

**Human Rights Council****Forty-fifth session**

14 September–2 October 2020

Agenda item 3

**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 36/6.

The mandate of the Working Group is to assist families of disappeared persons to ascertain the fate and whereabouts of their disappeared relatives; and 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 58,606 cases to 109 States. The number of cases under active consideration that have not yet been clarified, closed or discontinued stands at 46,271 in a total of 92 States. During the reporting period, 205 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 23 May 2019 to 15 May 2020.

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

** The annexes to the present report are reproduced as received, in the language of submission only.



Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	3
II. Activities of the Working Group from 23 May 2019 to 15 May 2020.....	3
A. Activities.....	3
B. Meetings	5
C. Communications	5
D. Country visits.....	6
E. Follow-up reports and other procedures	7
F. Press releases and statements.....	7
III. Decisions on individual cases taken by the Working Group and communications transmitted to the States concerned during the reporting period	8
IV. Observations.....	15
V. Conclusions and recommendations	24
Annexes	
I. Country visit requests and invitations extended	26
II. Statistical summary: cases of enforced or involuntary disappearance reported to the Working Group between 1980 and 2019, and general allegations transmitted	28
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 15 May 2020 (only for countries with more than 100 cases transmitted).....	34
IV. Press releases and statements	50

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 36/6.
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 23 May 2019 to 15 May 2020. 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 58,606 cases to 109 States. The number of cases under active consideration that have not yet been clarified, closed or discontinued stands at 46,271 in a total of 92 States. During the reporting period, 205 cases were clarified.

II. Activities of the Working Group from 23 May 2019 to 15 May 2020

A. Activities

6. During the period under review, the Working Group held two sessions: its 119th session, from 16 to 20 September 2019 (see A/HRC/WGEID/119/1), and its 120th session, from 10 to 14 February 2020 (see A/HRC/WGEID/120/1). Due to the travel restrictions imposed on account of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Working Group decided to meet remotely by videoconference, from 11 to 15 May 2020, to partially fulfil the programme of activities of its 121st session (see A/HRC/WGEID/121/1). The reports on the sessions should be considered as complementary to the present report.
7. During the 119th session, Luciano Hazan was selected Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group and Tae-Ung Baik was confirmed as Vice-Chair.
8. Between 18 and 20 June 2019, Bernard Duhaime represented the Working Group at the twenty-sixth annual meeting of the special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council.
9. On 11 September 2019, Mr. Duhaime presented the annual report for the period from 3 May 2018 to 22 May 2019, and its addenda, to the Human Rights Council at its forty-second session, and participated in the interactive dialogue with States.
10. On 17 October 2019, the Chair-Rapporteur addressed the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session and participated in the interactive dialogue with Member States.
11. On 15 February 2020, to mark the launch of its fortieth anniversary campaign, the Working Group hosted a public event during which it presented new audiovisual materials¹

¹ See <https://vimeo.com/showcase/6609050>.

on the mandate of the Working Group, its history, and ways to engage with its humanitarian procedure.

12. On 3 March 2020, the Chair-Rapporteur participated in an event organized by the Government of Argentina, in Buenos Aires, to mark the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of the Working Group on 29 February 1980. The event was held at the Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA) former clandestine detention centre. It was opened by the Secretary for Human Rights, with Estela de Carlotto and Rosa Bru representing the families of the disappeared. The Chair-Rapporteur reviewed part of the Working Group's history and reflected on why the mandate is as needed today as in 1980. He also presented new audiovisual materials.

13. The Government of Turkmenistan requested the assistance of the Working Group in implementing the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and consequently has invited the Working Group to undertake a technical visit aimed at increasing the capacities of the authorities to tackle enforced disappearances in the penitentiary system. Initially planned for April 2020, the activity was postponed due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The Working Group continues to engage with the Government of Turkmenistan on conducting the visit as soon as the travel restrictions have been lifted.

14. On 28 May 2020, the Chair-Rapporteur facilitated a workshop on enforced disappearances, with government officials from 11 ministries and institutions in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The activity was organized in the framework of the Letter of Understanding between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

15. On 8 and 10 June 2020, Houria Es-Slami delivered two online workshops to representatives of civil society and family associations working on the issue of enforced disappearances in the Syrian Arab Republic. The OHCHR-facilitated workshops enabled Syrian activists and family members to deepen their engagement with the Working Group, most notably in the implementation of the Working Group's humanitarian mandate of assisting in clarifying the fate and the whereabouts of the forcibly disappeared.

16. The Working Group continues its practice of holding one of its sessions each year outside Geneva. The Working Group had programmed its 121st session to take place in San José, Costa Rica, in May 2020. However, the session had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Working Group is grateful to the Government of Costa Rica for accepting to host a session of the Working Group, and looks forward to rescheduling a session in San José once travel restrictions have been lifted.

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 continued to discuss its thematic report on standards and public policies for effective investigation of enforced disappearances. In 2018, the Working Group presented to the Human Rights Council an interim report, and invited States, families of the disappeared, civil society organizations and other stakeholders to provide relevant inputs for a full report on this matter, to be issued in 2019. In view of the richness of the information received, the Working Group decided to postpone the release of the study, in order to adequately consider the submissions. The study is included as an addendum to the present annual report (A/HRC/45/13/Add.3).

19. The Working Group is thankful for the continuous support, including through voluntary contributions, provided by donor States, notably France, Japan 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 Croatia (120th session), Israel (119th session), Japan (119th and 120th sessions, and during the remote meeting in May 2020), Libya (119th session), Morocco (119th session), Pakistan (120th session), the Philippines (119th session), Portugal (119th and 120th sessions) and Turkmenistan (120th 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 699 new cases of enforced disappearance to 26 States.

22. The Working Group transmitted 105 of the above-mentioned cases under the urgent action procedure to 14 States.

23. In September 2019, the Working Group announced that it would start documenting violations tantamount to enforced disappearance perpetrated by non-State actors (A/HRC/42/40, para. 94).

24. During the reporting period, the Working Group transmitted 21 cases tantamount to enforced disappearance, namely to the Libyan National Army – Libya (4 cases); to the self-proclaimed “Donetsk People’s Republic” – Ukraine (8 cases); to the de facto authorities in Sana’a – Yemen (5 cases); and to Hamas – State of Palestine (4 cases).^{2, 3}

25. The Working Group clarified 205 cases in 16 States. Of the 205 cases, 141 were clarified on the basis of information provided by Governments and 64 on the basis of information provided by sources.

26. The Working Group transmitted six prompt intervention communications addressing allegations of harassment of and/or threats to human rights defenders and relatives of disappeared persons in Algeria (1), Belarus (1), Mexico (1), Pakistan (2) and the Philippines (1).

27. It transmitted 28 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), Bangladesh (1), China (6), the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (1), Egypt (2), France (1), India (1), the Islamic Republic of Iran (3), Iraq (1), Ireland (1), the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (1), Myanmar (1), the Philippines (1), Saudi Arabia (1), Singapore (1), Thailand (1), Turkey (2), the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (1) and Viet Nam (1).

28. The Working Group transmitted 42 joint allegation letters, with other special procedure mandate holders, concerning Algeria (1), Bahrain (2), Belarus (1), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1), Brazil (1), Burkina Faso (1), Cameroon (1), Chile (1), China (3), Colombia (1), the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (1), Egypt (2), the Islamic Republic of Iran (2), Iraq (1), Jordan (1), Lebanon (1), Libya (1), Mexico (3), Nepal (1), Paraguay (1), the Republic of Korea (1), Saudi Arabia (1), Sri Lanka (1), Thailand (1), Tunisia (1), Turkey (3), Turkmenistan (1), the United Republic of Tanzania (1), the United States of America (1) and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (1). Three letters were

² The reported acts tantamount to enforced disappearance allegedly took place in the Gaza Strip, part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

³ 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 any opinion concerning the legal status of any territory, city or area, or of its authorities.

addressed to the following non-State actors: the World Heritage Panel of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, the World Heritage Committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the de facto authorities in Sana'a, Yemen.

29. The Working Group transmitted eight general allegations relating to obstacles in the implementation of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, to the Governments of Algeria, Brazil, China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Morocco, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia.

30. It also transmitted five other letters addressing issues related to enforced disappearances to the Governments of China, Egypt, Guatemala, Nepal and Pakistan.

D. Country visits

31. The Working Group visited Kyrgyzstan from 25 to 30 June 2019 (see A/HRC/45/13/Add.2) and Tajikistan from 1 to 5 July 2019 (see A/HRC/45/13/Add.1). The Working Group thanks the Governments of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan for their invitations and for the cooperation extended to it before, during and after the visits. It encourages these Governments to fully implement the recommendations contained in the respective country visit reports.

32. The Working Group also thanks the Governments of Iraq and Uruguay, which extended invitations to the Working Group during the reporting period to visit their countries.

33. The Working Group regrets that visits scheduled to take place in Burkina Faso and Mali during the second half of 2019, and following formal invitations by the two countries, did not materialize due to a lack of cooperation and follow-up from the two Governments during the planning phase for the visits. The Working Group hopes that, in light of the alarming reports⁴ on the deteriorating security situation in these countries, and reports of serious human rights violations including enforced or involuntary disappearances, the Governments will extend their full cooperation to the Working Group to allow the visits to take place.

34. During the reporting period, the Working Group requested visits to Brazil, Cyprus, Ghana, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

35. In addition to these new requests, the Working Group reiterated its requests, to which it has still not received a positive response, to visit Bangladesh, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, South Africa, Thailand and Zimbabwe. 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 21/4.⁵

36. The Working Group once again recalls that the Islamic Republic of Iran agreed to a visit by the Working Group in 2004, 15 years ago, which was delayed at the request of the Government. The Working Group calls upon the Government to set the dates for the visit.

37. In February 2016, the Government of South Sudan invited the Working Group to visit. However, it did not respond to a subsequent letter from the Working Group sent in April 2016, proposing two dates for a visit to the country in the last quarter of 2017. The Working Group reiterated its interest in visiting the country on 8 February 2019.

⁴ See the statements made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, to the Human Rights Council at its 44th session, on 30 June 2020, available at www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26015&LangID=E, and on 26 June 2020, available at www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26005&LangID=E.

⁵ See annex I for country visit requests and invitations extended.

E. Follow-up reports and other procedures

38. The Working Group has prepared a follow-up report on the implementation of recommendations made following its visit to Turkey. The follow-up report is contained in an addendum to the present report (A/HRC/45/13/Add.4). The Working Group encourages the Government of Turkey to implement the outstanding recommendations.

39. The Working Group notes with regret that despite an official request and several reminders, the Government of Albania did not provide a consolidated input for the preparation of the follow-up report on the implementation of recommendations made following the visit to Albania in 2016. The Working Group calls upon the Government of Albania to extend cooperation in this regard with the aim of presenting the report in 2021.

F. Press releases and statements

40. Please refer to annex IV for the full list of press releases and statements issued by the Working Group during the reporting period.

III. Decisions on individual cases taken by the Working Group and communications transmitted to the States concerned during the reporting period⁶

	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 actions	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	
Afghanistan	3						3											
Albania	1						1											
Algeria	3 253						3 253	1	1	1				1				
Angola	0						0											
Argentina	3 065						3 065											1
Azerbaijan	0						0											1
Bahrain	2						2			2								1
Bangladesh	61	3	8		2		70	1										
Belarus	3		1				4	1		1			1				1	
Bhutan	1						1											
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	28						28											
Brazil	13						13			1	1							1

⁶ Urgent actions relate to cases of enforced disappearance that have occurred within three months prior to the receipt of a report by the Working Group; or cases of enforced disappearance that have occurred prior to the three-month limit, but within one year prior to the receipt of a report by the Working Group, provided that there is a link with a case that occurred within the three-month period. Standard cases are cases of enforced disappearance that have occurred prior to the three-month limit. Prompt intervention letters concern cases of intimidation, persecution or reprisal against families of disappeared persons, witnesses, lawyers, human rights defenders or other individuals concerned with disappearances. Urgent appeals concern allegations of enforced disappearance, or allegations regarding persons deprived of liberty who are at risk of being disappeared. Allegation letters and general allegations concern alleged obstacles encountered in the implementation of the Declaration.

