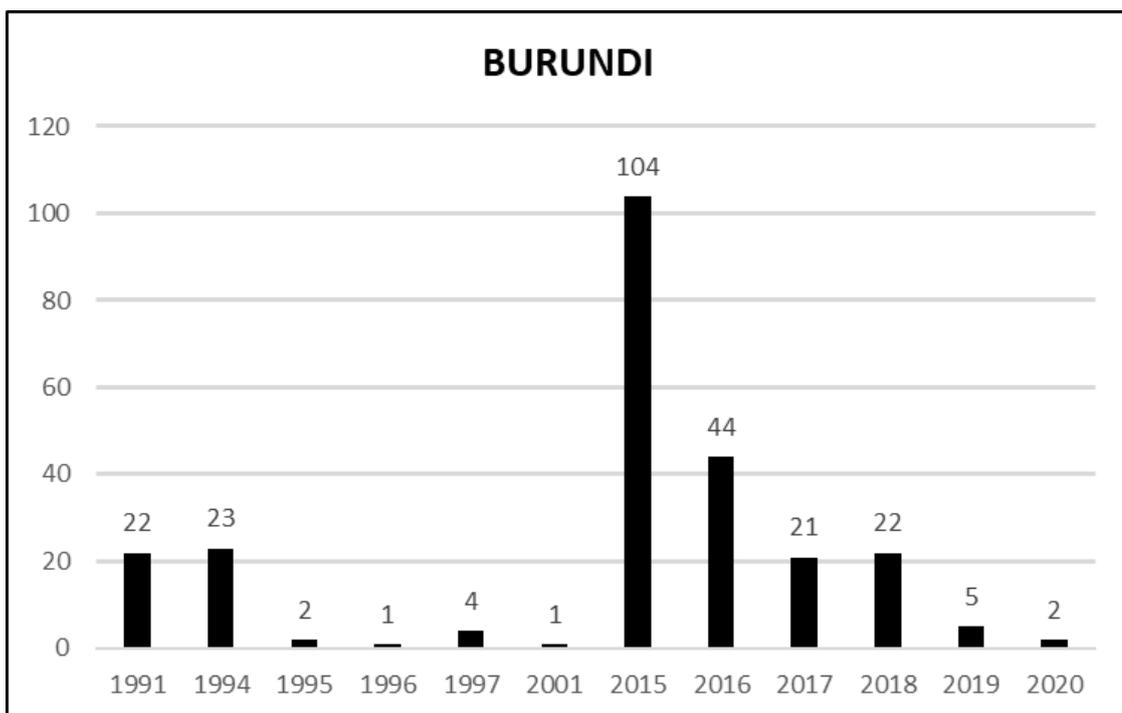
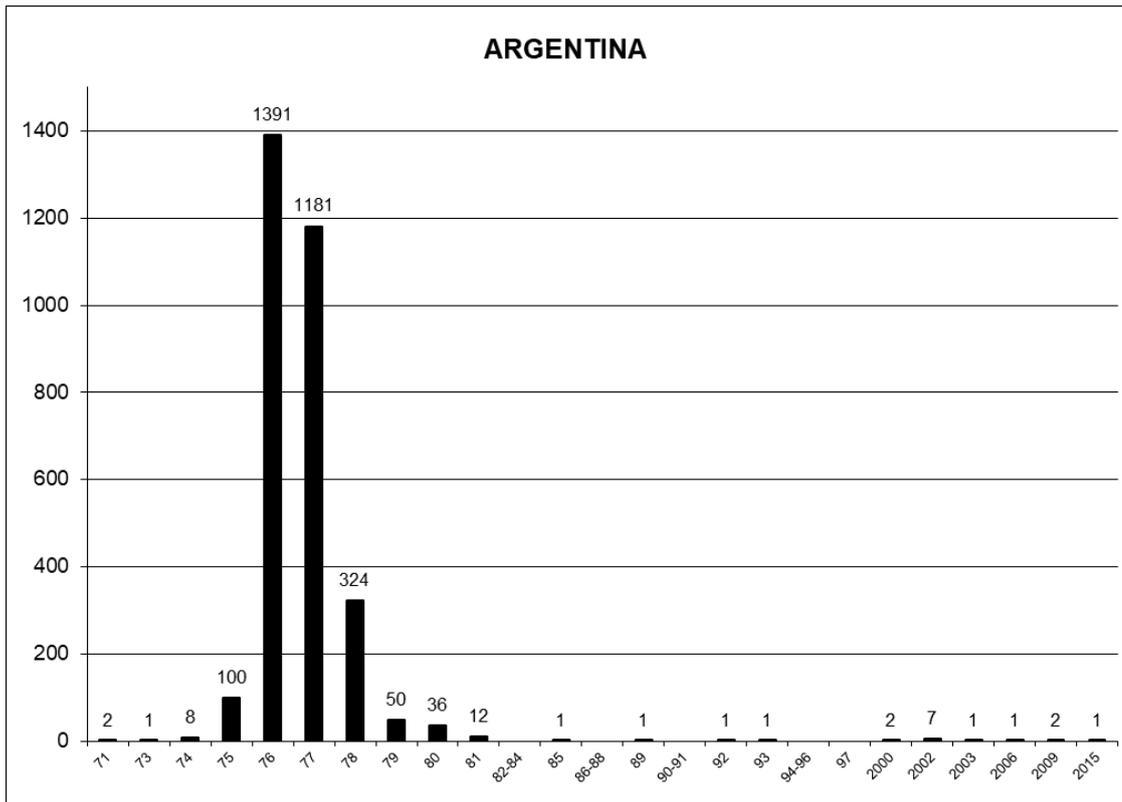
States/entities	Cases transmitted to the Government				Cases clarified by:		Status of person at date of clarification					General Allegation	
	Outstanding cases		Total		Government	Sources	At liberty	In detention	Dead	Discontinued cases	Closed cases	GA sent	Response
	Cases	Female	Cases	Female									
Seychelles	3		3										
Somalia	1		1										
South Africa	2	1	13	2	3	2	1	1	3		6		
South Sudan	3		3										
Spain	6		9		3				3			2014	Yes
Sri Lanka	6 259	162	12 850	232	6 551	40	118	27	6 446			2011/2014	Yes
Sudan	177	5	394	37	206	11	214	3					
Switzerland	0		1		1			1					
Syrian Arab Republic	539	36	602	36	17	46	33	23	7			2011/2011/2019/ 2021	Yes (2011); No (2019, 2021)
Tajikistan	1		8		5	2	1		6				
Thailand	75	9	91	8	7	1	4	1	3		8	2008/2018	No
North Macedonia	0		0									2009	No
Timor-Leste	428	29	504	36	58	18	51	23	2				
Togo	10	2	11	2		1	1						
Tunisia	13		30	1	12	5	2	15					
Turkey	85	3	235	14	91	58	76	33	36		1		
Turkmenistan	4		9		5			4	1			2018	No
Uganda	15	2	22	4	2	5	2	5					
Ukraine	6		13		3	1	2		2		3		
United Arab Emirates	11	1	50	5	9	30	11	28					
United Republic of Tanzania	2		4		2			2					
United States of America	5		6		1		1					2019	No
Uruguay	20	2	34	7	13	1	5	4	5			2013/2015/2018	No (2018)

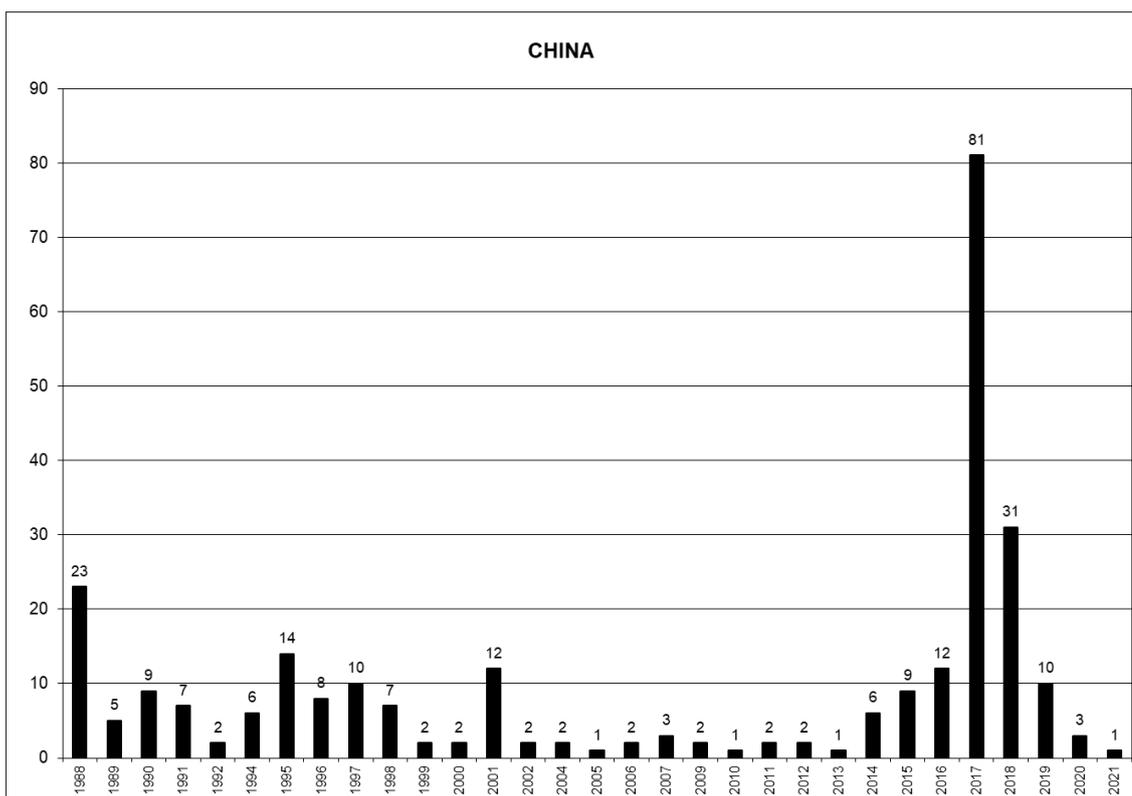
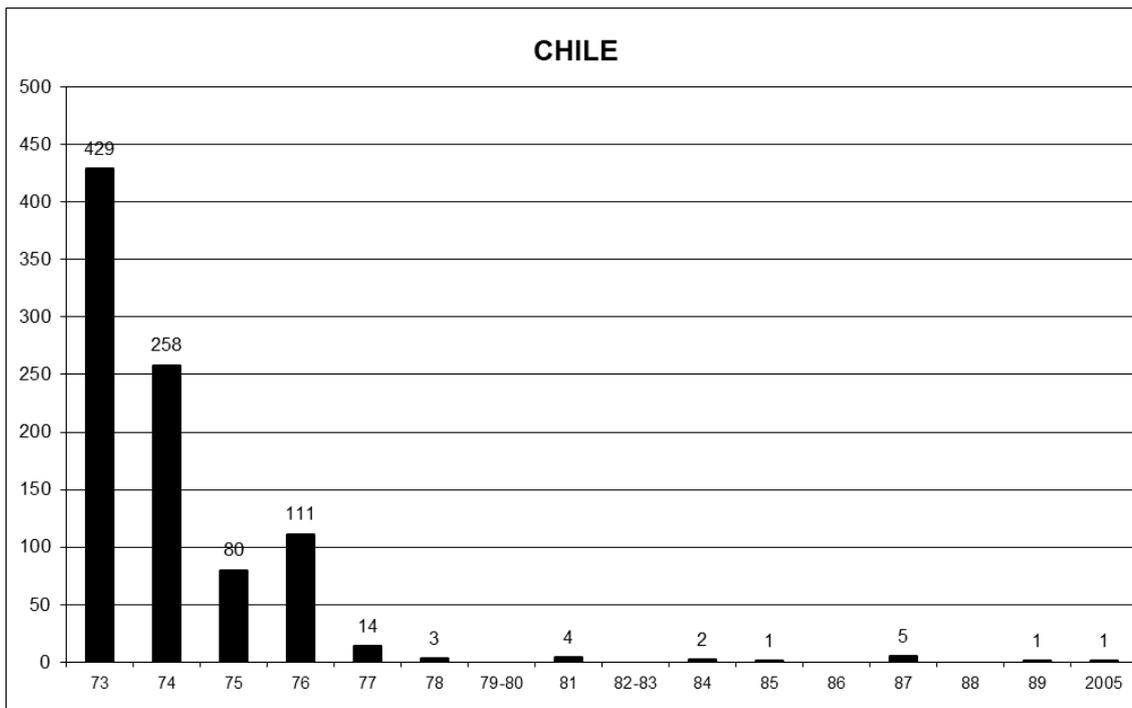
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	<i>Outstanding cases</i>		<i>Total</i>		<i>Government</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>At liberty</i>	<i>In detention</i>	<i>Dead</i>	<i>Discontinued cases</i>	<i>Closed cases</i>	<i>GA sent</i>	<i>Response</i>
	<i>Cases</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Cases</i>	<i>Female</i>									
Uzbekistan	10		23		12	1	2	11					
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	30	2	38	3	6	2	1	4	3			2019	No
Viet Nam	1	1	5	1	3	1	2	2					
Yemen	38		196		135	9	66	5	73	14			
Zambia	0		1	1		1		1					
Zimbabwe	5	1	7	1	1	1	1		1			2009	No
State of Palestine	4	1	5	1		1	1						

