

RECOMANEM

Materials and resources recommended by the ICIP

Event

Encounter for the Truth #WeRecognizeYourSearch

Acknowledging the efforts made by the families of victims of missing people is a key element for the processes of transitional justice and peacebuilding. The Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence, and Non-Repetition of Colombia, which seeks to explain and clarify the events that occurred throughout the armed conflict that the country suffered for more than 50 years, has done a remarkable work.

The Commission carried out, from the 26th to the 28th of August 2019 at Pasto, Nariño, an “Encounter for the Truth #RecognizeYourSearch: Acknowledgment of the persistency of woman and families who seek their missing loved ones” in Colombia. The encounter publicly gave value to the efforts of the people who are searching for loved ones and, simultaneously established a dialogue between families and institutions. At the same time, the encounter was accompanied by memorial ceremonies for the victims and artistic representations. These ceremonies enabled the relatives to channel their grief, to embark in resilience initiatives and to regain strength to continue with their search.

Such an encounter served to communicate and pass on the courage and persistency with which the family members of the missing have lived over years, with the anguish of not knowing what had happened with their loved ones, and undergoing a process that, at the moment, has no signs of ending.

“The pain will never leave, but we have to work on being better, we give each other support and strength whenever we need them. We keep on fighting, some for justice,

others because they are still searching for their loved ones”, explains Idali Garcerá, mother of one of the young victims of the Soacha assassinations who are also known as ‘Falsos positivos’.

Book

***Unspeakable truths*, by Priscilla B. Hayner**

Unspeakable Truths: Transitional Justice and the Challenge of Truth Commissions, by Priscilla B. Hayner, is an essential book on transitional justice and one of the most authoritative works on truth as an ethic imperative regarding crimes against human rights, including missing people.

Priscilla Hayner’s in-depth investigation into different Truth Commissions established throughout the last three decades decisively contributes to the comprehension on the new dimensions of the protection of human rights. The study is an excellent guide for those societies that decide to face historical events of mass atrocities with honesty and courage.

Priscilla Hayner analyses the dilemmas, the options and the concessions that sometimes are necessary to face the past and to let the past illustrate the present and the future. This book is realistic about the difficulties and obstacles presented by the implementation of the “right to the truth”, but in no way justifies the act of forgetting, of denial, nor of impunity.

The book has been published in Spanish within the “Peace and Security” collection edited by ICIP and Bellaterra Edicions.

Project

Disappearances in migration processes

The Missing Migrants initiative of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), through its Global Migration Data Analysis Centre, plays a key role in analysing enforced disappearances within migration processes.

The centre has been monitoring disappearances and deaths along migration routes since 2014. On the basis of this work, the organisation estimates that more than 30,000

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migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, have died worldwide since 2015. IOM describes these deaths as “an epidemic of crime and abuse”. The project provides up-to-date information and statistics, at global and regional levels, on the number of deaths and their causes. It also includes a series of publications that can be downloaded from the web, with information for the press, researchers and the general public.

Concerning this issue, the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances delivered a report on enforced disappearances in the context of migration to the Human Rights Council in 2017. The report states that “there is a direct link between migration and enforced disappearance, either because individuals leave their country as a consequence of a threat or risk of being subjected to enforced disappearances there, or because they disappear during their journey or in the country of destination”.

The Working Group also argues that the phenomenon of enforced disappearances in the context of migrations must receive urgent attention. It links the increased risk of suffering human rights violations on migration routes to states’ ever harsher border policies, which make those routes ever longer and more dangerous.

This is a key declaration in framing the relationship between enforced disappearances and migration processes, analysing the factors that these involve and proposing obligations on States in preventing and combating this phenomenon as a priority issue.

Publication

The Missing, International Committee of the Red Cross

The prestigious International Review of the Red Cross, published November 2018, dedicated its 905 issue to the question of the missing. With a clearly humanitarian vision, the monograph includes 23 articles that address, from different perspectives and experiences, questions such as the psychosocial effects, the challenges in the implementation of international law, the disappearance of people in migratory routes, search mechanisms, the importance of records, the use of forensic science, and the need to strengthen resilience capacities.

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It also collects an explanation about the actions of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in relation to disappeared persons and illustrates some of the issues related to these phenomena through the cases of Mexico and Sri Lanka. The editorial, signed by the historian Vincent Bernard, reveals in a few pages with all the sensitivity that the subject requires, the main humanitarian challenges posed by the disappearance of persons.

Report***Missing persons and victims of enforced disappearance in Europe, Council of Europe***

In 2016, the Council of Europe published the report *Missing persons and victims of enforced disappearance in Europe*. The title, which at first might seem repetitive, refers explicitly to two distinct phenomena. The first one applies to those persons who have been reported missing in connection with an armed conflict or a situation of internal violence, or related to a natural catastrophe or a fatal accident. The second one –enforced disappearance– is a crime under international criminal law and a violation of multiple human rights. However, both phenomena must be addressed by focusing on the victims and their rights, especially the right to truth, justice and reparation.

This is precisely the approach that emanates from the whole report, which presents different realities of various member countries of the Council of Europe: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Balkans, Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, as well as Spain, a case that we also deal with in this monograph. These include, for example, victims of “extraordinary renditions” in the context of counterterrorism operations with the involvement of European countries, as well as cases of disappearance in the context of extraditions and on immigration routes to Europe.

Finally, we find this report particularly useful because it contains a series of good practices that have been implemented in various parts of the world and have helped to strengthen transitions to peace.

Readings and video***Collection of materials on disappearances in Mexico***

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According to the latest official figures, there are more than 60,000 disappeared persons in Mexico, one of the countries that have been hit the hardest by this terrible phenomenon. This scourge involves many actors in the accountability chain, including various organized crime groups. An earlier issue of the *Peace in Progress* magazine dealing with peacebuilding in Mexico offered an analysis of the dynamics and consequences of violence in Mexico, as well as reflections on how to reverse it. A number of further readings were also suggested, including reports on enforced disappearances in this country.

Here are two more recommendations. The first one is the report *"El regreso del infierno mexicano: los desaparecidos que están vivos"* (Back from Mexican Hell: Disappeared and Alive), by Alejandra Guillén and Diego Petersen, published in *El País* on 5 February 2019. In this chronicle, based on the testimonies of people who have managed to escape from the captivity of organized crime groups, the authors uncover a highly unknown and very difficult reality to investigate: the disappearance and forced recruitment of young people at training camps of the Jalisco New Generation cartel. The article also refers to the impact that these disappearances have on the families of the abductees and the efforts of the prosecution to uncover "an open secret" that conceals unimaginable doses of violence and cruelty. The report is part of the *A dónde (Ile)van (a) los desaparecidos* (Where do the disappeared go?) project, which we also recommend, especially for the map of graves that illustrates the magnitude and extent of enforced disappearance in Mexico.

The second recommendation is the testimonies of Epifanio Álvarez, father of Jorge, one of the 43 students of Ayotzinapa who were forcibly disappeared in 2014, and of Yolanda Morán, mother of Dan Jeremeel, also disappeared, and a representative of *Colectivo BÚSCAME* and of the Movement for Our Disappeared in Mexico. Both of them participated in the International Forum on Peacebuilding in Mexico, organized by ICIP, Serapaz and la Taula per Mèxic, on 25-27 September 2019 (watch the video, from minute 00:53).

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