	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 actions	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	
Egypt ⁸	298	58	31	64	14	35	308		2	2								1
El Salvador	2 284						2 284											
Equatorial Guinea	8						8											
Eritrea	63						63											
Ethiopia	113						113											
France	1						1		1					1				
Gambia	13						13											
Ghana											1							
Greece	1						1											
Guatemala	2 897						2 897						1					1
Guinea	37						37											
Guyana	1						1											
Haiti	38						38											
Honduras	130						130											
India	414		13		1		426		1					1				
Indonesia	164						164											
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	541						541		3	2				1		1		
Iraq	16 420		3				16 423		1	1	1							
Ireland							0		1					1				

⁸ During its 119th session, the Working Group decided to transfer one case from the records of Egypt to the records of China.

	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 actions	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
Israel	3						3										
Jordan	3			1			2			1					1		
Kenya	88						88										
Kuwait	1						1										
Lao People's Democratic Republic	2						2	1					1				
Lebanon	315						315			1					1		
Libya ⁹	56	5		1			58			1							
Malaysia	2		1				3										
Maldives	1						1										
Mauritania	6						6										
Mexico	357						357	1		3					3		
Morocco	153						153				1						
Mozambique	3						3										
Myanmar	3						3		1					1			
Namibia	2						2										
Nepal ¹⁰	480						479			1		1					2

⁹ During its 120th session, the Working Group decided to transfer two cases from the records of Libya to the records of the Libyan Liberation Army. During the reporting period, a total of three cases were transmitted by the Working Group to the Libyan Liberation Army. These cases are not counted in the statistics of Libya. The Working Group stresses that the cases addressed to the Libyan Liberation 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.

¹⁰ During its 116th session, the Working Group had decided to consider one outstanding case as a duplicate.

	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 actions	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		
Nicaragua	103						103												
Nigeria	5		2				7												
Oman	1						1												
Pakistan ¹¹	731	15	105	18	20	174	813	2					1		2				
Peru	2 364						2 361												
Philippines ¹²	625		2		12	15	606	1	1										
Republic of Korea	4						4				1							1	
Russian Federation ¹³	849		19			1	867												
Rwanda	24	1					25												
Saudi Arabia	20	2		5	3	1	14		1	1	1				1		1		
Seychelles	3						3												
Singapore									1						1				
Somalia	1						1												
South Africa	2						2												
South Sudan	3						3												
Spain	6						6												

¹¹ During its 119th session, the Working Group decided to transfer one case from the records of the United Arab Emirates to the records of Pakistan.

¹² During its 120th session, the Working Group decided to consider nine outstanding cases as duplicates. The duplicate cases were consequently deleted from the records of the Working Group.

¹³ During its 119th session, the Working Group decided to consider one outstanding case as duplicate. The duplicate case was consequently deleted from the records of the Working Group.

	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 actions	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
Sri Lanka	6 030		87				6 117			1							
Sudan	177						177										
Syrian Arab Republic	375	3	110		1		487										
Tajikistan	1						1										
Thailand	79	1		4	1		75		1	1			1				
Timor-Leste	428						428										
Togo	10						10										
Tunisia	13						13			1							
Turkey	92	1	1	4	4	3	86		2	3			2	2			
Turkmenistan	6			2			4			1					1		
Uganda	15						15										
Ukraine ¹⁴	6						6										
United Arab Emirates ¹⁵	10						9										
United Republic of Tanzania							0			1							

¹⁴ During the reporting period, a total of nine cases were transmitted by the Working Group to the self-proclaimed “Donetsk People’s Republic”. These cases are not counted in the statistics of Ukraine. The Working Group stresses that the cases addressed to the self-proclaimed “Donetsk People’s Republic” 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.

¹⁵ During its 119th session, the Working Group decided to transfer one case from the records of the United Arab Emirates to the records of Pakistan.

	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 actions	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
United States of America ¹⁶	5						4			1							
Uruguay	20						20										
Uzbekistan	7						7										
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	19	10	1	2			28		1	1				1			
Viet Nam	1	2		1	1		1		1					1			
Yemen ¹⁷	16		10				26										
Zimbabwe	5						5										
State of Palestine ¹⁸	4						4										

¹⁶ During its 116th session, the Working Group had decided to transfer one case from the records of the United States of America to the records of Iraq.

¹⁷ During the reporting period, a total of five cases were transmitted by the Working Group to the de facto authorities in Sana'a. These cases are not counted in the statistics of Yemen. The Working Group stresses that the cases addressed to the de facto authorities in Sana'a 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.

¹⁸ During the reporting period, a total of four cases were transmitted by the Working Group to Hamas. These cases are not counted in the statistics of the State of Palestine. The Working Group stresses that the cases addressed to Hamas 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.

IV. Observations

41. The Working Group welcomes the ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance by Dominica, Fiji, Norway and Oman in 2019 and 2020. The Working Group further welcomes the nomination of members of the National Commission for Missing and Forcibly Disappeared Persons in Lebanon, which was established pursuant to Law No. 105, of 2018, on Missing and Forcibly Disappeared Persons. The Working Group expresses the hope that the Commission will be able to receive adequate resources to perform its mandate. The Working Group also welcomes a decision on the composition of the Commission on Missing Persons, agreed on by the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers, which is expected to ensure the effective functioning of the body in coordination with relatives of the disappeared. The Working Group also welcomes the work undertaken by the National Search Commission in Mexico, including the thorough consultation process that it has spearheaded to finalize a search protocol that recognizes and benefits from the experience and knowledge of relatives and civil society organizations, and includes their proposals for best practices.

42. The Working Group is concerned by the impact of the COVID-19 situation on enforced disappearances. It has observed that, despite the pandemic, enforced disappearances have continued in many countries. Additionally, search and investigation into disappearances has become increasingly difficult given the restrictions in place and in some cases has been suspended. The Working Group emphasizes that enforced disappearances remain prohibited in all situations and that search and investigation into cases cannot be postponed. The Working Group also received reports of disappearances in new contexts, notably during compulsory quarantine. Additionally, the Working Group is concerned by reports that in some countries, the bodies of persons who have died of COVID-19 have not been properly registered and families have been unable to identify the remains before burial. While saluting the resilience of many families of disappeared persons, the Working Group also emphasizes that they may be in a particularly precarious position and should be supported.

43. The Working Group remains concerned by the lack of engagement and cooperation from a number of countries. For instance, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues to send standard replies without substantive information on the cases transmitted.

44. The Working Group also regrets that the following States, which have cases under the humanitarian procedure that are still outstanding, have not replied in regard to any cases during the reporting period (23 May 2019 to 15 May 2020), despite receiving a reminder: Albania (1 case), Algeria (3,253 cases), Argentina (3,065 cases), Bangladesh (70 cases), Plurinational State of Bolivia (23 cases), Brazil (13 cases), Burundi (238 cases), Cambodia (1 case), Cameroon (16 cases), Central African Republic (3 cases), Chad (23 cases), Chile (785 cases), Congo (89 cases), Democratic Republic of the Congo (48 cases), Dominican Republic (2 cases), Equatorial Guinea (8 cases), Eritrea (63 cases), Ethiopia (113 cases), France (1 case), Gambia (13 cases), Greece (1 case), Guatemala (2,897 cases), Guinea (37 cases), Guyana (1 case), Haiti (38 cases), Honduras (130 cases), India (426 cases), Indonesia (164 cases), Iraq (16,423 cases), Israel (3 cases), Kenya (88 cases), Kuwait (1 case), Lao People's Democratic Republic (2 cases), Lebanon (315 cases), Mauritania (6 cases), Mexico (357 cases), Mozambique (3 cases), Myanmar (3 cases), Namibia (2 cases), Nepal (479 cases), Nicaragua (103 cases), Nigeria (7 cases), Oman (1 case), Peru (2,361 cases), Rwanda (25 cases), Seychelles (3 cases), Somalia (1 case), South Africa (2 cases), South Sudan (3 cases), Sri Lanka (6,117 cases), Sudan (177 cases), Syrian Arab Republic (485 cases), Thailand (75 cases), Timor-Leste (428 cases), Togo (10 cases), Tunisia (13 cases), Uganda (15 cases), United States of America (4 cases), Uruguay (20 cases), Yemen (26 cases) and Zimbabwe (5 cases); and State of Palestine (4 cases). The Working Group recalls that investigations into cases of enforced disappearance should continue until the fate or whereabouts of the individual or individuals concerned is established, and that, under the humanitarian procedure, the Working Group requests to be updated on the investigations being undertaken and the results. The Working Group encourages the States listed to provide updates on the outstanding cases.

45. The Working Group is concerned at the increase in the number of reported cases of disappearance allegedly perpetrated by non-State actors that exercise effective control and/or government-like functions over a territory. In this regard, the Working Group urges the aforementioned non-State actors (see para. 24 above) to immediately stop and prevent acts tantamount to enforced disappearances, and recalls the obligation to search for, locate and identify the disappeared or their remains and to return them to the relatives, with due respect for cultural customs.

46. The Working Group is deeply concerned that a number of States continue to justify extraterritorial abductions and forced returns under the pretext of combating terrorism and protecting national security. Against this backdrop, the situation in Turkey is particularly worrying, insofar as at least 100 Turkish nationals are presumed to have been forcibly repatriated from numerous States to Turkey on suspicion of involvement in or showing sympathy for a purported terrorist organization.¹⁹ The alleged involvement by the Government of China in forcible repatriations of Chinese nationals, including those belonging to the Uighur ethnic group, are equally disconcerting. It is believed that as many as 300 Uighurs have been forcibly returned to China from 16 different countries since 2004.²⁰ The Working Group received reports indicating that at least four Egyptian nationals had been expelled from Malaysia to Egypt on national security grounds.²¹ According to information received, these individuals were subjected to enforced disappearance either in the lead-up to the transfer, while in transit, or upon arrival in their countries of origin.

47. In denouncing these practices, the Working Group has underlined that States engaging in such practices may not only violate national laws that provide for fair and due process, but also their international obligations, most notably the principle of non-refoulement.²² In this context, the Working Group recalls article 8 of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which stipulates that no State shall expel, return (refouler) or extradite a person to another State where there are substantial grounds to believe that he or she would be in danger of enforced disappearance.

48. 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.

Algeria

49. The Working Group acknowledges the continued dialogue with the Government of Algeria. However, it also notes with regret that the country visit initially agreed to by the Government of Algeria in 2014 has yet to take place. The Working Group further notes with concern the repression carried out against protesters, including protesters requesting justice for violations of the past such as enforced disappearances that remain unaddressed in Algeria.²³

50. The Working Group further notes with concern that it continues to receive allegations regarding the unaddressed violations, including enforced disappearances that have been occurring in the Tindouf refugee camps, and the lack of access to justice for Saharan refugees in Algeria.²⁴

¹⁹ TUR 5/2020. This communication, and other such communications from special procedures referred to in the present report, are searchable at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/Tmsearch/TMDocuments>.

²⁰ A/HRC/WGEID/115/1, annex I, p. 20.

²¹ A/HRC/WGEID/118/1, p. 10.

²² TUR 5/2020 and ALB 1/2020.

²³ DZA 2/2020, DZA 1/2020 and DZA 2/2019.

²⁴ A/HRC/WGEID/121/1, annex I.