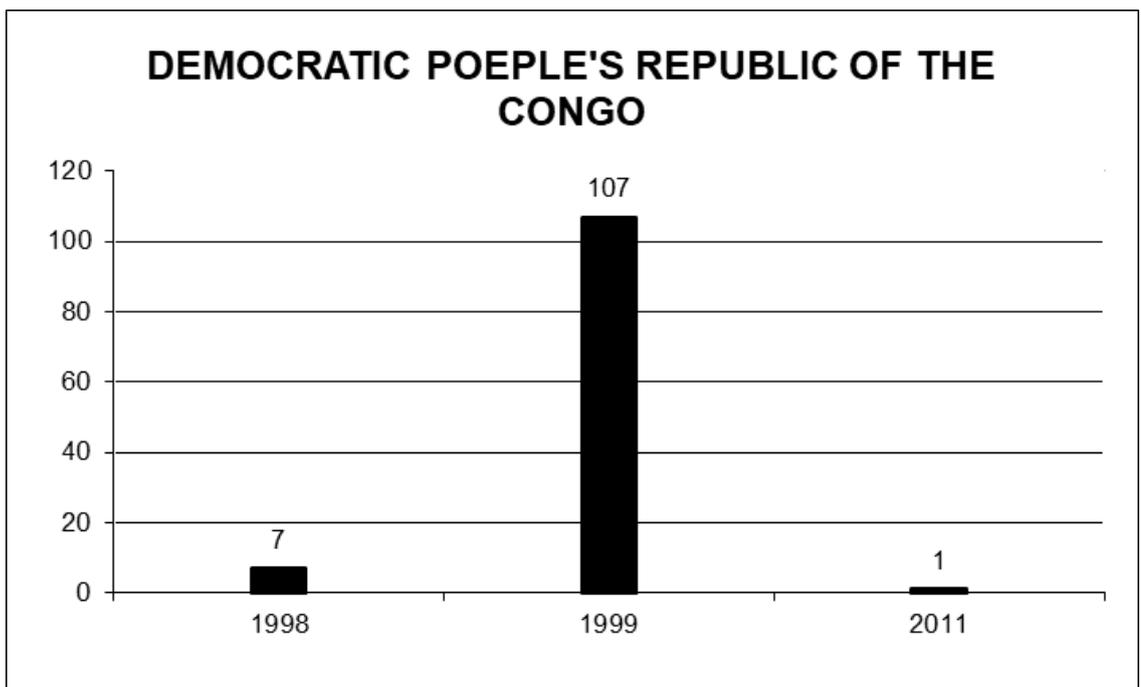
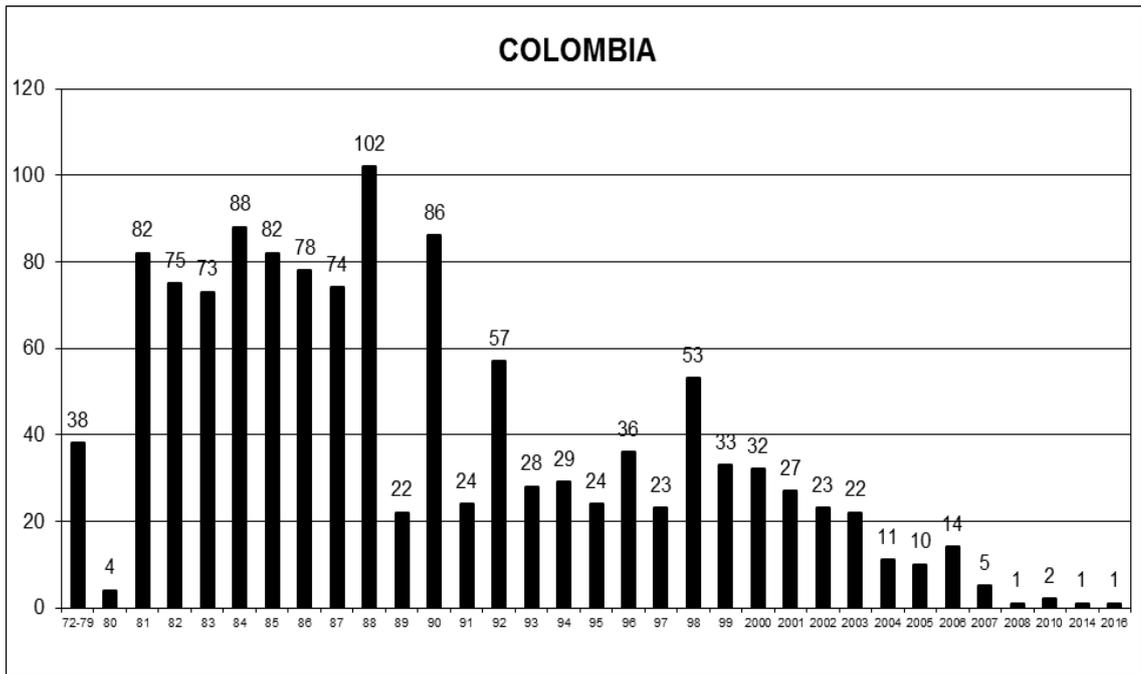
Annex III

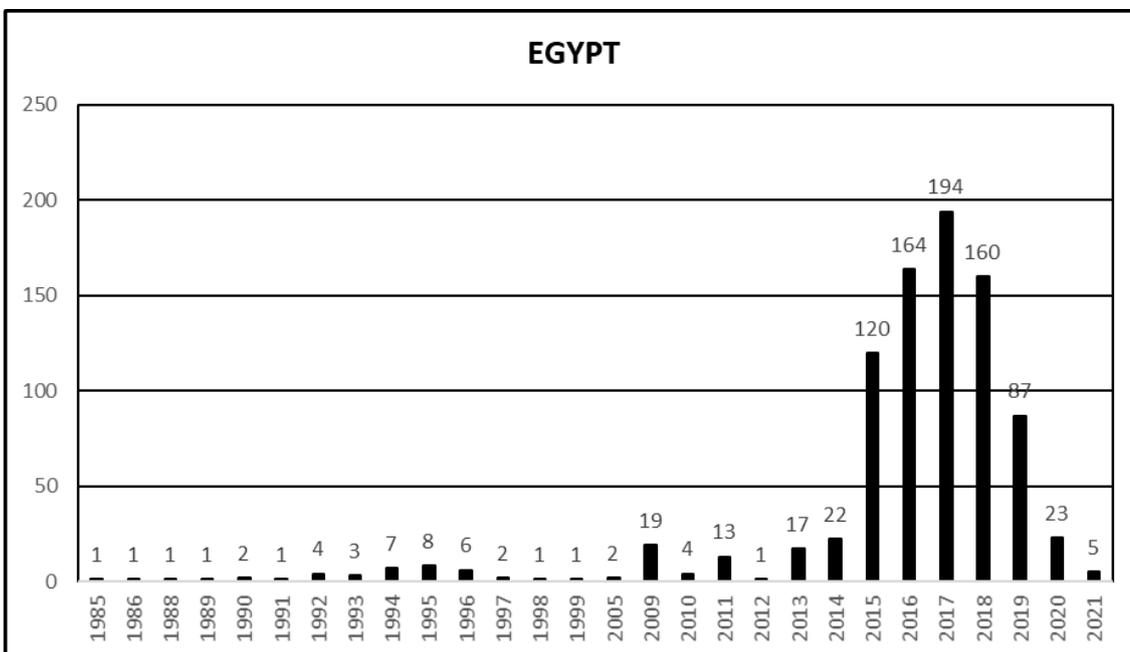
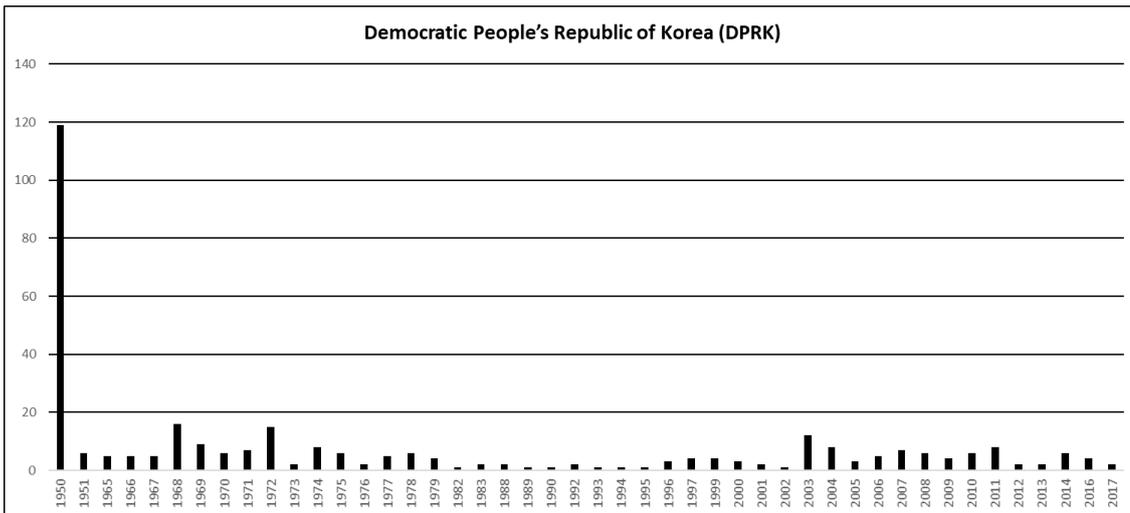
Graphs showing the number of cases of enforced disappearance by country and by year according to the cases transmitted by the Working Group between 1980 and 21 May 2021 (only for countries with more than 100 cases transmitted)

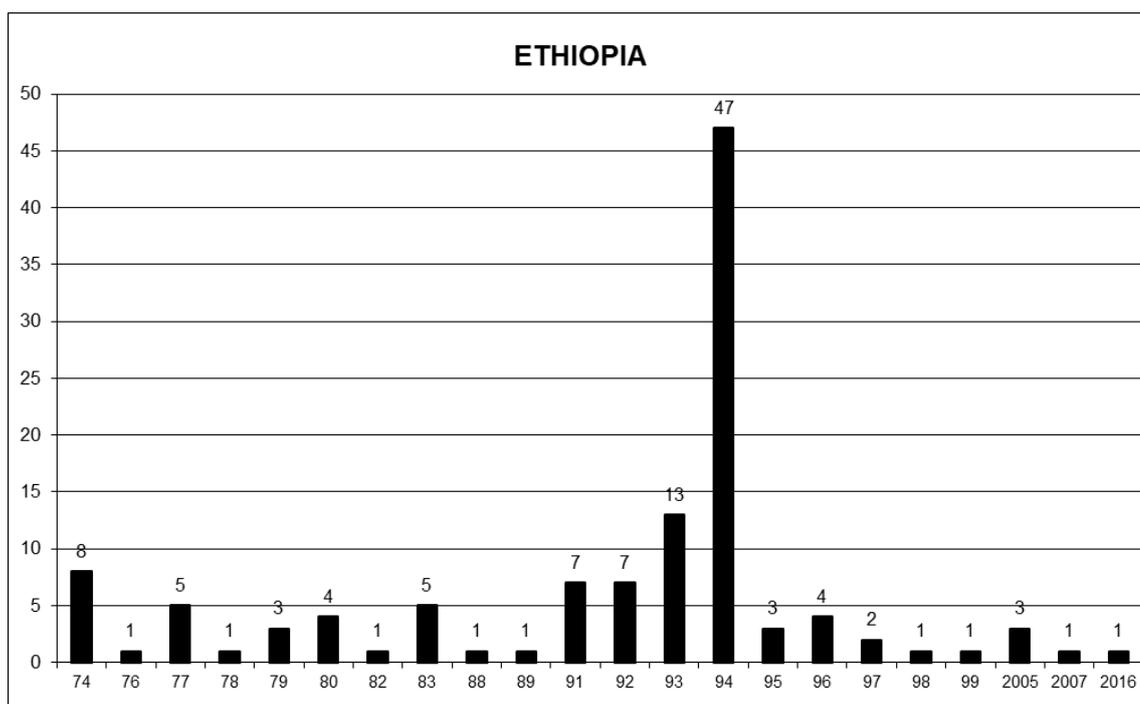
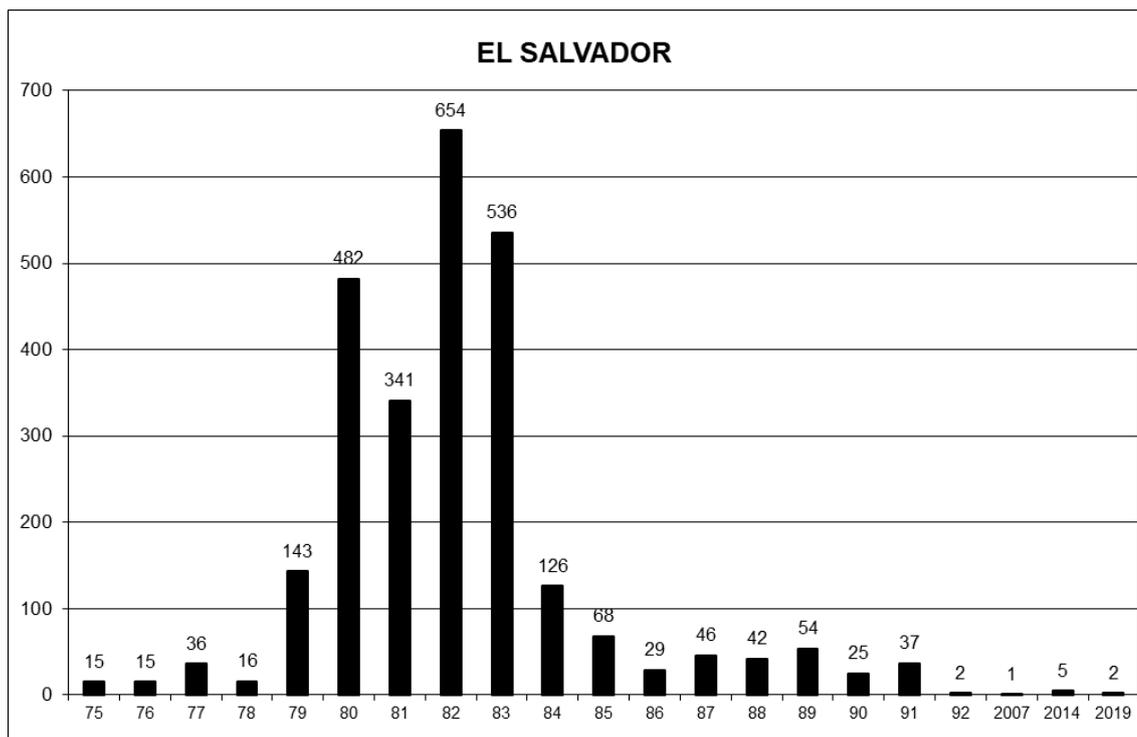


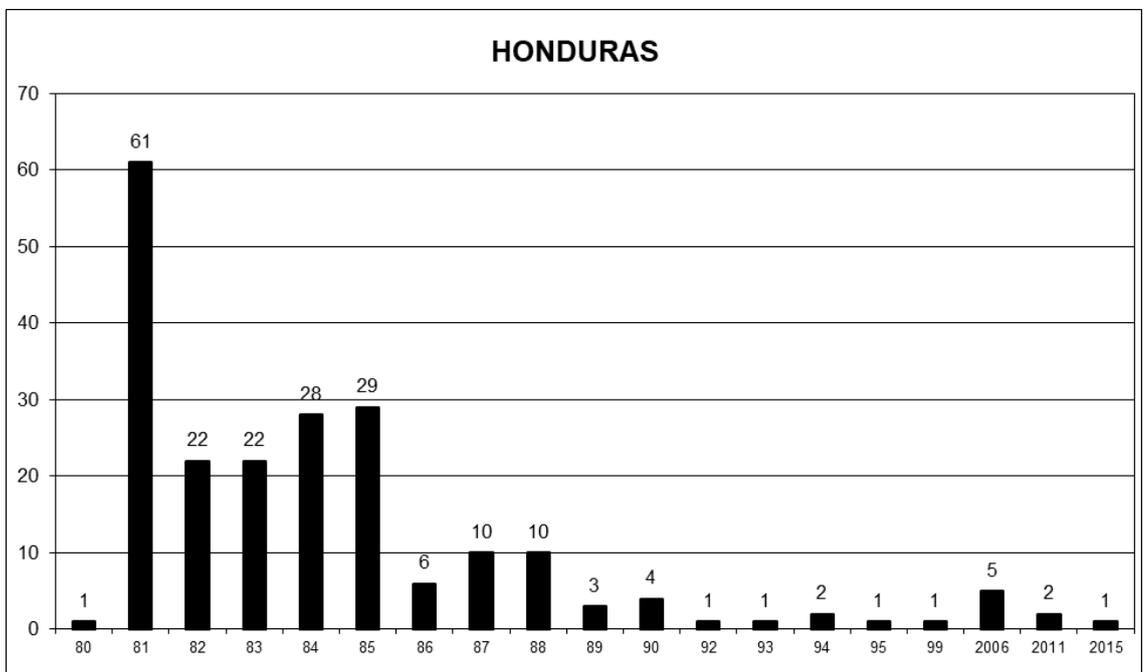
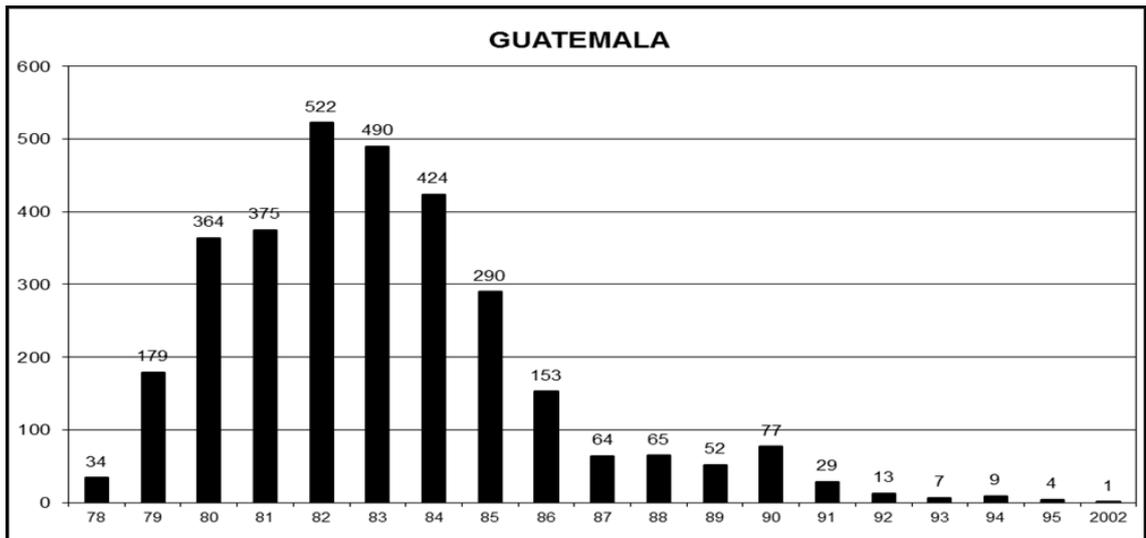