Bangladesh

51. The Working Group underlines its serious concern that it has been raising similar reports regarding the situation of enforced disappearance in Bangladesh for several years. It is alarmed that it continues to receive cases, many of which relate to individuals linked to opposition political parties, and by the apparent impunity for the practice in the country. It is further concerned by the complete lack of engagement from the State.

52. On 12 March 2013, the Working Group requested an invitation to visit the country. No response has yet been received from the Government in spite of multiple reminders. The Working Group hopes that a positive reply will be received soon.

Brazil

53. The Working Group remains concerned at renewed public remarks made by members of the Government at the highest level, denying the existence of a military dictatorship in Brazil between 1964 and 1985, or assessing positively the events that occurred during this period, as well as at allegations concerning interference with the work of existing transitional justice mechanisms (BRA 4/2020). The Working Group has also expressed concerns about the alleged regressions in State public policies to address the enforced disappearances that occurred in Brazil during the military dictatorship, particularly as regards the search for victims, through a general allegation transmitted on 31 October 2019 (A/HRC/WGEID/119/1, para. 23 and annex I), to which the Government of Brazil replied on 29 January 2020 (A/HRC/WGEID/121/1, para. 38 and annex III).

54. While thanking the Government for its thorough reply, the Working Group remains concerned at narratives and actions that undermine existing efforts to memorialize the country's abusive past and provide recognition to victims and their families. In this sense, the Working Group recalls its general comment on the right to the truth in relation to enforced disappearance, which reiterates that the right to the truth is both a collective and an individual right. Each victim has the right to know the truth about violations that affected him or her, but the truth also has to be told at the level of society as a "vital safeguard against the recurrence of violations", as stated in principle 2 of the updated set of principles for the protection and promotion of human rights through action to combat impunity (see E/CN.4/2005/102/Add.1).

55. The Working Group invites the Government of Brazil to consider responding positively to the visit request sent by the Working Group on 8 April 2020 (see annex III). A country visit would allow the Working Group to examine in situ questions relating to its mandate, to advise on the implementation of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and to make constructive and concrete recommendations thereon.

Burundi

56. The Working Group regrets that despite its continued transmission of cases of enforced disappearance to the Government of Burundi – 117 cases²⁵ during the reporting period (A/HRC/WGEID/116/1, para. 36; A/HRC/WGEID/117/1, paras. 27–28; and A/HRC/WGEID/118/1, paras. 27–28) – it has not received any information on the cases from the country concerned. The Working Group has noted in its post-session reports a number of patterns regarding the profiles of the alleged victims and the circumstances of the disappearances. The Working Group noted that a large number of the alleged disappearances occurred in the context of the protests against the third term of the former President, Pierre Nkurunziza. It further noted a widespread fear of reprisals, preventing the formal reporting and registration of enforced disappearances. Allegations were received

²⁵ A/HRC/WGEID/119/1, paras. 24–25; A/HRC/WGEID/120/1, paras. 28–33; and A/HRC/WGEID/121/1, paras. 39–40.

about the killings of individuals searching for their disappeared relatives. The Working Group also noted allegations made as to the existence of secret detention facilities, and the frequent reporting of cooperation between security forces and the “Imbonerakure” youth wing of the ruling party in perpetrating disappearances. In several reported cases, the alleged perpetrators were identified by name and rank.

57. In light of the election of a new president in Burundi, the Working Group hopes that efforts will be undertaken by the Government to investigate cases of enforced disappearance and that Burundi will extend its cooperation to the Working Group. The Working Group echoes the call of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi requesting the new President of the Republic to “demonstrate his willingness for change regarding human rights issues by fully cooperating with the international human rights mechanisms”.²⁶

58. The Working Group reiterates its support for the decision of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, on 25 October 2017, to open an investigation into the situation in Burundi, including on cases of enforced disappearance.²⁷ At the same time, it fully endorses the recommendation 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 (A/HRC/39/63, para. 85 (c)).

China

59. The Working Group continues to be concerned at the situation of Uighurs in detention in a number of facilities in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, in conditions that appear to amount to enforced disappearances.²⁸ The Working Group has also raised concerns over the *liuzhi* system, which allows members of the Communist Party of China or employees of organizations involved in public affairs to be detained for up to six months at a secret location with no contact with their family members and no appeal (A/HRC/WGEID/119/1, annex I, paras. 12–15), as well as by the continued use of residential surveillance in a designated location. The Working Group 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.

60. 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 reminders sent on 27 October 2014, 27 November 2015, 18 November 2016, 19 January 2018, 18 January 2019 and 11 March 2020. The Working Group hopes that a positive reply will be received soon.

Egypt

61. During the reporting period, the Working Group continued to review allegations of enforced disappearance concerning Egypt and to transmit them to the Government. Eighty-nine new cases were transmitted, while 64 cases were clarified. As regards the cases that were clarified, 60 persons were confirmed to be in detention, and 1 person, Mahmoud Ghareeb Mahmoud Qassim, was confirmed to have been killed. The Working Group notes that a majority of the clarified cases concern individuals who reappear in detention following several weeks of enforced disappearance. The Working Group has received allegations regarding the reappearance of victims before the prosecutor after having been subjected to torture during the period of enforced disappearance. The Working Group

²⁶ See the oral briefing of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, held in Geneva on 14 July 2020, available at www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26087&LangID=E.

²⁷ No. ICC-01/17-X, 25 October 2017, para. 117.

²⁸ A/HRC/39/46, para. 88.

reiterates concerns expressed as to the lack of investigations of enforced disappearances, and allegations of torture, including in instances where victims have informed prosecutors that they were subjected to enforced disappearance and torture.²⁹

62. The Working Group has continued to receive allegations of the enforced disappearance of persons who have received a court decision ordering their release. Such disappearances are reportedly occurring at police stations: national security officers have allegedly removed individuals expecting to be released from such police stations and have taken them to undisclosed locations without providing any formal information as to their fate. The Working Group has also noticed discrepancies between the information provided by the Government confirming the release of individuals and the actual release date confirmed by sources. In this regard, the Working Group recalls the provisions of article 11 of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which require that all persons deprived of liberty be released in a manner permitting reliable verification that they have actually been released, and, furthermore, that they have been released in conditions in which their physical integrity and ability to fully exercise their rights are assured.

63. The Working Group remains deeply concerned about alarming reports of reprisals against human rights defenders. During the reporting period, the Working Group transmitted, with other special procedures, communications³⁰ to the Government of Egypt regarding the arrest, disappearance, and detention and prosecution under terrorism-related charges of human rights defenders. The Working Group continues to condemn the ongoing detention of Ibrahim Abdelmonem Metwally Hegazy in reprisal for his activities as a human rights defender and cooperation with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. The Working Group calls on the Government of Egypt to immediately halt the pretrial detention of Mr. Metwally, which began on 10 September 2017 and was found to be arbitrary by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention which adopted an opinion on the matter on 14 August 2019.³¹ The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances draws the attention of the public to the information that Mr. Metwally allegedly was arrested, arbitrarily detained, disappeared for two days during which he was reportedly tortured, initially denied access to his defence lawyer, and refused family visits, in retaliation for his activities as a human rights defender documenting cases of enforced disappearance, including that of his own son, in Egypt. He was allegedly arrested while at the airport travelling to Geneva to meet with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and attend a session of the Human Rights Council.

64. The Working Group notes that as part of the third universal periodic review of Egypt, in November 2019, several recommendations were made with regard to addressing enforced disappearances in the country. The Working Group fully supports the recommendation made to Egypt to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

65. The Working Group encourages Egypt to continue extending its cooperation. It also calls on the Government of Egypt to investigate reported cases of enforced and involuntary disappearance and bring those responsible to justice, including in cases in which the fate and whereabouts of the person has been clarified, and provide remedy and reparation to the victims.

India

66. The Working Group is seriously concerned by the complete lack of progress on cases of enforced disappearance in Jammu and Kashmir. This has been compounded by the closure of the Jammu and Kashmir State Human Rights Commission in 2019, which had been working on several hundred cases of disappearance as well as on the matter of unmarked and mass graves. The Working Group emphasizes that investigations should

²⁹ EGY 4/2020; and A/HRC/WG.6/34/EGY/2, para. 15.

³⁰ EGY 7/2019, EGY 12/2019 and EGY 6/2020.

³¹ Working Group on Arbitrary Detention opinion No. 41/2019; and EGY 12/2019.

continue for as long as the fate of the victim of enforced disappearance remains unclarified (art. 13 of the Declaration), and that enforced disappearance is a continuing offence (art. 17 of the Declaration).

67. The Working Group also hopes that the Government, having issued a standing invitation to special procedures in 2011, will soon reply positively to the country visit request, transmitted on 16 August 2010, and the subsequent reminders that it has sent.

Libya

68. The Working Group is worried at reports of ongoing serious human rights violations occurring in Libya, in complete impunity, including summary executions, enforced disappearances, torture and gender-based violence.³²

69. The Working Group is extremely concerned by the situation described by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya: an increase in abductions and enforced disappearances by armed groups in towns and cities across the country conducted with total impunity.³³ In this regard, during the reporting period the Working Group transmitted to the Libyan National Army under the command of Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar four cases tantamount to enforced disappearance. Among them is the case of Siham Sergewa, an elected member of the House of Representatives who was abducted from her home in Benghazi on 17 July 2019. The Working Group also transmitted cases regarding disappearances reportedly perpetrated by armed militia with alleged ties with the Government of National Accord.

70. The Working Group welcomes the Human Rights Council resolution requesting the establishment and dispatch of a fact-finding mission to Libya to establish the facts and circumstances of the situation of human rights throughout Libya, and to collect and review relevant information to document alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law by all parties in Libya.³⁴

Mexico

71. During the reporting period, the Working Group transmitted, jointly with other special procedure mandate holders, letters concerning the lack of significant progress in the investigation of cases of enforced disappearance, including allegations of obstruction of justice by State institutions and even acts of threat and intimidation against relatives.³⁵ The Working Group recalls article 13 of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which establishes, inter alia, the right of victims of enforced disappearance to complain to a competent and independent State authority and to have that complaint promptly, thoroughly and impartially investigated (art. 13-1). Steps must be taken to ensure that all involved in the investigation, including the complainant, counsel, witnesses and those conducting the investigation, are protected against ill-treatment, intimidation or reprisal (art. 13-3). Steps must also be taken to ensure that any ill-treatment, intimidation or reprisal or any other form of interference is appropriately punished (art. 13-5). Furthermore, investigations should be conducted for as long as the fate of the victim of enforced disappearance remains unclarified (art. 13-6).

72. On 9 October 2019, the Working Group also transmitted, jointly with other special procedure mandate holders, a communication concerning the discussions in the Mexican Supreme Court of a draft judgment regarding the right of victims and relatives to access the

³² See the oral update of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Libya pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 40/27, of 18 June 2020, available at www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25973&LangID=E.

³³ See <https://unsmil.unmissions.org/unsmil-expresses-concern-about-increased-enforced-disappearances-libya>.

³⁴ Human Rights Council resolution 43/39.

³⁵ MEX 14/2019 and MEX 1/2020.

files of cases of enforced disappearance that they have pursued through the justice system.³⁶ The Working Group is grateful for the reply transmitted by the Government of Mexico on 30 January 2020,³⁷ and welcomes the decision of the Supreme Court to uphold the right of victims, including the relatives of disappeared migrants, to participate in the investigations. In this regard, the Working Group highlights the guiding principles for the search for disappeared persons (CED/C/7), issued in 2019 by the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, in particular principles 4, 5 and 9.

73. The Working Group also welcomes the progress made in the investigation of the Ayotzinapa case in Mexico, including the establishment of a special unit for this case within the National Prosecutor's Office in June 2019, and the ensuing prosecution of high-level officials in March 2020 for crimes of torture, enforced disappearance, and obstruction of justice. The recent identification of the remains of Christian Alfonso Rodríguez Telumbre, one of the 43 missing students, is also an important step towards learning the truth about the fate and whereabouts of the victims, as well as in recognizing the serious flaws and human rights violations in the original investigations of the case. The Working Group hopes that the Government will continue providing the victims and their families the much-needed answers and concrete results, in their search for truth and justice.

Myanmar

74. The Working Group continues to be concerned at the scale of enforced disappearances in Myanmar, as also indicated by the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar (A/HRC/39/64, paras. 2, 63 and 88; and A/HRC/42/50, para. 57),³⁸ and at the lack of any apparent efforts to address this. The Working Group emphasizes that, as provided in article 2 of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, no State shall practise, permit or tolerate enforced disappearances, and that, according to article 7 of the Declaration, no circumstances whatsoever may be invoked to justify enforced disappearances.

75. 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 northern Rakhine State (A/HRC/WGEID/112/1, paras. 72–73) and requests that a reply be provided soon.

Nepal

76. The Working Group expresses concern that despite commitments made by the Government to broad-based consultations with victim groups and civil society, consultations held in early 2020 on the amendment of the Act on the Commission on Investigation of Disappeared Persons, Truth and Reconciliation 2071 were rushed and inadequate. It also notes that the members of the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons and of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were reappointed in February 2020 without the Act being first amended. The Working Group welcomes the decision of the Supreme Court in April 2020 to reject a petition seeking to overturn its earlier decision which stated that there could be no amnesties for serious human rights violations. The Working Group hopes that the Government will implement the Supreme Court's rulings and proceed to amend the Act following a fair, transparent and consultative process.

77. The Working Group additionally calls upon the Government to ensure that the legal provisions in the Penal Code criminalizing enforced disappearance meet international standards and to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from

³⁶ MEX 12/2019.

³⁷ Available at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=35139>.

³⁸ See also A/HRC/42/CRP.5, paras. 513–515 and 630, available from www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/session42/Pages/ListReports.aspx.

Enforced Disappearance without delay. The Working Group reiterates its request to visit Nepal and hopes to receive a positive reply soon.

Pakistan

78. The Working Group appreciates the cooperation of the Government of Pakistan, demonstrated by the fruitful meetings held with the Working Group during the reporting period and the high number of replies sent on individual cases. The Working Group remains concerned, however, as it unceasingly continues to receive allegations of enforced disappearances in Pakistan (A/HRC/WGEID/119/1, paras. 75–76; A/HRC/WGEID/120/1, paras. 105–106; and A/HRC/WGEID/121/1, paras. 97–98).

79. Furthermore, in December 2019, the Working Group transmitted, jointly with other special procedure mandate holders, a letter concerning the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Actions (In Aid of Civil Power) Ordinance of 2019 and the assignation of wide-ranging powers to the armed forces.³⁹ While the promulgation of the Ordinance was allegedly prompted by the need to combat terrorism and other serious crimes, the Working Group is profoundly concerned that its implementation has led to miscarriages of justice and a number of human rights violations, including enforced disappearances.

80. While thanking the Government for its cooperation, the Working Group emphasizes that the allegations received are very serious. It reiterates the importance of respecting the provisions of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, in particular that:

- (a) No State shall practise, permit or tolerate enforced disappearances (art. 2);
- (b) No circumstances whatsoever may be invoked to justify enforced disappearances (art. 7);
- (c) Accurate information on the detention of persons deprived of liberty and their place or places of detention, including transfers, shall 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));
- (d) Steps shall be taken to ensure that all involved in the investigation, including the complainant, counsel, witnesses and those conducting the investigation, are protected against ill-treatment, intimidation or reprisal (art. 13 (3)).

81. The Working Group invites 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 report (A/HRC/33/51/Add.7, para. 38) and reiterated in several communications (see annex III). A follow-up country visit would allow the Working Group to examine in situ questions relating to its mandate, to advise on the implementation of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and to make constructive and concrete recommendations thereon.

Sri Lanka

82. The Working Group is concerned by the deteriorating civil society space in Sri Lanka and emphasizes that relatives of forcibly disappeared individuals as well as others such as witnesses and defence counsels should be protected against any form of intimidation, harassment or ill-treatment, and that the Government has the duty to guarantee the right to form and participate freely in organizations and associations concerned with attempting to establish the circumstances of enforced disappearances and the fate of disappeared persons and to assist victims of enforced disappearances (art. 13 of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and arts. 12 and

³⁹ PAK 10/2019.

24 of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance).

Syrian Arab Republic

83. The Working Group continues to observe that enforced disappearances are perpetrated unabatedly with impunity throughout the Syrian Arab Republic in clear violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. In this regard, the Working Group has assessed that the sheer scale and pattern of these violations may amount to crimes against humanity (A/HRC/WGEID/120/1, paras. 140–141). It is particularly alarmed by multiple reports of several members of the same family being subjected to enforced disappearance, including minors as young as 7 years old. Concerning disappearances of women and girls, the Working Group recalls its general comment on women affected by enforced disappearances (A/HRC/WGEID/98/2), in which it stresses, *inter alia*, the differentiated effects of enforced disappearances in women and girls. In particular, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic must acknowledge disappeared women and girls, and recognize the particular types of harm that they suffer based on their gender, including instances of sexual violence and forced impregnation, and the resulting psychological damage and social stigma as well as the disruption of family structures.

84. The Working Group reiterates its call to the Security Council to consider referring the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic to the International Criminal Court.⁴⁰ The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic must ensure full transparency and accountability in relation to persons in its custody, account for their fate and whereabouts to relatives, and ensure that due process and fair trial rights are respected and protected. All persons in detention should be promptly informed of any charges against them and they should be brought promptly before a judge. In regard to persons who have died while in custody, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic should facilitate prompt, effective, thorough and transparent investigations to establish the cause and circumstances of such deaths, and if it is found that such deaths resulted from criminal acts, the perpetrators must be brought to justice. Victims, including families, have the right to redress, including the right to truth, reparations and justice.

85. Similarly, the Working Group strongly urges the Government to grant the OHCHR office for the Syrian Arab Republic full, safe and unimpeded access to the country.

86. During the reporting period, the Working Group received reports of disappearances of persons including women and children perpetrated by various armed groups, including those affiliated with the Turkish armed forces. Alarmed by these patterns, the Working Group calls on all non-State actors exercising effective control over parts of the Syrian territory and States backing them to stop and prevent disappearances, in full compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

87. 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

88. Detailed observations are outlined in the follow-up report on Turkey, which is contained in an addendum to the present report (A/HRC/45/13/Add.4).

Turkmenistan

89. The reporting period witnessed increased engagement between the Government of Turkmenistan and the Working Group. The Government provided information on the fate

⁴⁰ A/HRC/27/49, para. 99; and A/HRC/33/51, para. 103.

and the whereabouts of two individuals, which led to the clarification of two cases. This is a welcome development, but the Government is requested to provide information on all outstanding cases pertaining to disappearances from the early 2000s. The Government of Turkmenistan also requested technical assistance from the Working Group, which was envisaged to be delivered during a technical visit to the country. The technical visit is expected to pave the way for a full-fledged country visit, during which the Working Group would be able to assess in situ the progress of Turkmenistan in eradicating enforced disappearances and protecting the rights of victims and their relatives to truth, justice, reparations and memory.

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

90. The Working Group appreciates the cooperation of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, demonstrated by the fruitful meetings held with the Working Group during the reporting period, including the workshop on enforced disappearances held in May 2020 in the framework of the Letter of Understanding between OHCHR and the Government.

91. The Working Group remains concerned, however, as it continues to receive allegations of enforced disappearance, including instances of short-term enforced disappearance perpetrated in the context of the arrest of political opponents (A/HRC/WGEID/119/1, paras. 123–124; A/HRC/WGEID/120/1, paras. 163–167; and A/HRC/WGEID/121/1, para. 138). In this context, the Working Group reminds the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela that no enforced disappearance is acceptable, no matter how short its duration, and that accurate information on the status of any person deprived of his or her liberty and the place of detention should be made available promptly to family members and legal counsels.

92. The Working Group invites the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to consider responding positively to the visit request sent by the Working Group on 28 November 2019, and reiterated on 6 April 2020 (see annex III). A country visit would allow the Working Group to examine in situ questions relating to its mandate, to advise on the implementation of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and to make constructive and concrete recommendations thereon.

Yemen

93. The Working Group is alarmed by reports according to which hundreds of civilians have been subjected to enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture in secret detention sites across Yemen. The reports received suggest that these detention sites have been administered by the Government of Yemen, the coalition forces or the de facto authorities in Sana'a. All parties to the conflict are reported to have dismissed complaints lodged by relatives of the disappeared aimed at obtaining information on their fate and their whereabouts. It is feared that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic will further exacerbate an already dire situation throughout the country. The Working Group therefore urges all parties to the conflict to stop and prevent disappearances, disclose information on the fate and the whereabouts of the disappeared, release those arbitrarily detained, conduct transparent, independent and effective investigations into these abuses, with a particular emphasis on the reported deaths in custody, hold the perpetrators accountable and provide redress to the families of the disappeared.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

94. **The Working Group notes with concern that enforced disappearances have continued and new contexts have arisen during the COVID-19 pandemic. It emphasizes that enforced disappearances remain prohibited in all circumstances and that the obligation to investigate cases cannot be postponed. It also underlines that procedural guarantees apply to all places of deprivation of liberty, including**

compulsory quarantine centres, and that care should be taken to ensure that the bodies of the deceased are properly registered, that families are able to identify them and that the remains are dealt with in line with their own tradition, religion or culture. Additionally, families of the disappeared, who may be in a particularly precarious position, should be supported.

95. 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 too often have not been able to lodge complaints or to have access to proper remedies, including effective independent investigations of such disappearances. Worse are the continued reports of reprisals faced by families of victims and the human rights defenders and organizations supporting them.

96. The Working Group also continued to receive information about the adoption of regressive legislation and measures in the area of truth, justice and reparations, which do not allow for individuals, families and entire societies to access their rights to truth. These obstacles to truth and justice have also favoured widespread impunity for grave human rights violations such as enforced disappearances.

97. The Working Group also observes that enforced disappearances have occurred in transnational contexts with pervasive impunity. Under the guise of combating terrorism, some States have deepened security cooperation with the aim of facilitating forced returns of targeted individuals, which has often placed them outside the protection of the law. The Working Group maintains 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. Procedural safeguards upon arrest and during the first hours of deprivation of liberty remain essential in order to prevent possible violations. These safeguards include immediate registration, judicial oversight of the detention, notification of family members as soon as an individual is deprived of liberty, the hiring of a defence lawyer of one's choice, and lawyer-client privilege.

98. Furthermore, States are reminded of the obligation to carry out comprehensive individual assessments to determine whether these individuals may face risks to their rights upon return to their countries of origin and what those risks may be. Institutional oversight mechanisms should guarantee that this happens in an independent, impartial and fair manner. With a view to tackling impunity, States are obliged to conduct independent and effective investigations into possible violations and to provide 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-recurrence.

99. As the Working Group marks 40 years of existence in 2020, it calls upon the international community to remobilize around the fight against enforced disappearances and to show commitment to ending this practice. It also 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, and inter-State complaints under article 32, of the Convention.