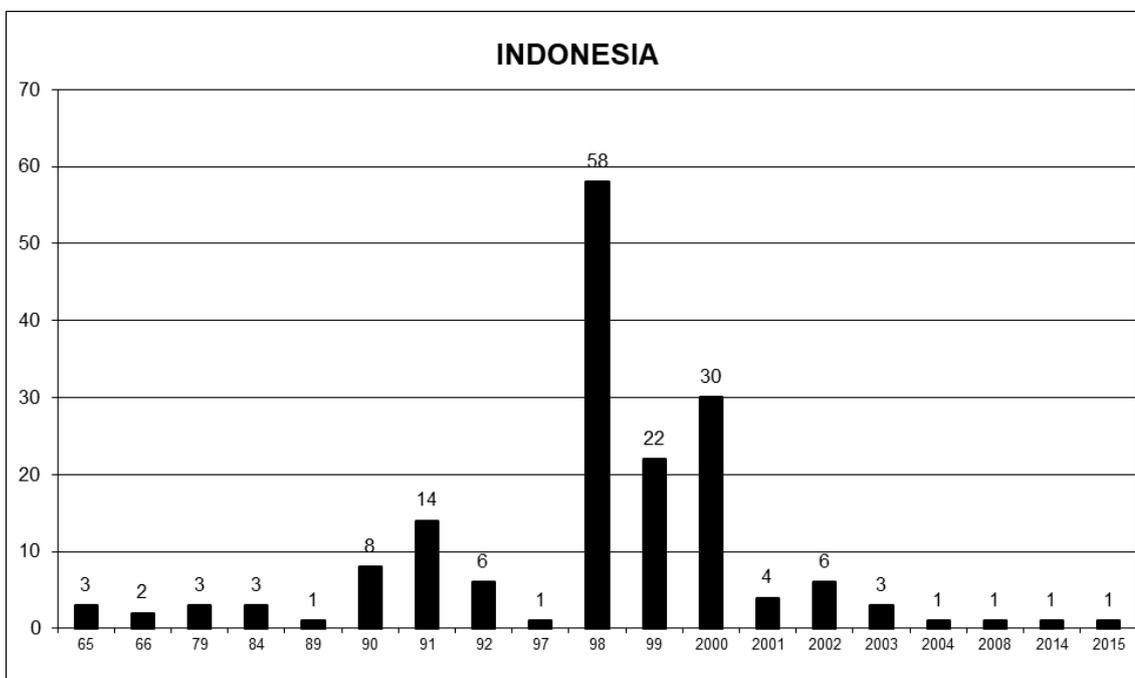
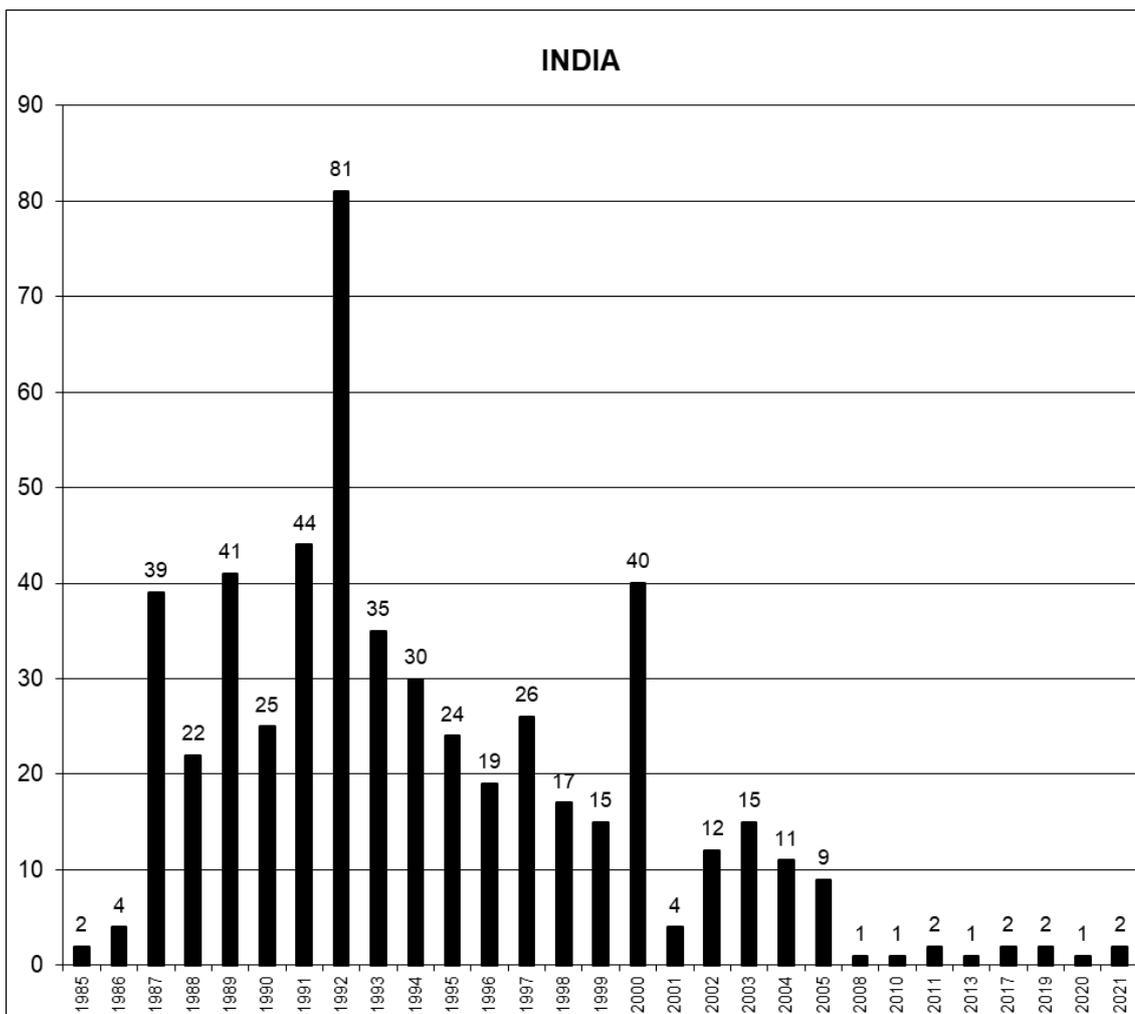


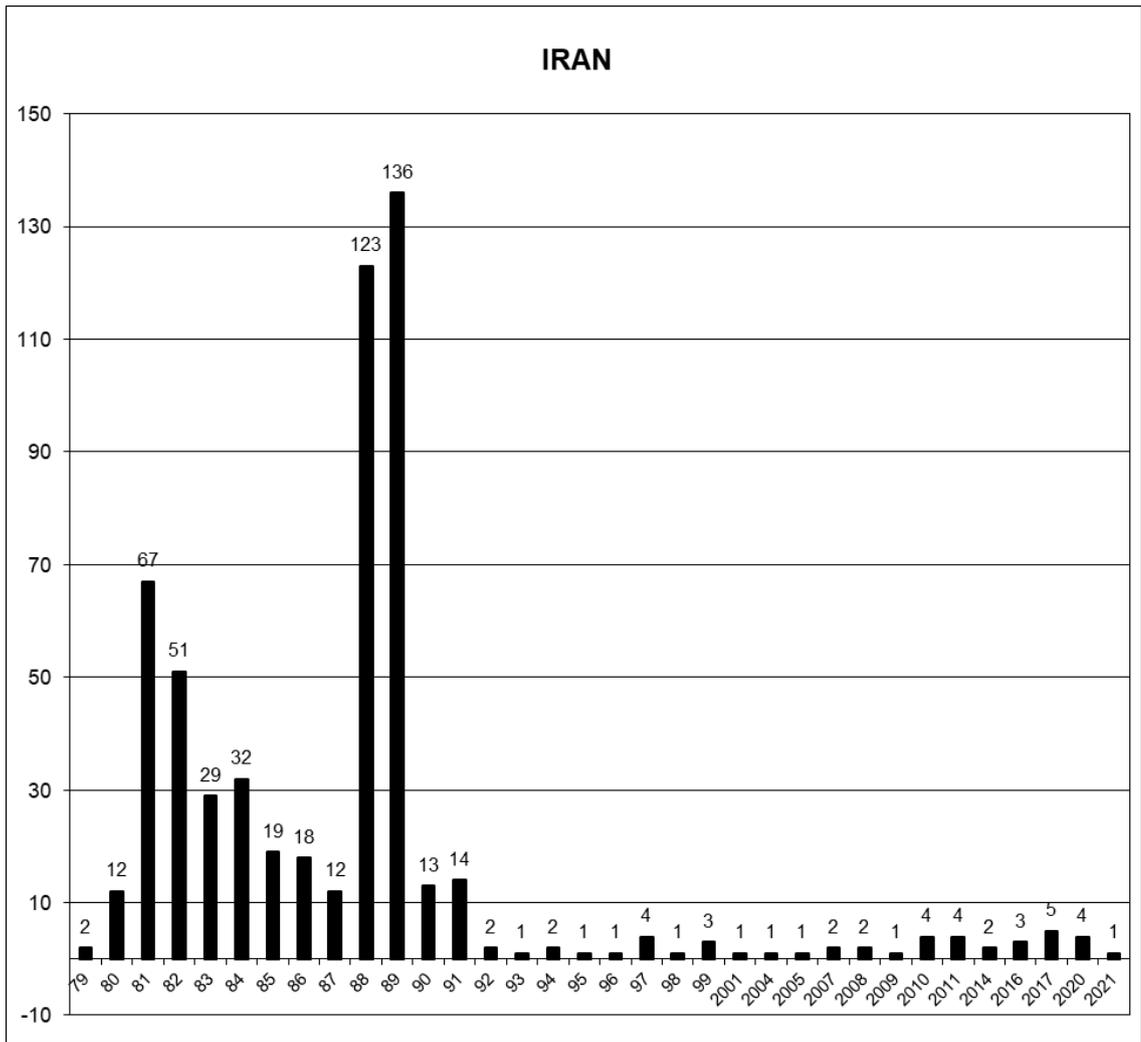


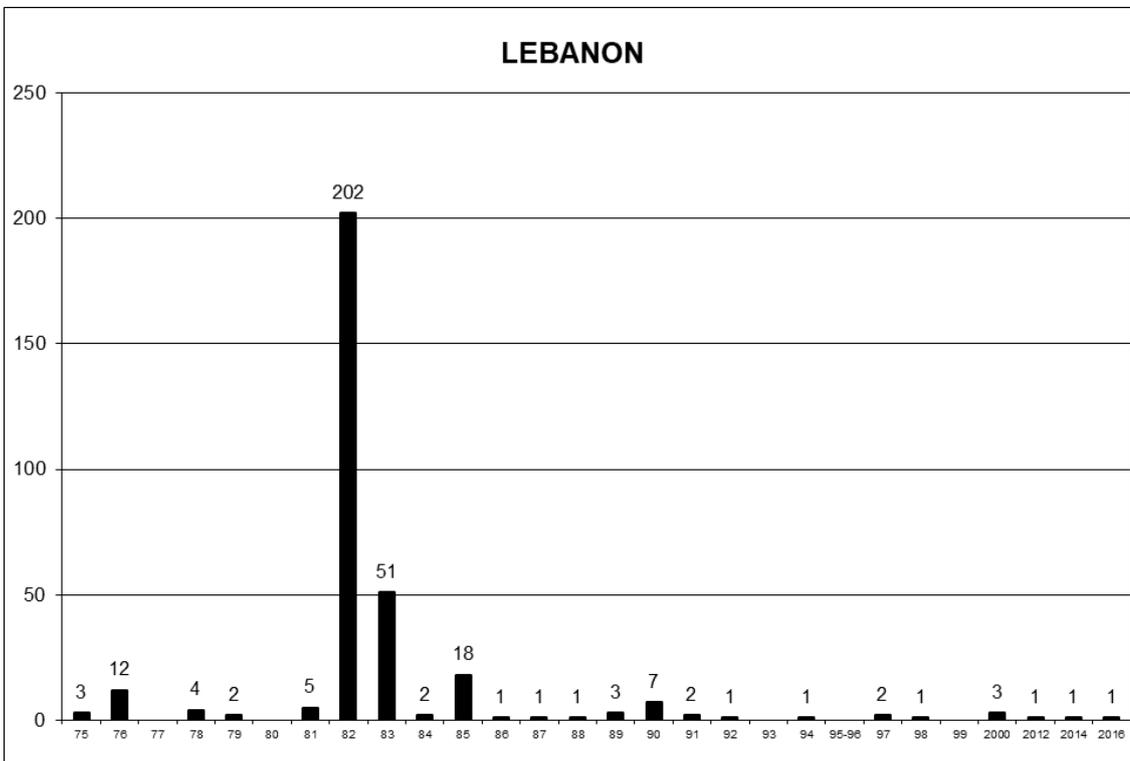
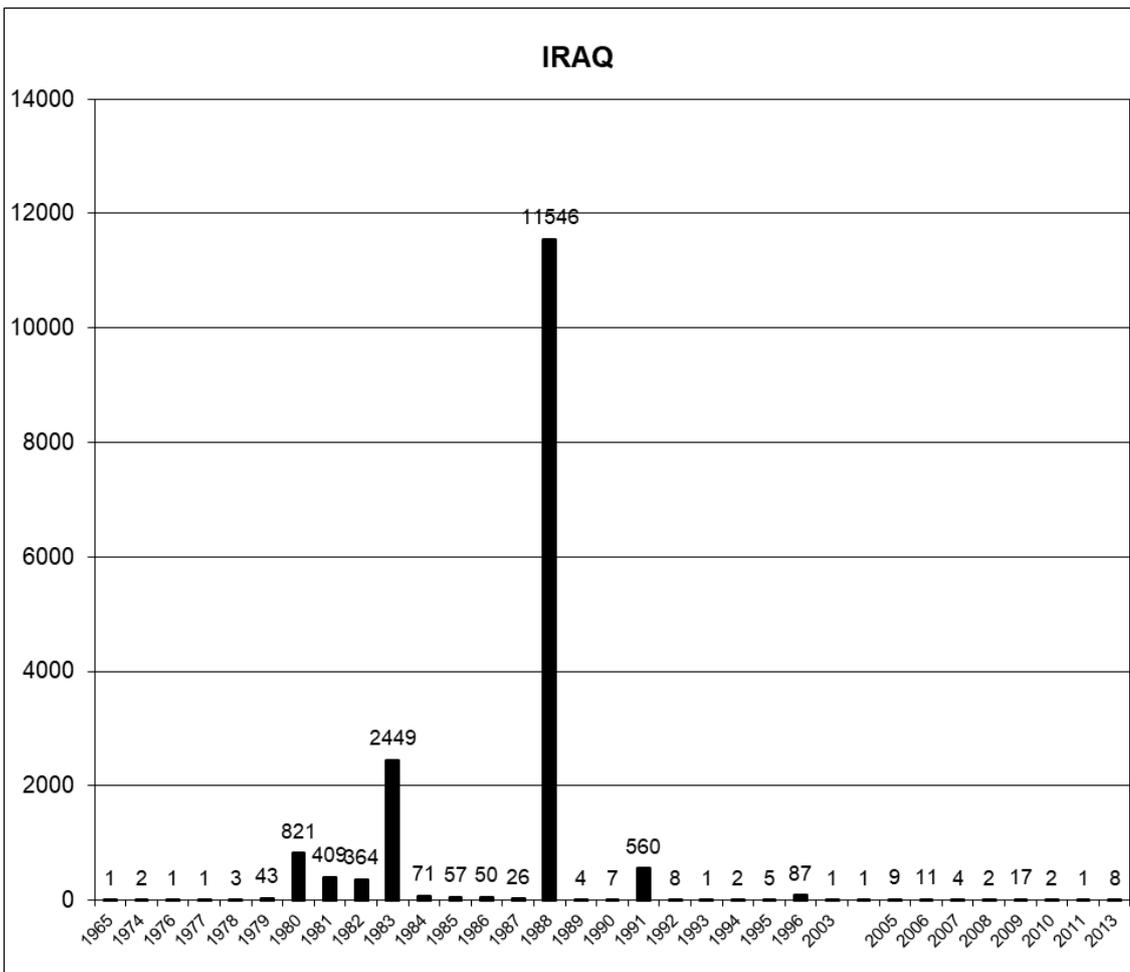


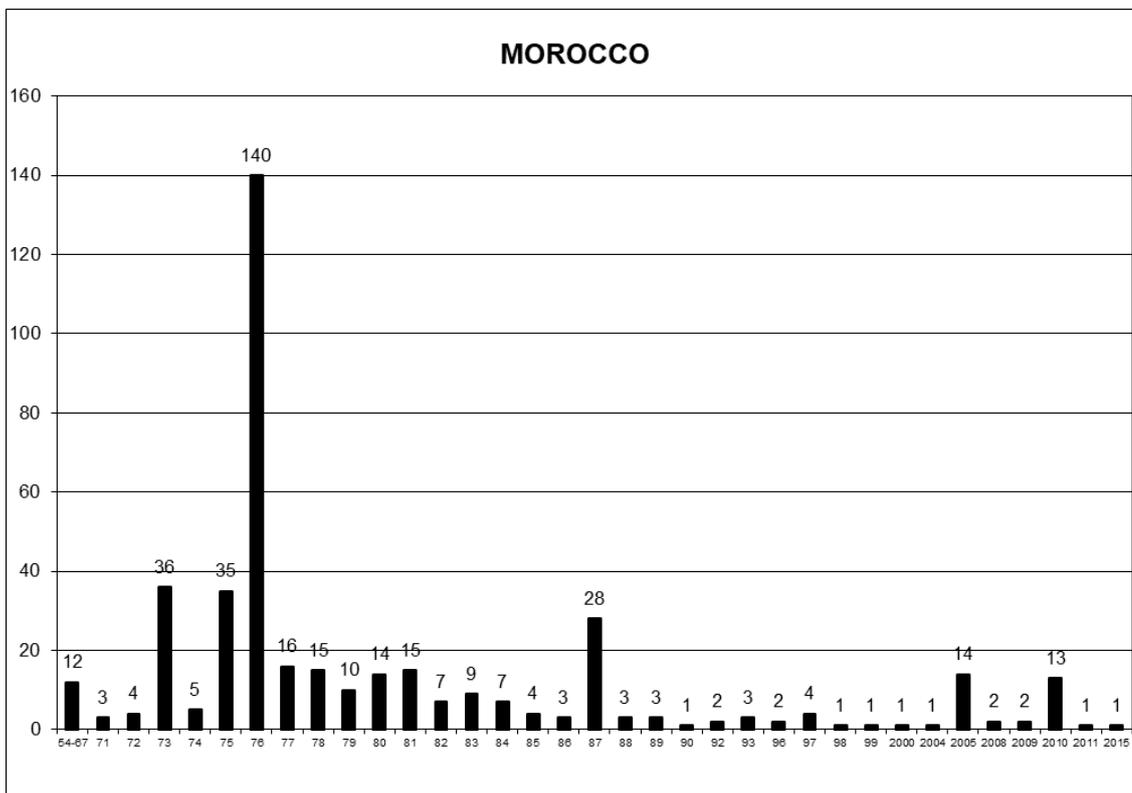
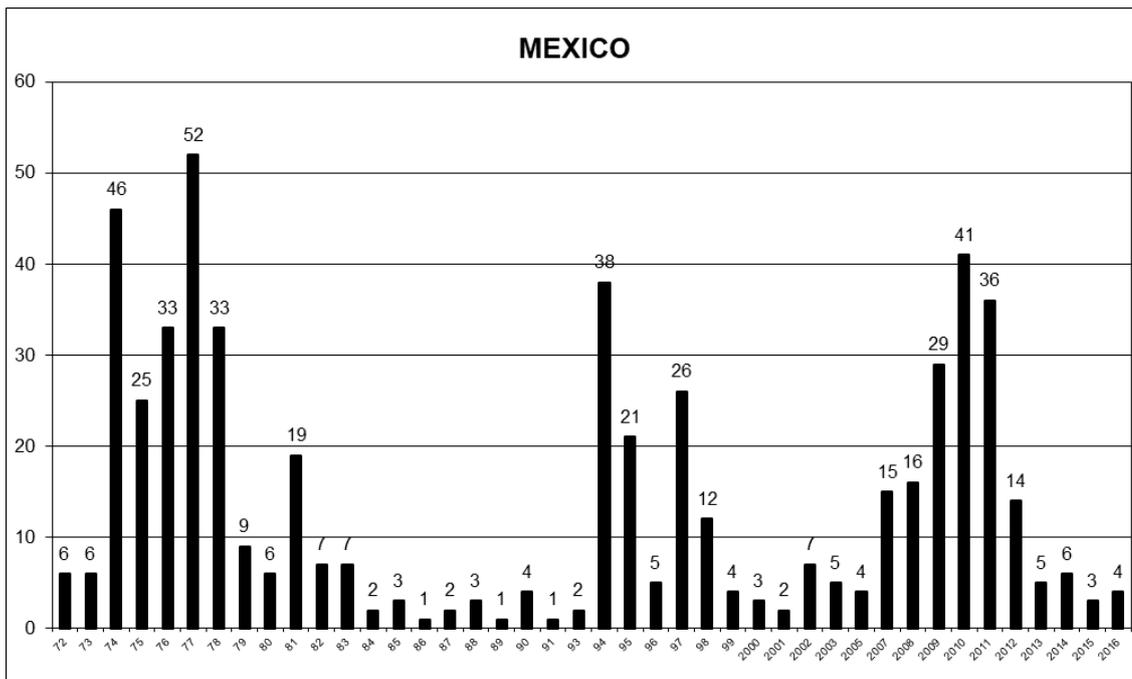


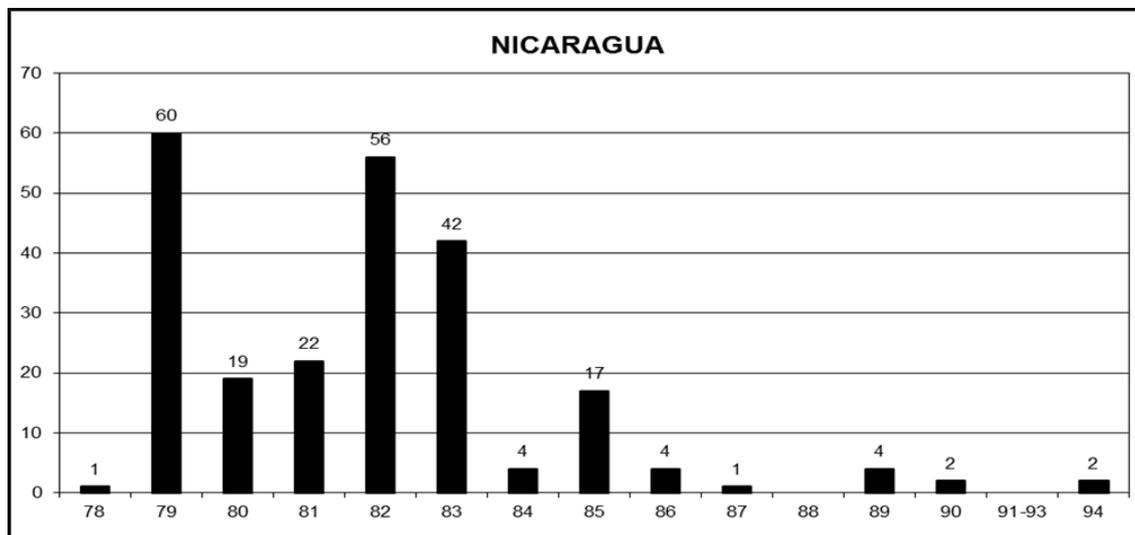
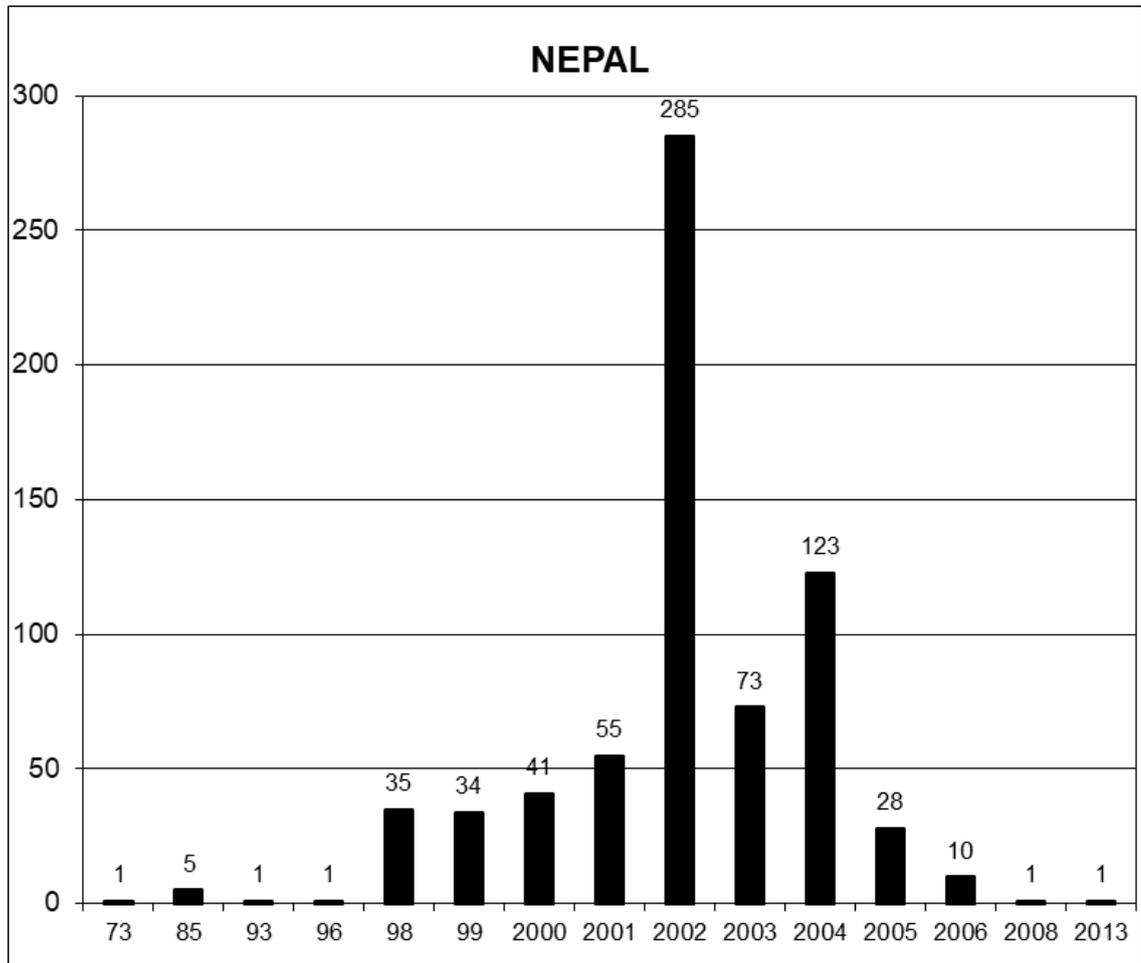