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)
Ghana	Last quarter of 2021
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	tbd
Libya	tbd, postponed
Mali	26 August–3 September 2019 (did not take place)
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
Cyprus	20 April 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
Ghana	8 April 2020	-
Guatemala	30 May 2018	6 April 2020
India	16 August 2010	26 February 2020
Indonesia	12 December 2006	12 March 2020

Visits requested by the WGEID

<i>Country</i>	<i>Request sent</i>	<i>Last reminder sent</i>
Kenya	19 February 2013	8 April 2020
Lao PDR	6 May 2020	
Lebanon	27 November 2015	18 January 2019
Nepal	12 May 2006	11 March 2020
Nicaragua	23 May 2006	3 April 2020
Nigeria	23 January 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
Uruguay	3 April 2020	-
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 2019, 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	3		3										
Albania	1		1										
Algeria	3 253	20	3 282	23	9	20	11	10	8			Yes (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	2		20		3	15	3	15				Yes (2014/2018)	Yes (2014); No (2018)
Bangladesh	70	1	77	2	1	6	3	4				Yes (2011, 2017, 2019)	No
Belarus	4		4										
Bhutan	1		1										
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	28	3	48	3	19	1	19		1				
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1		1									Yes (2009/2011/2014)	Yes
Brazil	13		63	4	46	4	1		49			Yes (2019)	Yes
Bulgaria	0		3		3				3				
Burkina Faso	0		3		3				3				
Burundi	238	5	239	5		1	1					Yes (2018)	

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									
Cambodia	1		3							2			
Cameroon	16		21		5		4	1				Yes (2016)	No
Central African Republic	3		3									Yes (2013)	No
Chad	23		34		3	8	9	1	1				
Chile	785	63	908	65	101	22	2		121				
China	98	27	214	42	90	26	76	38	2			Yes (2010/2011/2018/2019)	Yes; No (2018/2019)
Colombia	943	96	1 286	126	275	68	160	24	159			Yes (2012/2013/2015/2016/2017)	No (2017)
Congo	89	3	91	3						2			
Cuba	0		1		1			1					
Czech Republic	0		0									Yes (2009)	Yes
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	316	48	316	48									
Democratic Republic of the Congo	48	11	58	11	6	4	10					Yes (2015, 2019)	Yes; No (2019)
Denmark	0		1			1		1				Yes (2009)	No
Djibouti	0		1			1							
Dominican Republic	2		5		2		2			1			
Ecuador	5		27	2	18	4	12	4	6				
Egypt	308	10	827	10	357	161	115	381	21	1		Yes (2011/2016/2017)	Yes; No (2017)
El Salvador	2 284	296	2 675	333	318	73	196	175	20			Yes (2015/2015)	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									
Equatorial Guinea	8		8										
Eritrea	63	4	63	4								Yes (2012/2017)	No
Ethiopia	113	1	120	2	3	4	2	5					
France	1		1										
Gambia	13	2	21	2		8	8						
Ghana	0		0										
Georgia	0		1		1				1				
Greece	1		3							2			
Guatemala	2 897	372	3 154	390	177	80	187	6	64			Yes (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	426	10	507	13	68	13	51	8	22			Yes (2009/2011/2013/2019)	No
Indonesia	164	6	168	3	3	1	3	1				Yes (2011/2013/2017)	No
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	541	103	565	103	19	5	10	4	10			Yes (2017)	No
Iraq	16 423	2 300	16 571	2 317	117	31	122	17	9			Yes (2020)	
Ireland	0		0									Yes (2009)	No
Israel	3		4			1			1				
Japan	0		0	3									
Jordan	2		8		1	5	3	3					
Kazakhstan	0		2			2		2					
Kenya	88	1	88									Yes (2011/2014/2016/2017)	No

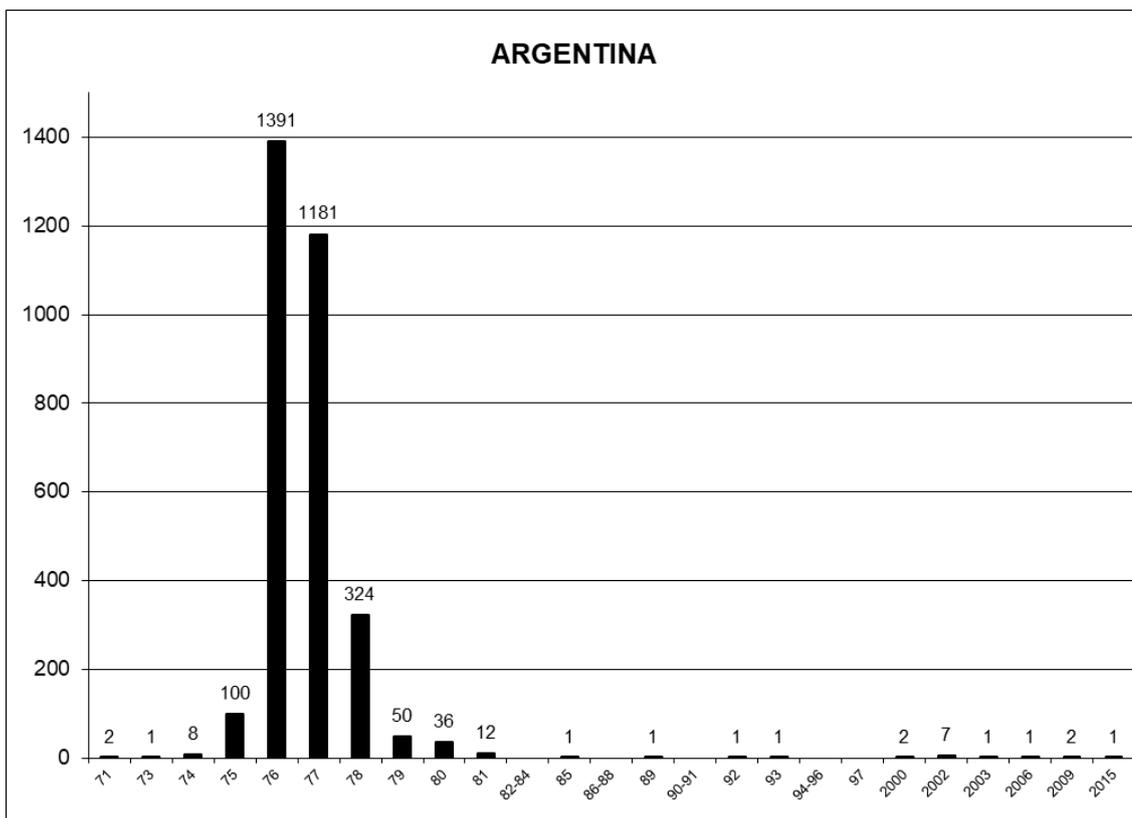
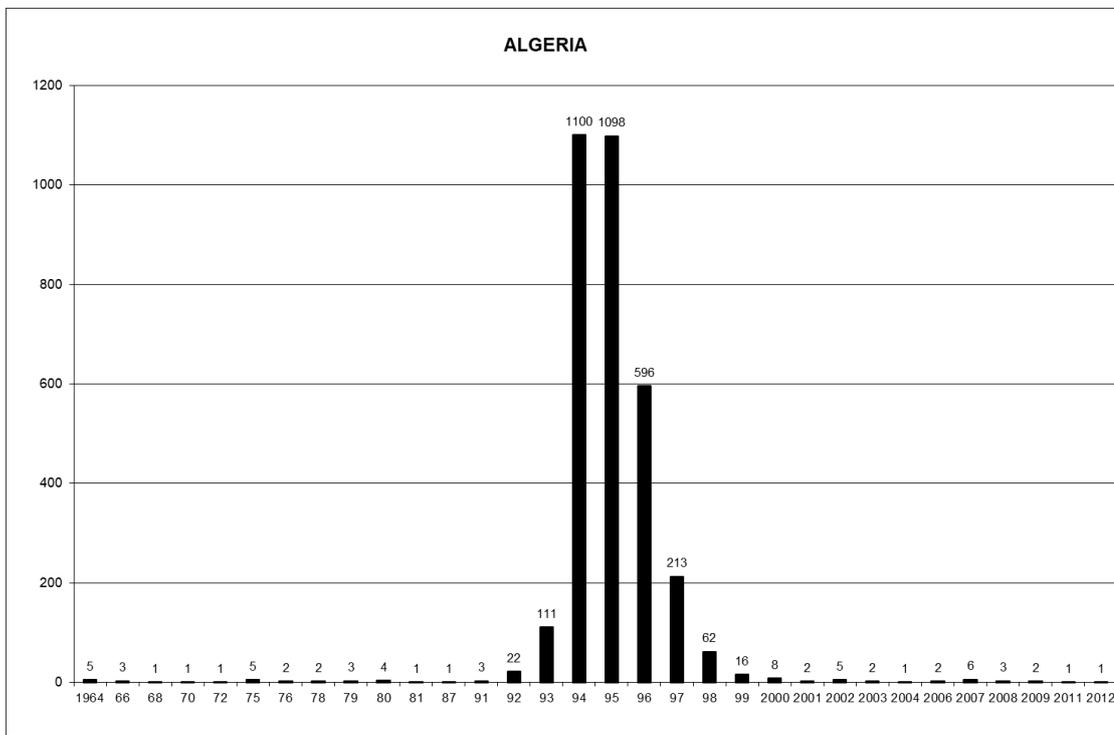
States/entities	Cases transmitted to the Government				Cases clarified by:		Status of person at date of clarification				General Allegation		
	Outstanding cases		Total		Government	Sources	At liberty	In detention	Dead	Discontinued cases	Closed cases	GA sent	Response
	Cases	Female	Cases	Female									
Kuwait	1		3			1				1			
Lao People's Democratic Republic	2	1	11	2		8		7	1	1			
Lebanon	315	19	324	19	2	7	8	1					
Libya	58		72	1		12	7	4	1	2	Yes (2014/2018)	No	
Lithuania	0		0								Yes (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	Yes (2013/2014/2017/2017/2017)	No (2014 and one of 2017)	
Montenegro	0		16	1	1			1		14	1		
Morocco	153	9	409	31	170	53	141	16	74	33	Yes (2013, 2020)	Yes	
Mozambique	3		3										
Myanmar	3	1	10	6	7		5	2			Yes (2017)	No	
Namibia	2		3			1	1						
Nepal	479	60	693	73	135	79	153	60	1				
Nicaragua	103	2	234	4	112	19	45	11	75				
Nigeria	7	2	17		6	4	10				Yes (2020)		
Oman	1		2			1	1						
Pakistan	813	9	1 264	10	335	116	288	138	25		Yes (2015, 2017, 2019)	No (2017); Yes (2019)	
Paraguay	0		23		20		19		1	3	Yes (2014)	Yes	
Peru	2 361	236	3 003	311	254	388	450	85	107				
Philippines	606	74	779	94	126	47	122	19	32		Yes (2009/2012)	No	