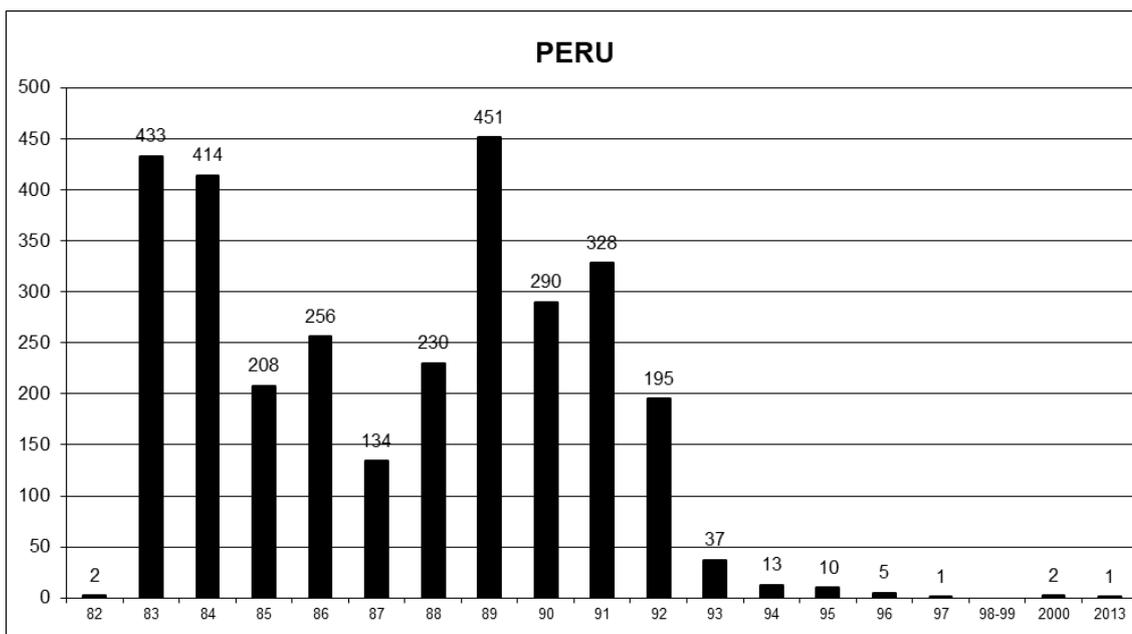
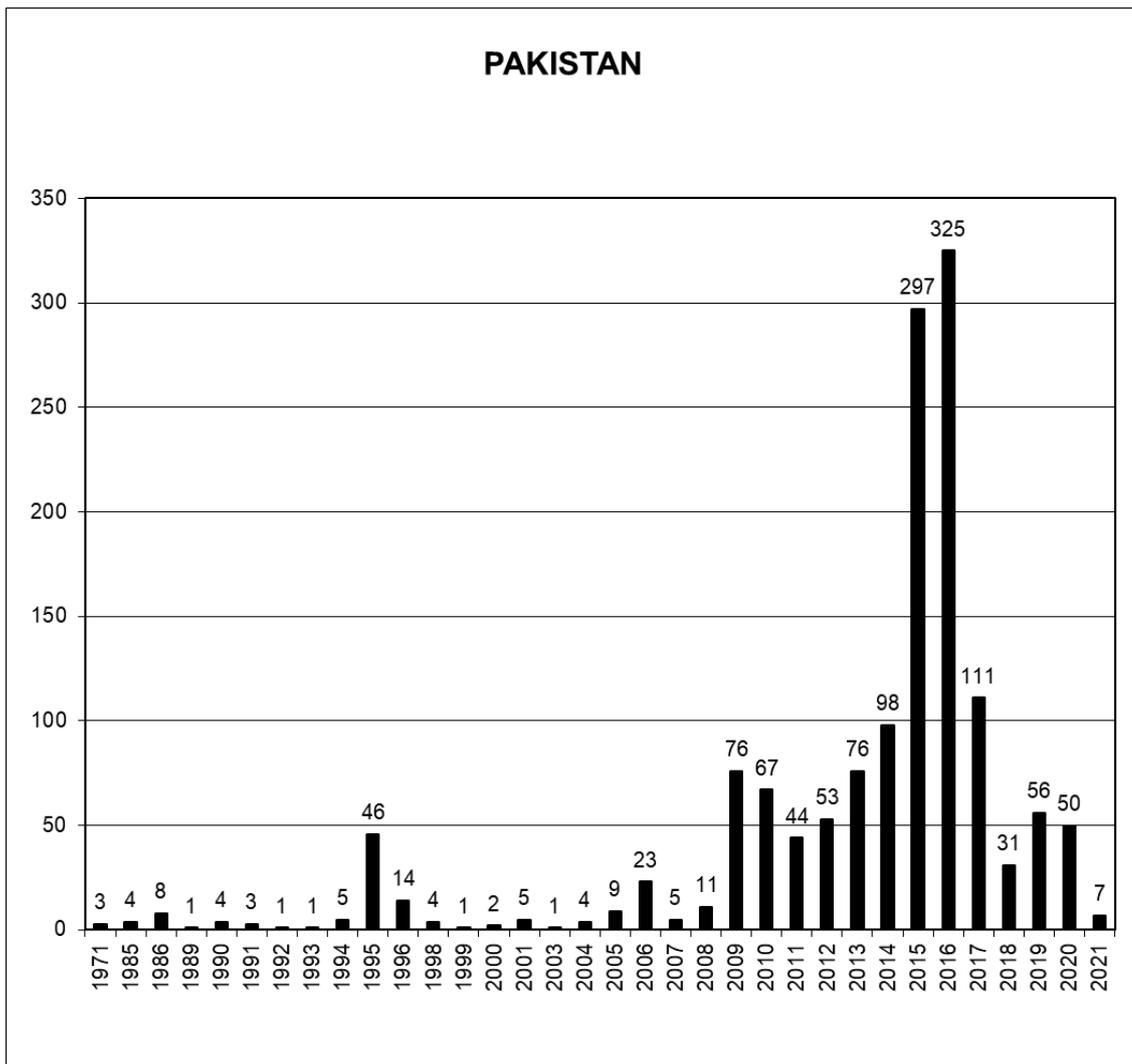


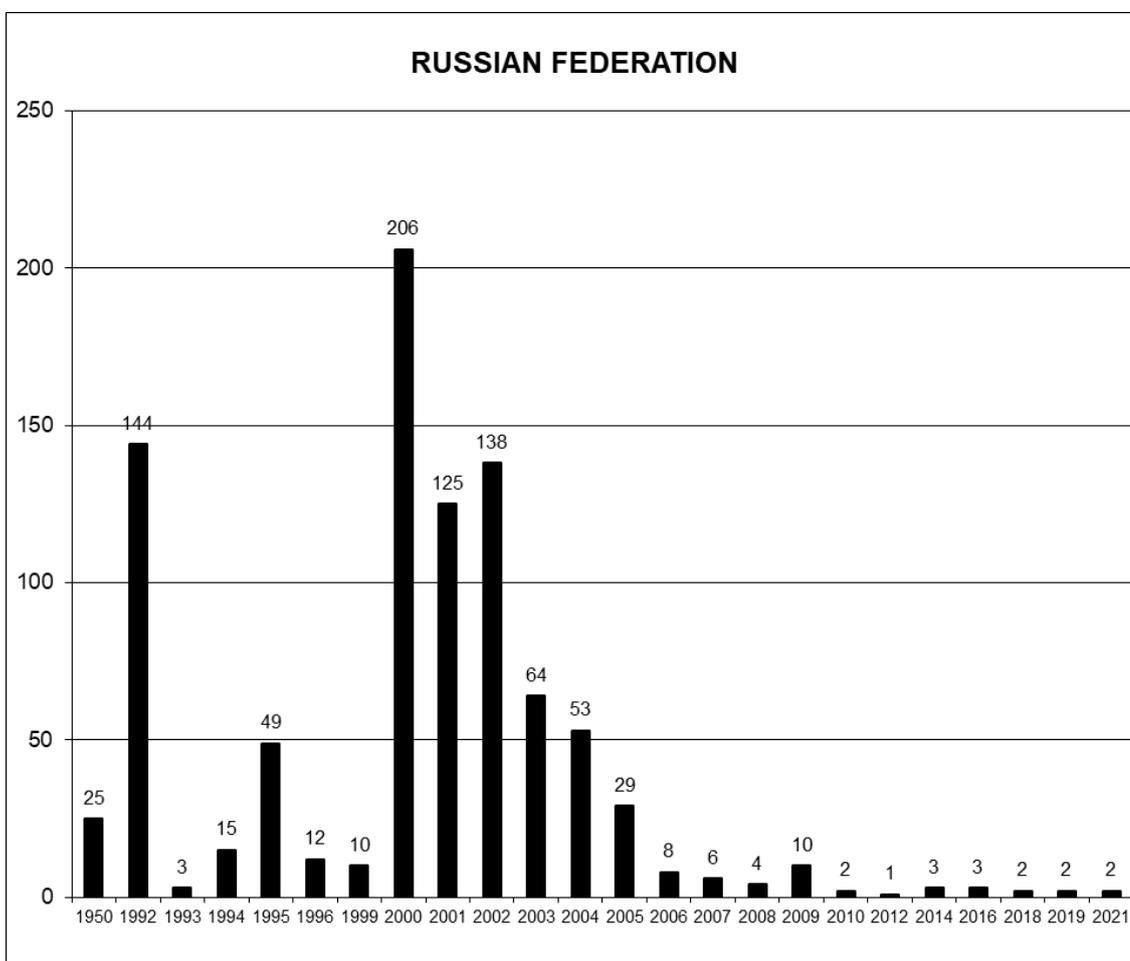
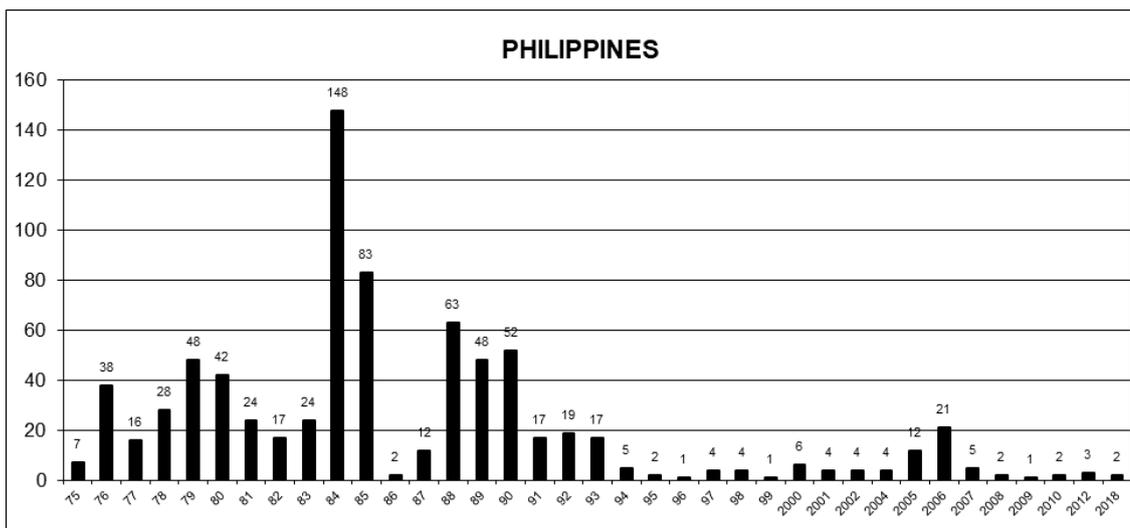


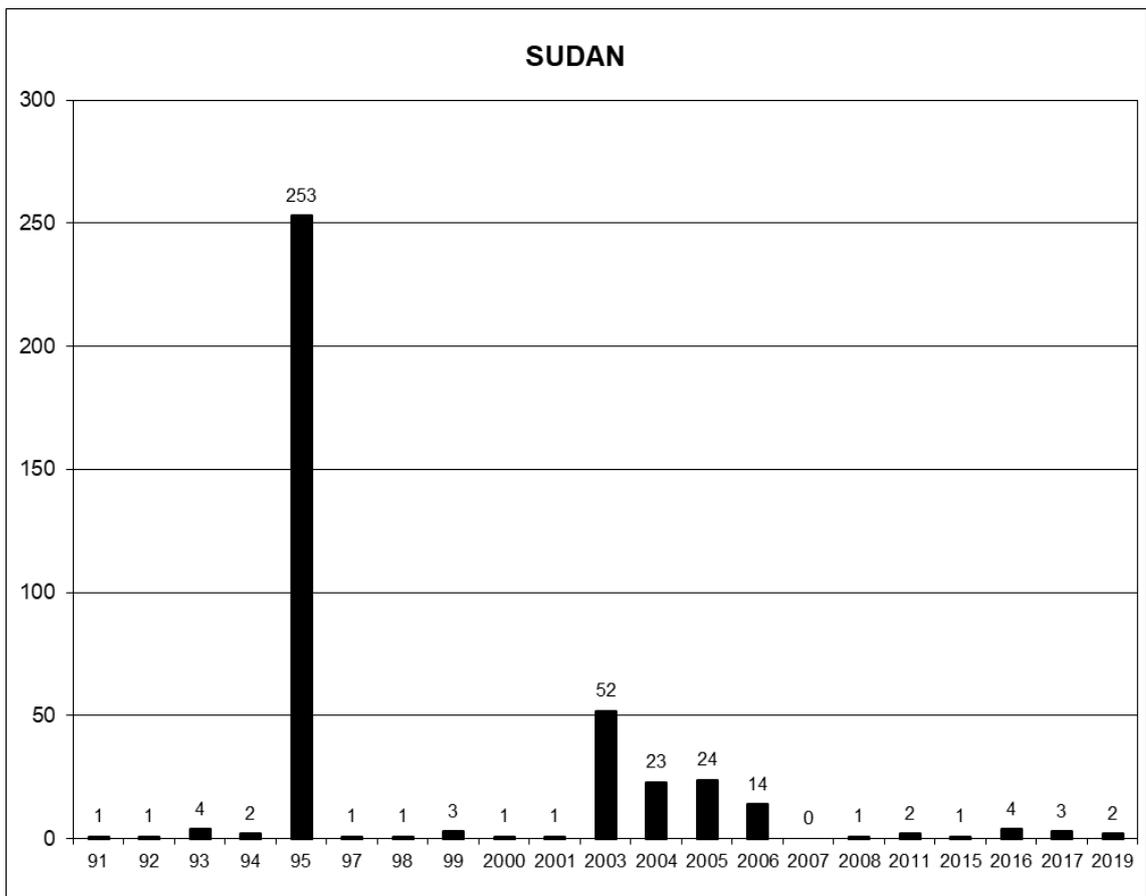
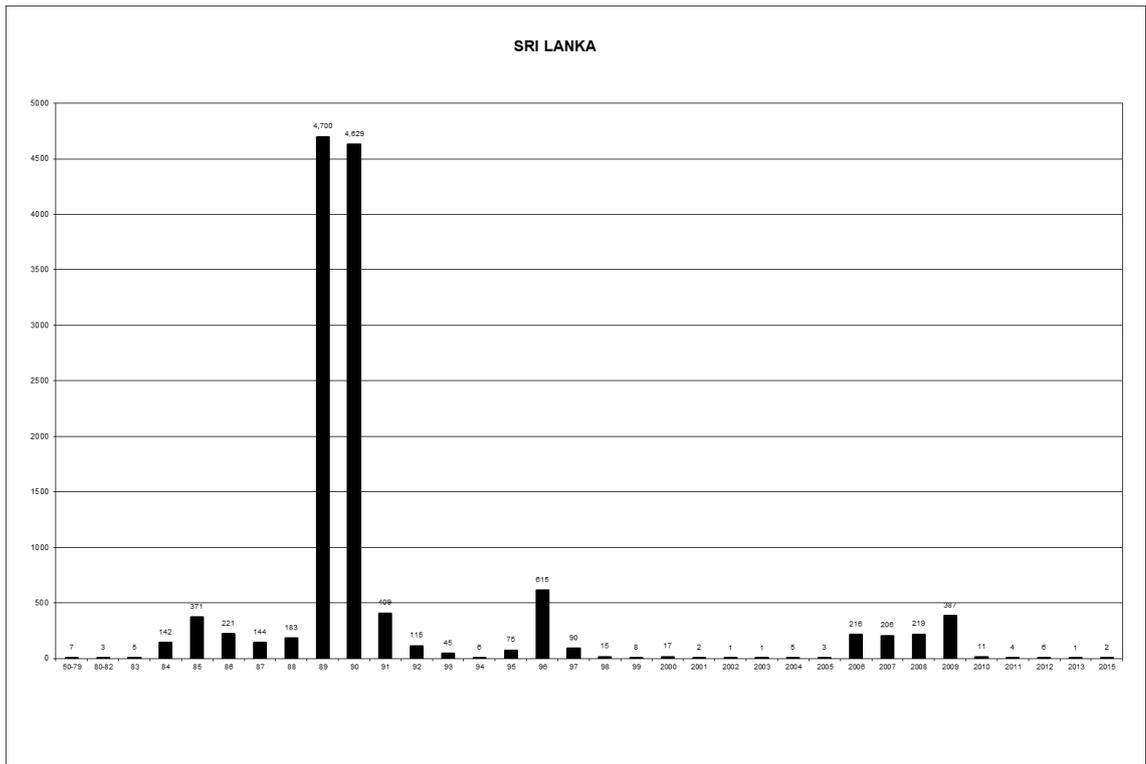


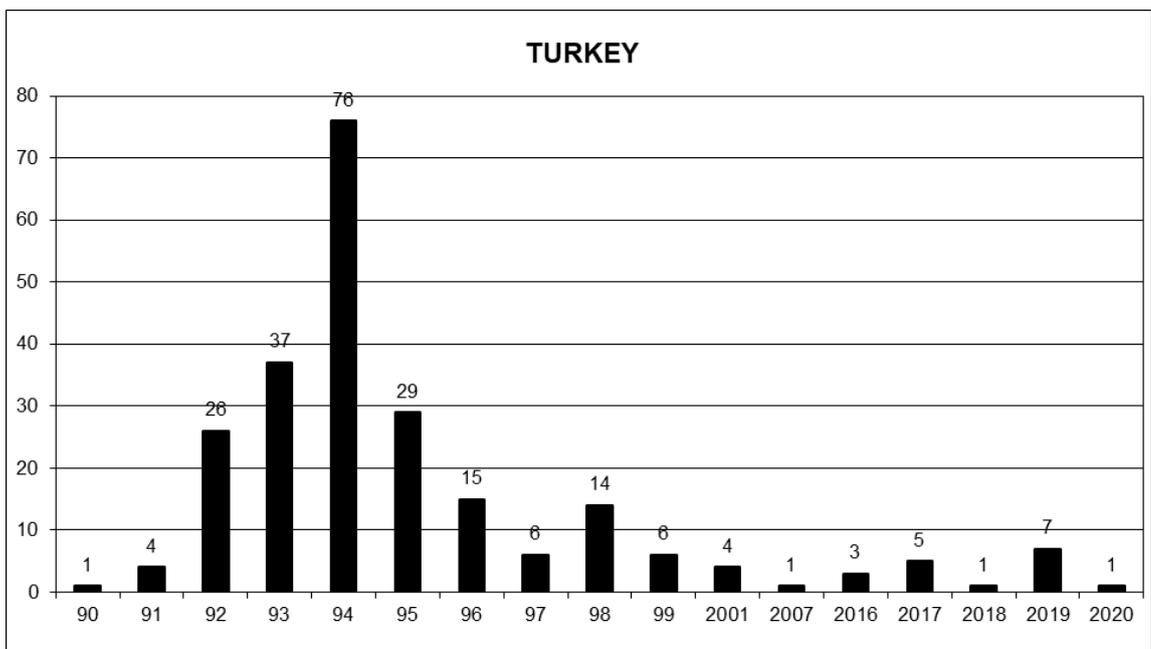
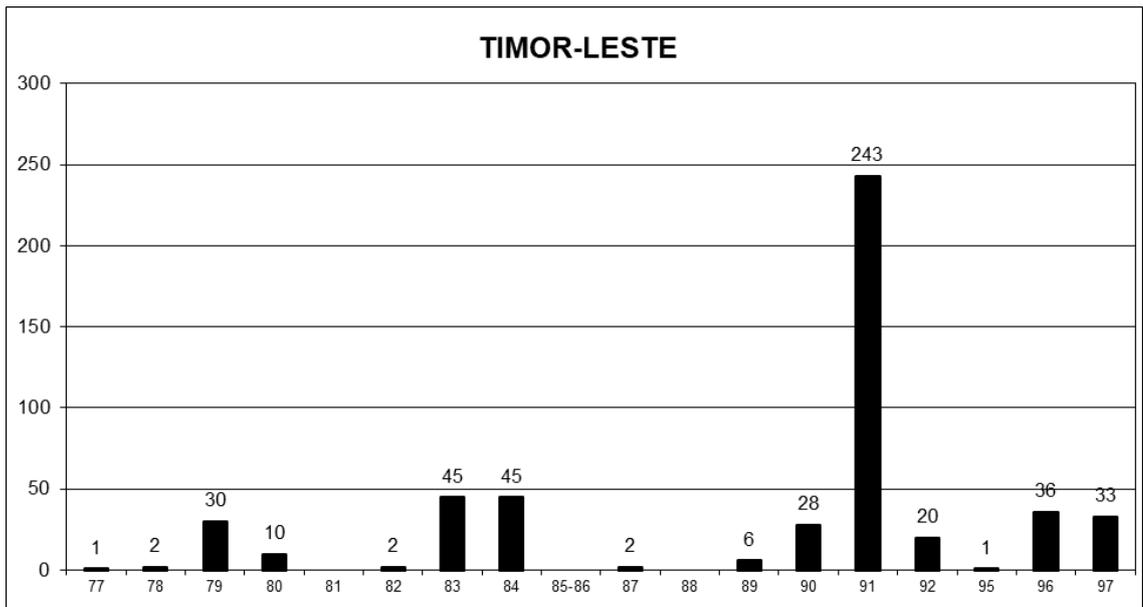
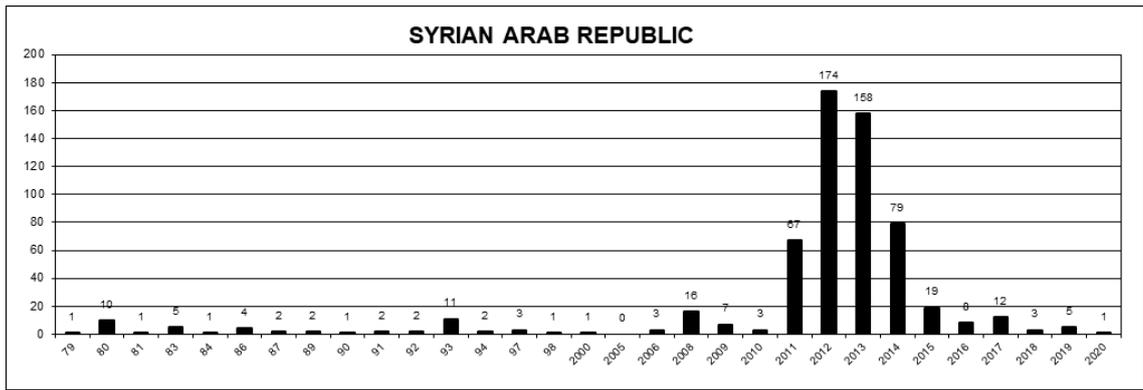