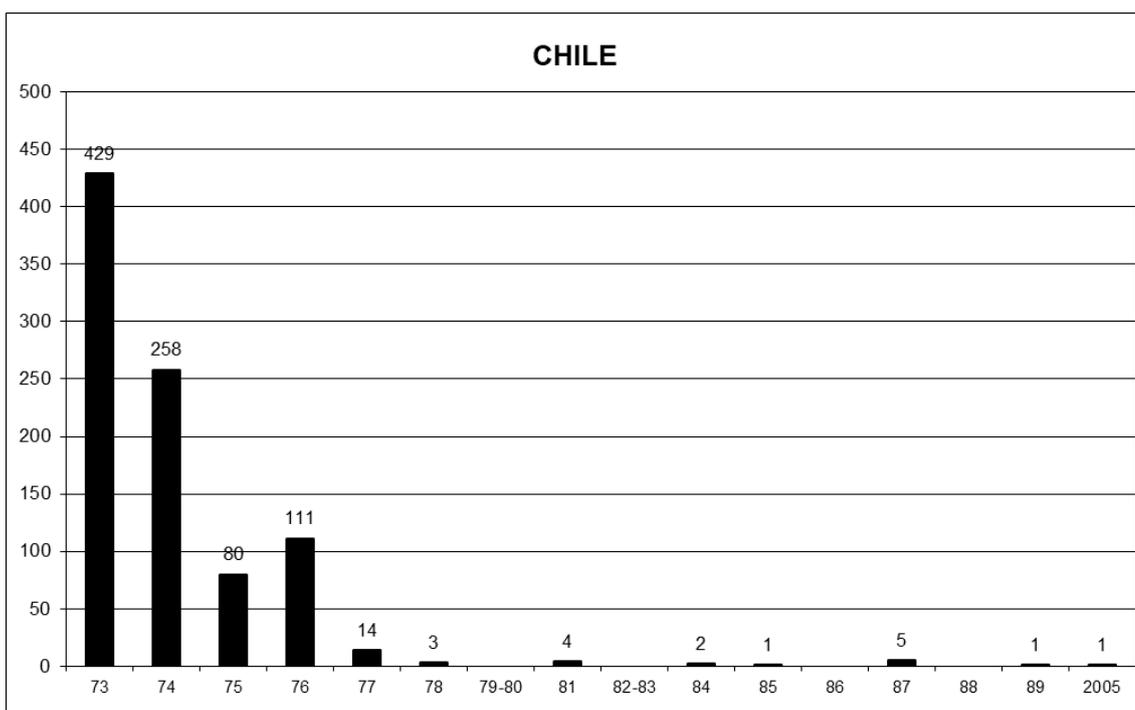
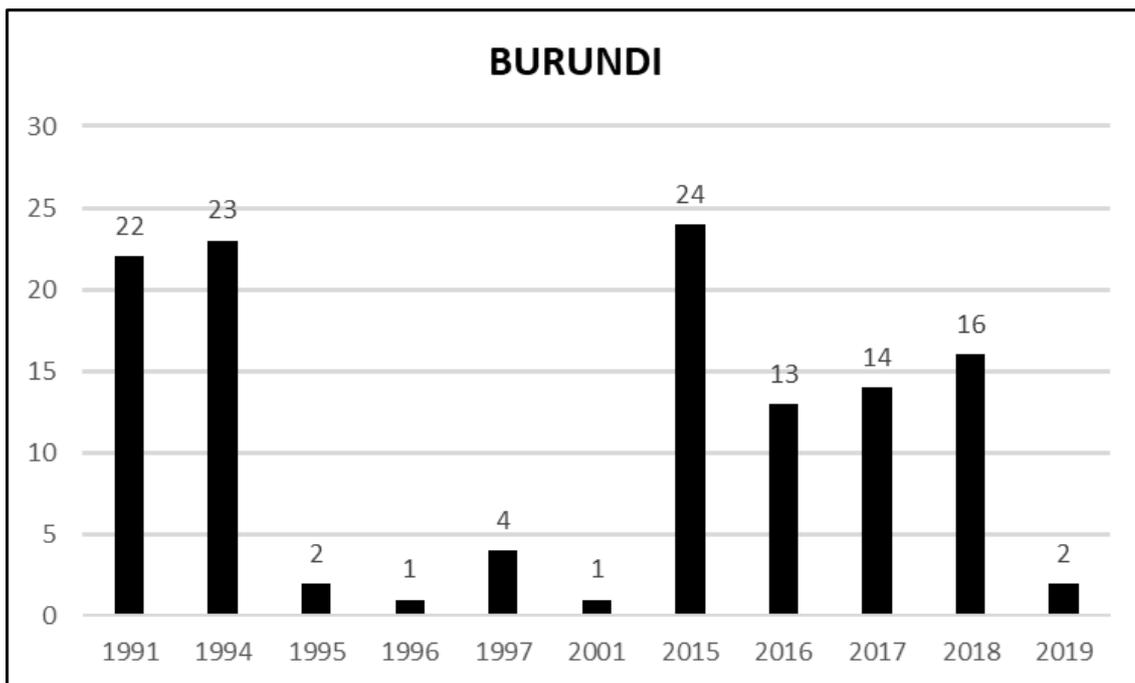
States/entities	Cases transmitted to the Government				Cases clarified by:		Status of person at date of clarification					General Allegation	
	Outstanding cases		Total		Government	Sources	At liberty	In detention	Dead	Discontinued cases	Closed cases	GA sent	Response
	Cases	Female	Cases	Female									
Republic of Korea	0		1		1		1						
Romania	4		4										
Russian Federation	867	39	880	40	2	11	12	1				Yes (2016, 2018)	No (2018)
Rwanda	25	3	28	2		2	1	1		1			
Saudi Arabia	14	1	43		10	17	8	20	1	2		Yes (2020)	
Serbia	0		1		1		1						
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			Yes (2014)	Yes
Sri Lanka	6 117	162	12 708	232	6 551	40	118	27	6 446			Yes (2011/2014)	Yes
Sudan	177	5	394	37	206	11	214	3					
Switzerland	0		1		1			1					
Syrian Arab Republic	485	31	546	36	17	44	31	23	7			Yes (2) (2011); 2019	Yes (2011); No (2019)
Tajikistan	1		8		5	2	1		6				
Thailand	75	9	91	8	7	1	4	1	3	8		Yes (2008, 2018)	No
North Macedonia	0		0									Yes (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	86	3	234	14	89	58	76	33	34	1			
Turkmenistan	4		9		5			4	1			Yes (2018)	No

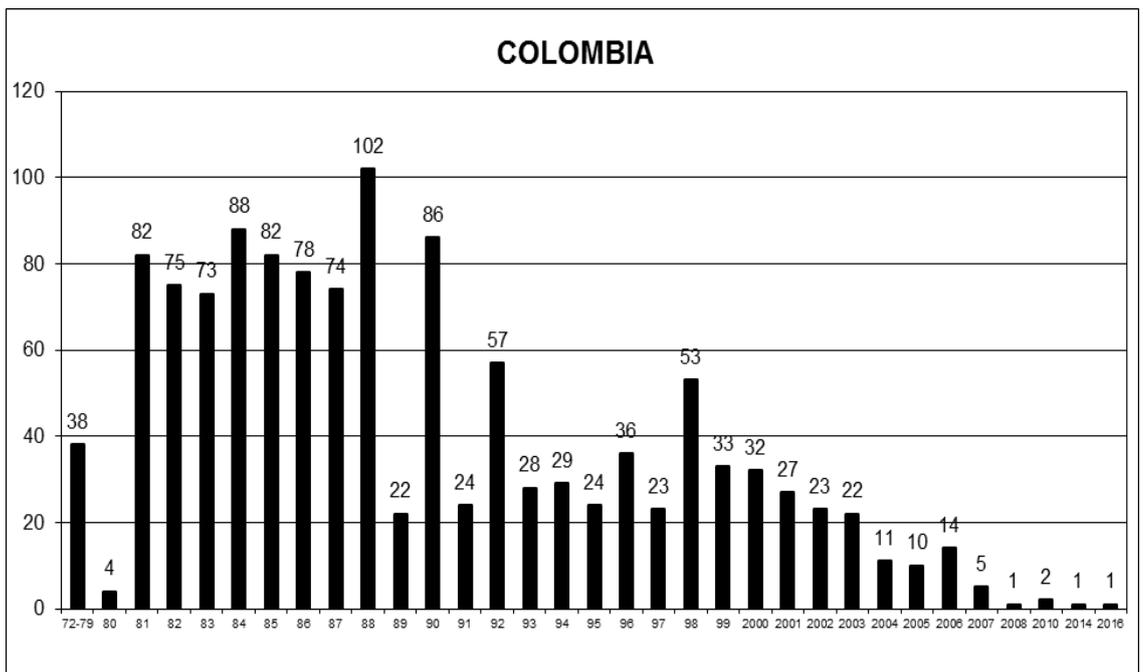
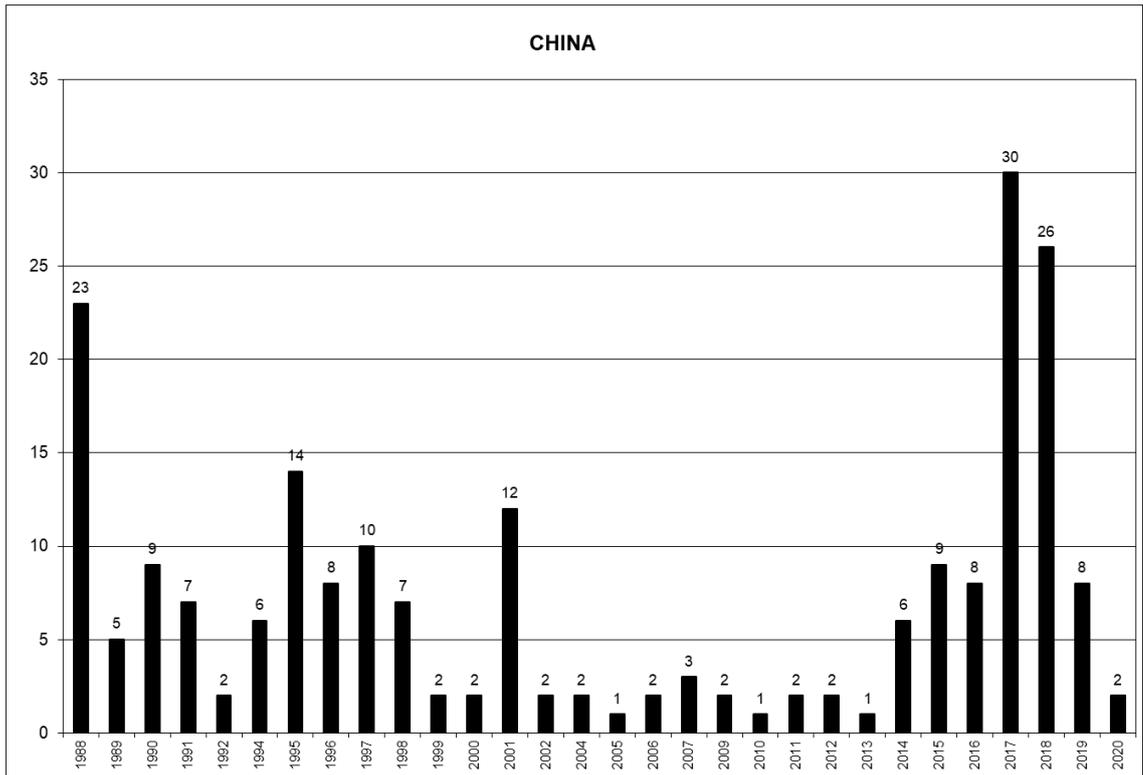
States/entities	Cases transmitted to the Government				Cases clarified by:		Status of person at date of clarification					General Allegation	
	Outstanding cases		Total		Government	Sources	At liberty	In detention	Dead	Discontinued cases	Closed cases	GA sent	Response
	Cases	Female	Cases	Female									
Uganda	15	2	22	4	2	5	2	5					
Ukraine	6		13		3	1	2		2	3			
United Arab Emirates	9	1	47	5	8	30	10	28					
United Republic of Tanzania	0		2		2			2					
United States of America	4		5		1		1				Yes (2019)	No	
Uruguay	20	2	34	7	13	1	5	4	5		Yes (2013/2015/2018)	No (2018)	
Uzbekistan	7		20		12	1	2	11					
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	28	2	35	3	6	1	1	3	3		Yes (2019)	No	
Viet Nam	1	1	5	1	3	1	2	2					
Yemen	26		184		135	9	66	5	73	14			
Zambia	0		1	1		1		1					
Zimbabwe	5	1	7	1	1	1	1		1		Yes (2009)	No	
State of Palestine	4	1	5	1		1	1						