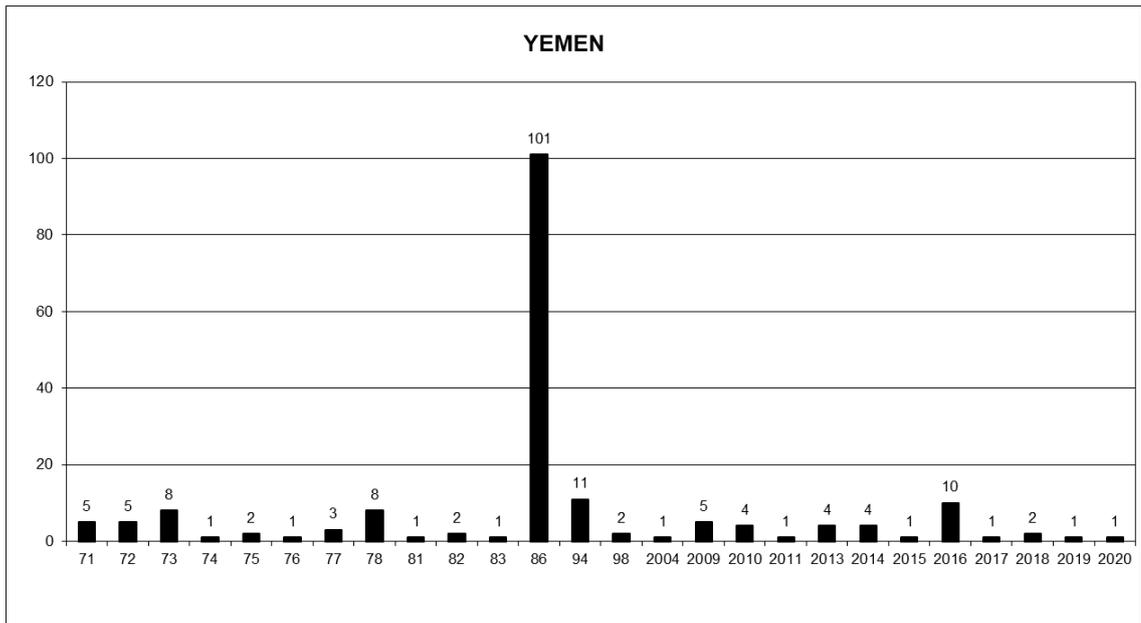












Annex IV

Press releases and statements

1. On 10 June 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) calling on Zimbabwe to end a reported pattern of disappearances and torture aimed at suppressing protests and dissent.¹²⁶
2. On 25 June 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) lamenting the decision by the United States Government to target and sanction individual staff of the International Criminal Court (ICC).¹²⁷
3. On 25 June 2020, on the 70th anniversary of the Korean War, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) urging the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to repatriate hundreds of people abducted during and after the Korean War, and end decades of anguish for the families of those taken.¹²⁸
4. On 26 June 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) expressing alarm at the repression of fundamental freedoms in China.¹²⁹
5. On 29 June 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) welcoming the disclosure by the Pakistani Government of the whereabouts of Idris Khattak, a leading human rights defender, yet strongly condemning his enforced disappearance.¹³⁰
6. On 3 July 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) expressing outrage at reports of the secret execution by the Islamic Republic of Iran of Hedayat Abdollahpour, a member of the Kurdish minority in the country.¹³¹
7. On 9 July 2020, ahead of the 25th Anniversary of the Srebrenica Memorial Day on 11 July, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [statement](#) urging governments to honour victims of the 1995 Srebrenica genocide by building peaceful, inclusive and just societies to prevent a repetition of such an atrocity.¹³²
8. On 16 July 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) strongly condemning the decision in the Islamic Republic of Iran to uphold death sentences against three men for participating in protests in November 2019.¹³³
9. On 4 August 2020, a year after India revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) calling for urgent action to remedy "alarming" human rights situation.¹³⁴
10. On 29 August 2020, ahead of the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances on 30 August, the Working Group, together with the Committee on Enforced Disappearances issued a [statement](#) calling on States to continue the search for people who have been forcibly disappeared, despite the COVID-19 pandemic.¹³⁵

¹²⁶ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25944&LangID=E.

¹²⁷ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25997&LangID=E.

¹²⁸ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26248&LangID=E.

¹²⁹ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26006&LangID=E.

¹³⁰ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26010&LangID=E.

¹³¹ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26036&LangID=E.

¹³² See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26060&LangID=E.

¹³³ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26106&LangID=E.

¹³⁴ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26148&LangID=E.

¹³⁵ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26189&LangID=E.

11. On 1 September 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) calling on Belarus to stop torturing detainees and bring to justice police officers humiliating and beating protesters in their custody with impunity.¹³⁶
12. On 4 September 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) calling on the Pakistani authorities to end the secret detention of human rights defender Idris Khattak.¹³⁷
13. On 21 September, on the occasion of the Working Group's annual reporting to the Human Rights Council, the Working Group issued a [press release](#) calling on the international community to strengthen cooperation to enable timely and effective investigations and prosecutions of enforced disappearances.¹³⁸
14. On 25 September 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) calling on Belarus to release prominent opposition leader Maria Kalesnikava, and to bring to justice those responsible for her enforced disappearance.¹³⁹
15. On 5 October 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) calling on the UK Parliament to reject a government bill they say would give British soldiers advance immunity for war crimes and crimes against humanity.¹⁴⁰
16. On 12 October 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mandates, issued a [press release](#) calling for the end to detention and intimidation of peaceful protesters in Cameroon.
17. On 27 November 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mandates, issued a [press release](#) calling for the release of Egyptian human rights defenders jailed after meeting diplomats.
18. On 30 November 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mandates, issued a [press release](#) calling on governments around the world to do more to prevent slavery and exploitation during the COVID-19 pandemic.
19. On 7 December 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mandates, issued a [press release](#) indicating that the decision to release on bail three senior staff from the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) was a positive first step.
20. On 9 December 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) calling on the Pakistan to uphold its human rights obligations by initiating prompt, thorough and impartial investigations into acts of enforced disappearances and torture, in particular concerning the incommunicado detention of human rights defender Idris Khattak.
21. On 16 December 2020, the Working Group endorsed a [press release](#) issued by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, expressing dismay at the treatment of human rights defenders and lawyers in China, as they continue to be charged, detained, disappeared and tortured five years after the start of a crackdown on the profession under the guise of national security concerns.¹⁴¹
22. On 18 January 2021, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) condemning the violent events at the US Capitol in Washington and calling on the United States of America to de-escalate tensions and unify the country in full respect for democracy and the rule of law.
23. On 1 February 2021, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) calling on Russia to ensure historian and human rights

¹³⁶ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26199&LangID=E.

¹³⁷ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26207&LangID=E.

¹³⁸ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26268&LangID=E.

¹³⁹ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26296&LangID=E.

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26342&LangID=E>.

¹⁴¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26612&LangID=E>.

defender Yuri Alexeevich Dmitriev has a fair trial amid concerns the proceedings against him are politically motivated after a court ordered he stop using his own lawyer and engage a state appointed counsel.¹⁴²

24. On 1 February 2021, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) calling on Azerbaijan and Armenia to promptly release prisoners of war and other captives from the recent Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and to return bodies to families for burial with due respect for cultural customs.¹⁴³

25. On 4 February 2021, the Working Group together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) calling on Iran to stop the execution of Baloch minority prisoners condemning the hanging of Javid Dehghan, an Iranian from the Baloch minority, on 30 January 2021.

26. On 5 February 2021, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) urging the Sri Lankan authorities to stop rolling back hard fought progress made on rebuilding democratic institutions, and to press for accountability for past crimes and deliver justice for victims and promote reconciliation between communities.¹⁴⁴

27. On 26 February 2021, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) calling on the Myanmar military to immediately end the violent crackdown on countrywide peaceful protests against its coup and allow free expression.¹⁴⁵

28. On 3 March 2021, the Working Group, endorsed a [press release](#) issues by a group of special procedure mechanisms, urging Nigeria to prioritise specialised rehabilitation measures for hundreds of abducted children left deeply traumatised after their release, and to strengthen protection measures for those at risk.¹⁴⁶

29. On 18 March 2021, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) calling on the Government of Comoros to immediately reveal the fate and whereabouts of Mr. Inssa Mohamed, better known as Bobocha, and demonstrate full commitment to international law.¹⁴⁷

30. On 26 March 2021, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) expressing alarm at the killing of Mr. Jasib Hattab Abboud Al Heliji, father of human rights defender Mr. Ali Jasib Hattab Al Heliji, who remains forcibly disappeared.¹⁴⁸

31. On 31 March 2021, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) expressing alarm at the increased recruitment and use of private military and foreign security contractors by the Government of Central African Republic, and their close contacts with UN peacekeepers.¹⁴⁹

32. On 13 April 2021, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) calling on the Government of Uganda to immediately stop the brutal crackdown on its political opponents which began in the lead-up to January's disputed general elections and continues to suppress opposition supporters.¹⁵⁰

33. On 13 April 2021, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) calling on the governments of Tanzania and Burundi to

¹⁴² <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26703&LangID=E>.

¹⁴³ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26702&LangID=E>.

¹⁴⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26725&LangID=E>.

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26808&LangID=E>.

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26830&LangID=E>.

¹⁴⁷ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26912&LangID=E>.

¹⁴⁸ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26951&LangID=E>.

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26961&LangID=E>.

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26988&LangID=E>.

respect the rights of refugees and asylum seekers who have fled Burundi, deploring reports of enforced disappearances, torture, forced returns and repression.¹⁵¹

34. On 20 April 2021, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) calling on the Government of the United Arab Emirates to provide meaningful information on the fate of Sheikha Latifa Mohammed Al Maktoum, as well as assurances of her safety and well-being.¹⁵²

35. On 27 April 2021, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a [press release](#) expressing serious concern for the independence of Nepal's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) after the appointment of new members that they regard as being inconsistent with international standards.¹⁵³

36. On 14 May 2021, the Working Group, together with other special procedure and OAS human rights experts, issued a [press release](#) condemning the violent crackdown on peaceful protests in Colombia, and calling on the Government to conduct a thorough and independent investigation into the reported killings, sexual violence, allegations of torture, and cases of alleged arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26990&LangID=E>.

¹⁵² <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26990&LangID=E>.

¹⁵³ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27026&LangID=E>.

¹⁵⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27093&LangID=E>.