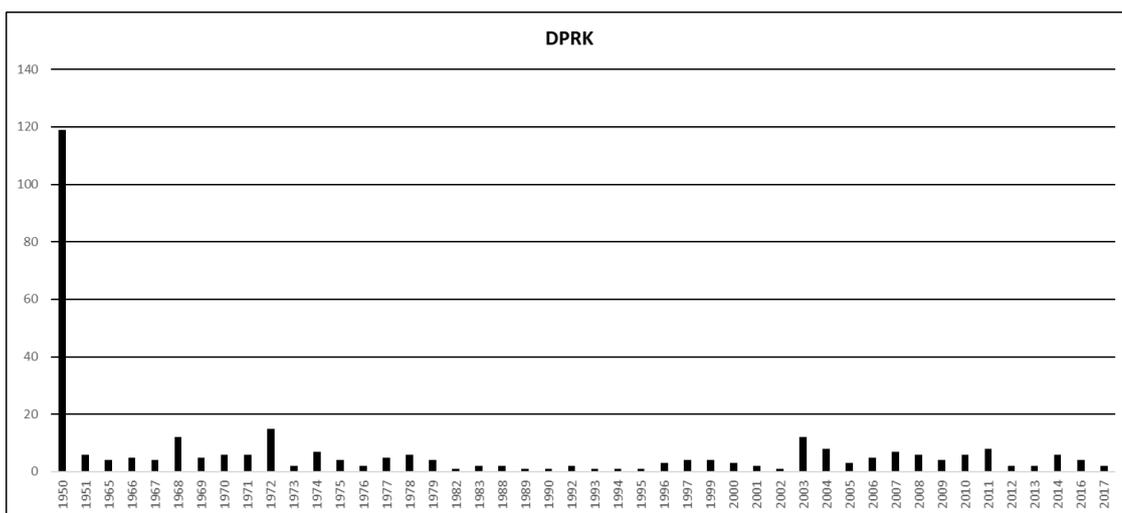
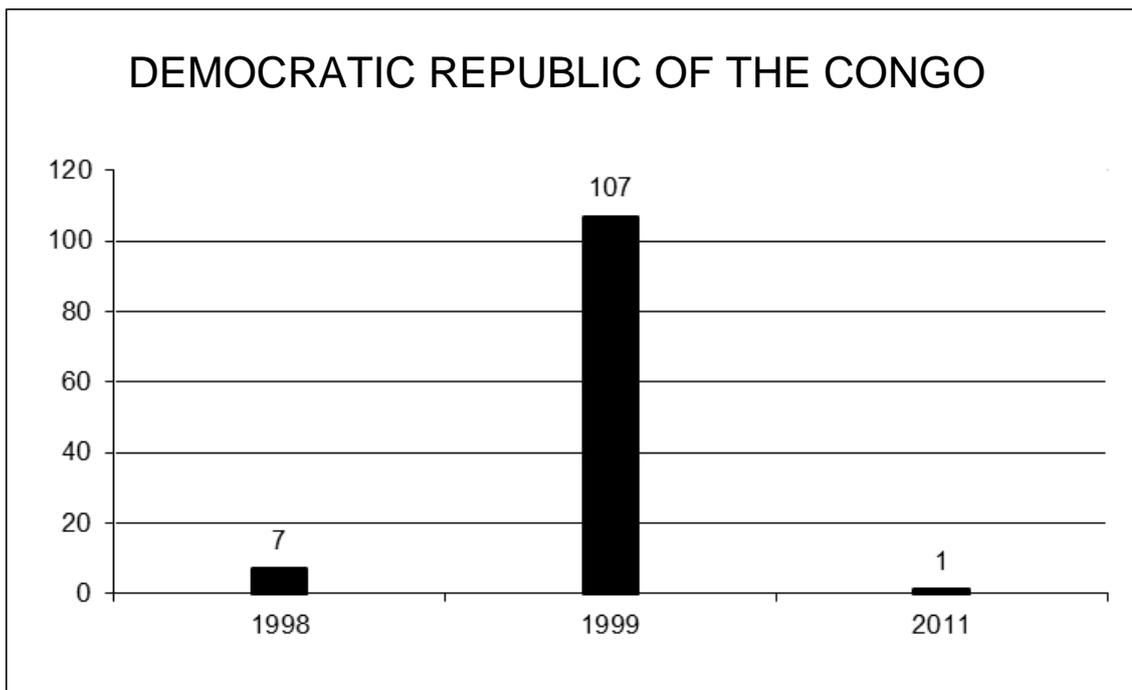
Annex III

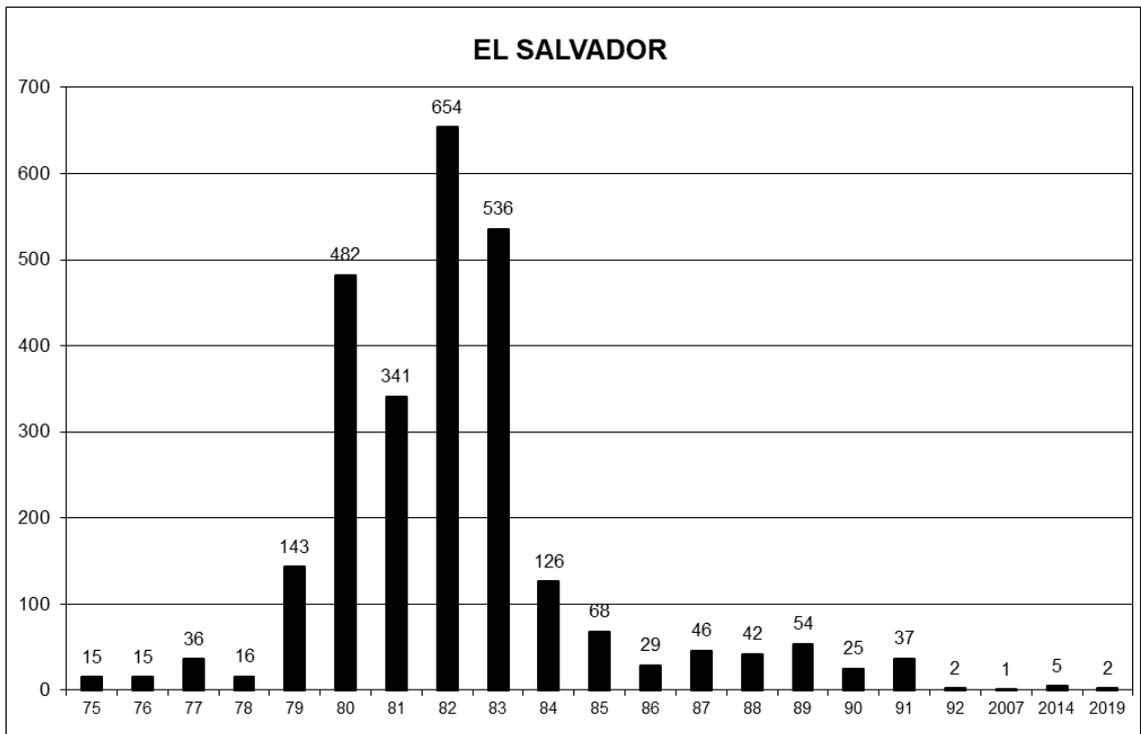
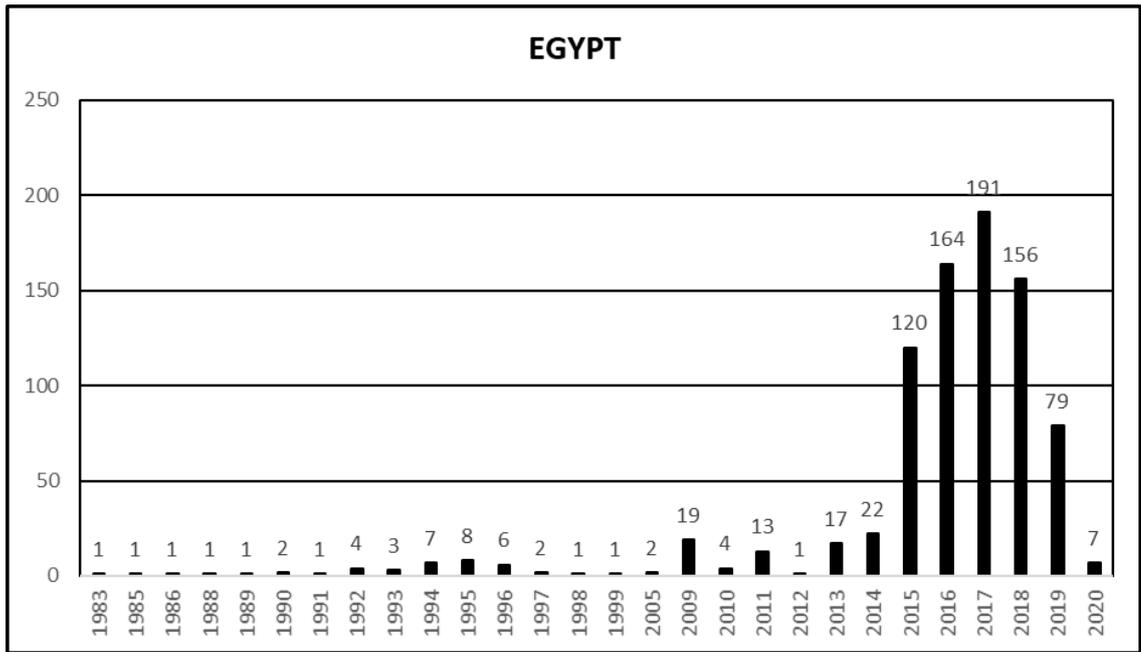
Graphs showing the number of cases of enforced disappearance by country and by year according to the cases transmitted by the Working Group between 1980 and 15 May 2020 (only for countries with more than 100 cases transmitted)

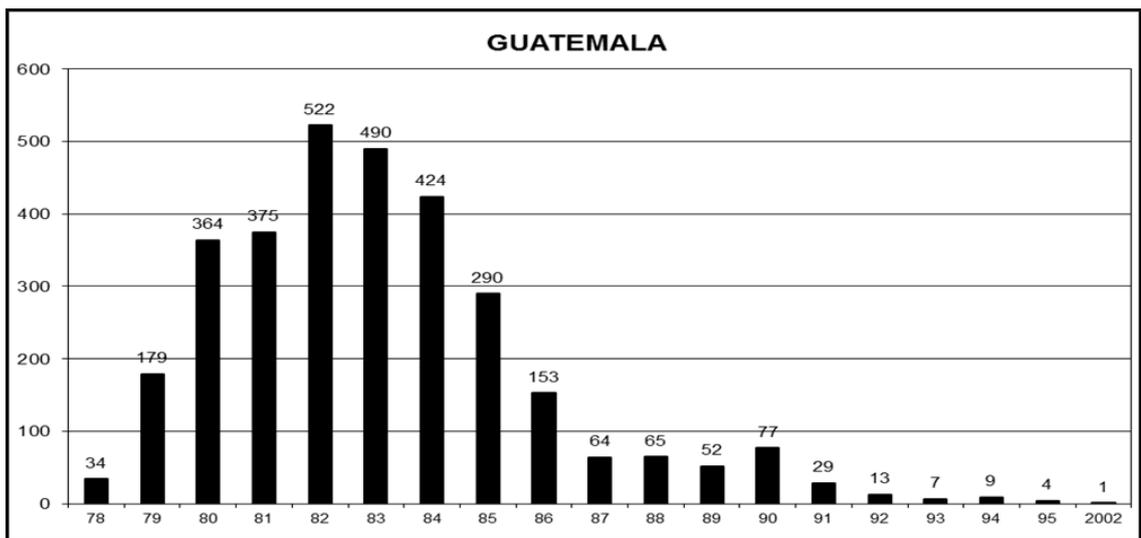
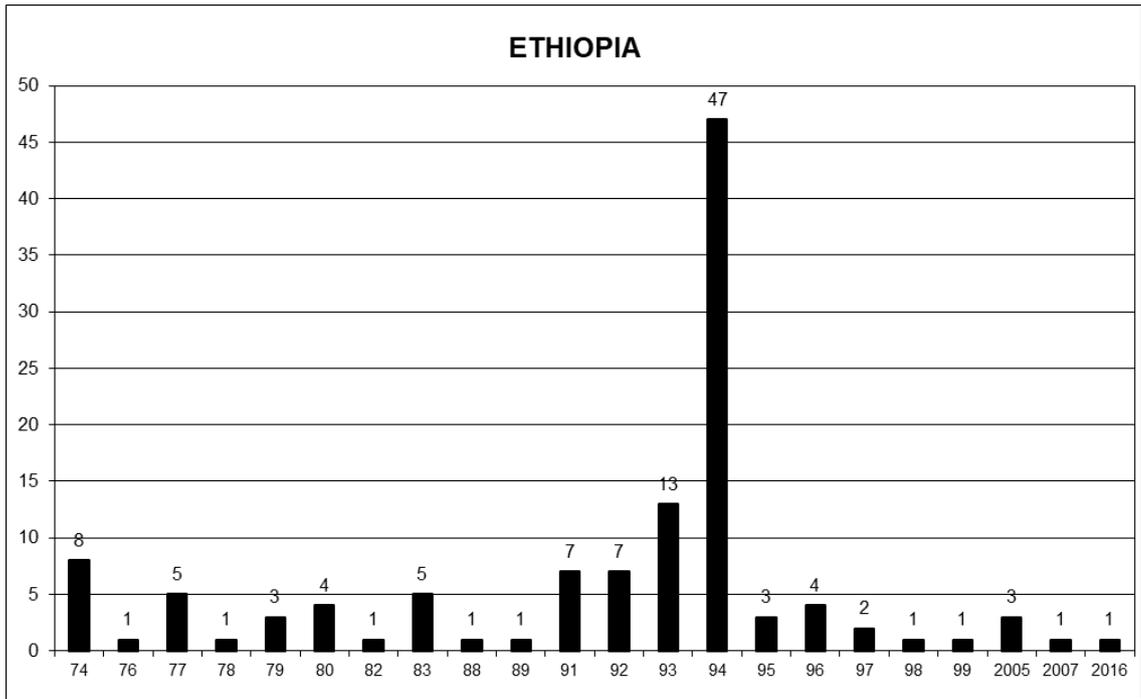


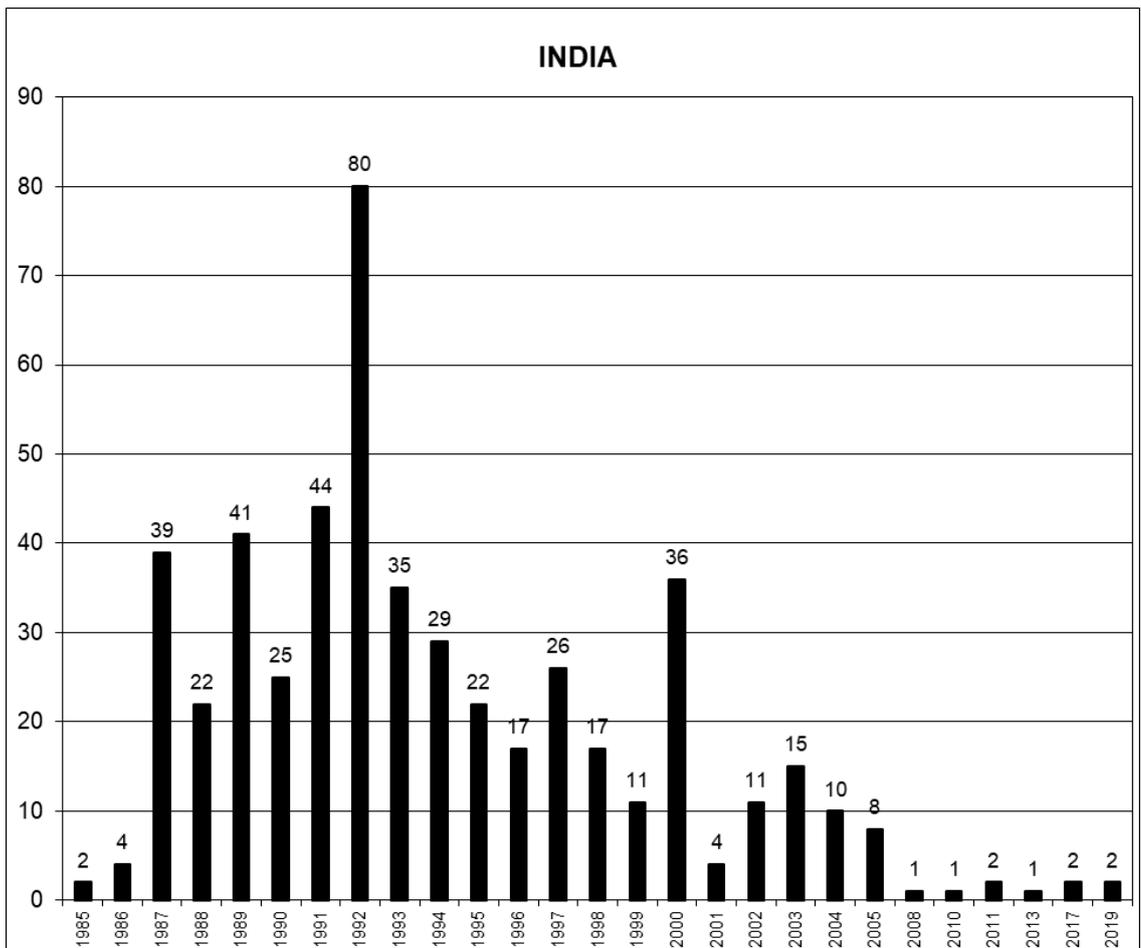
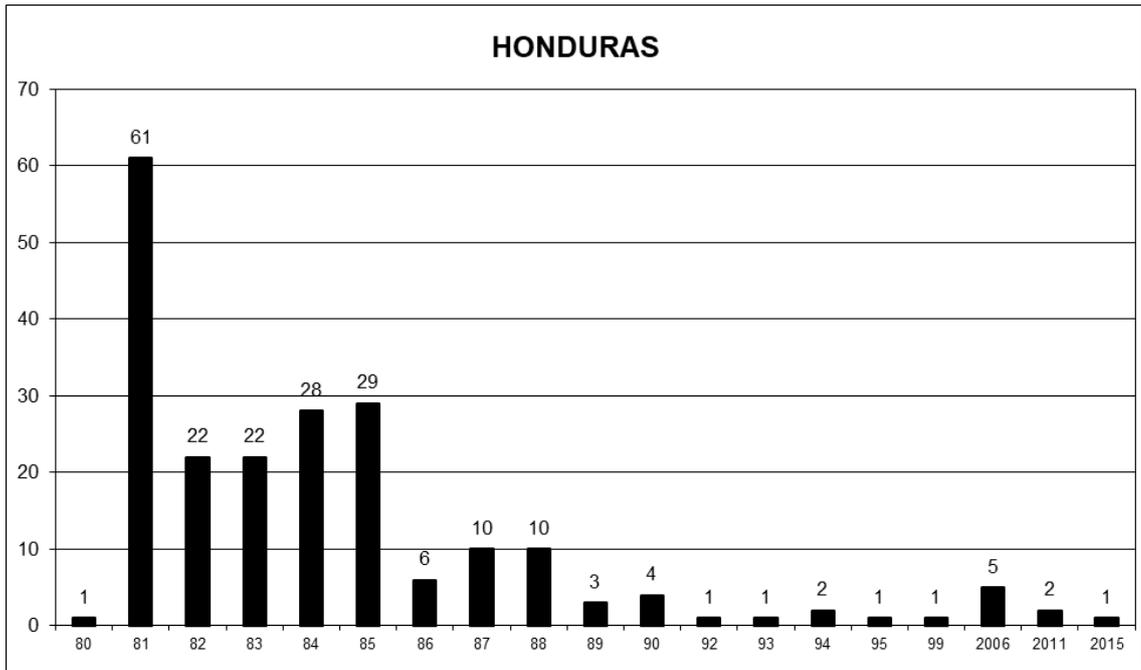


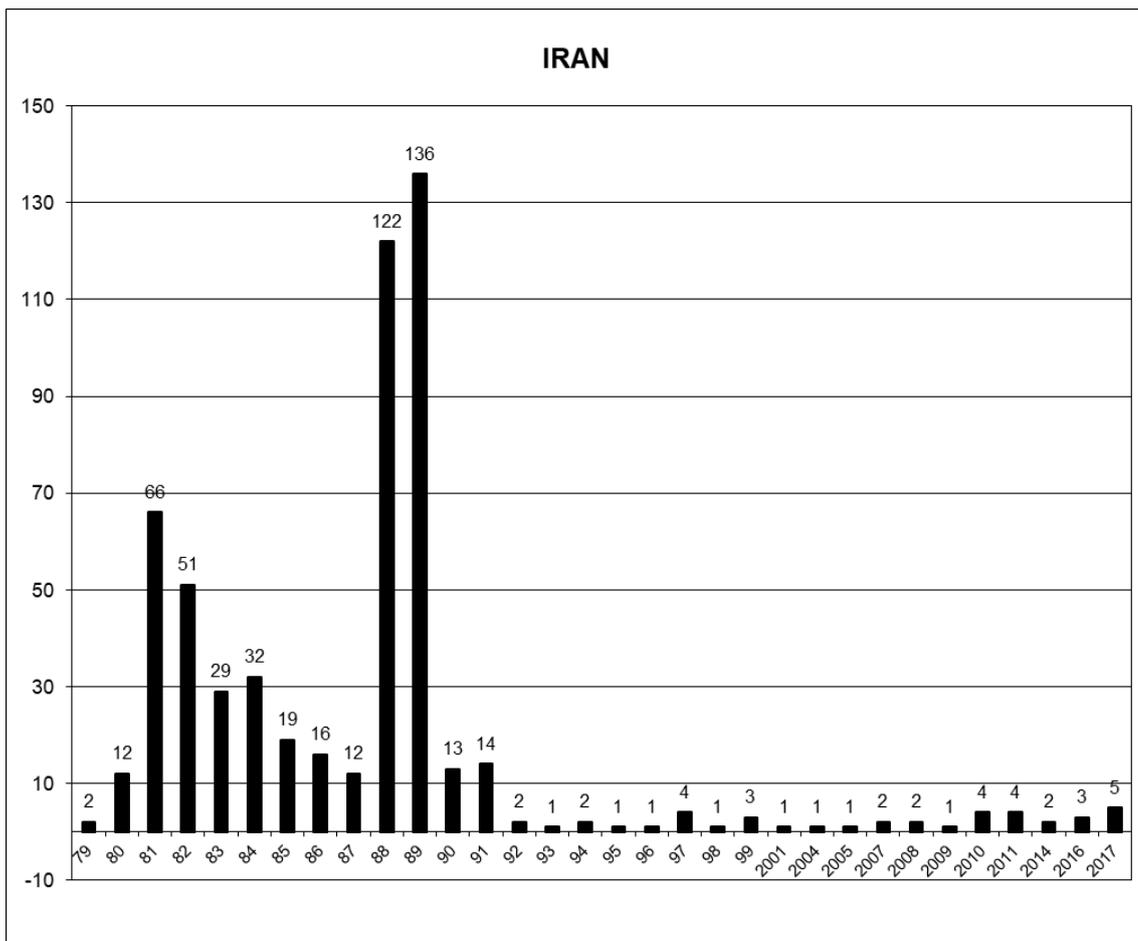
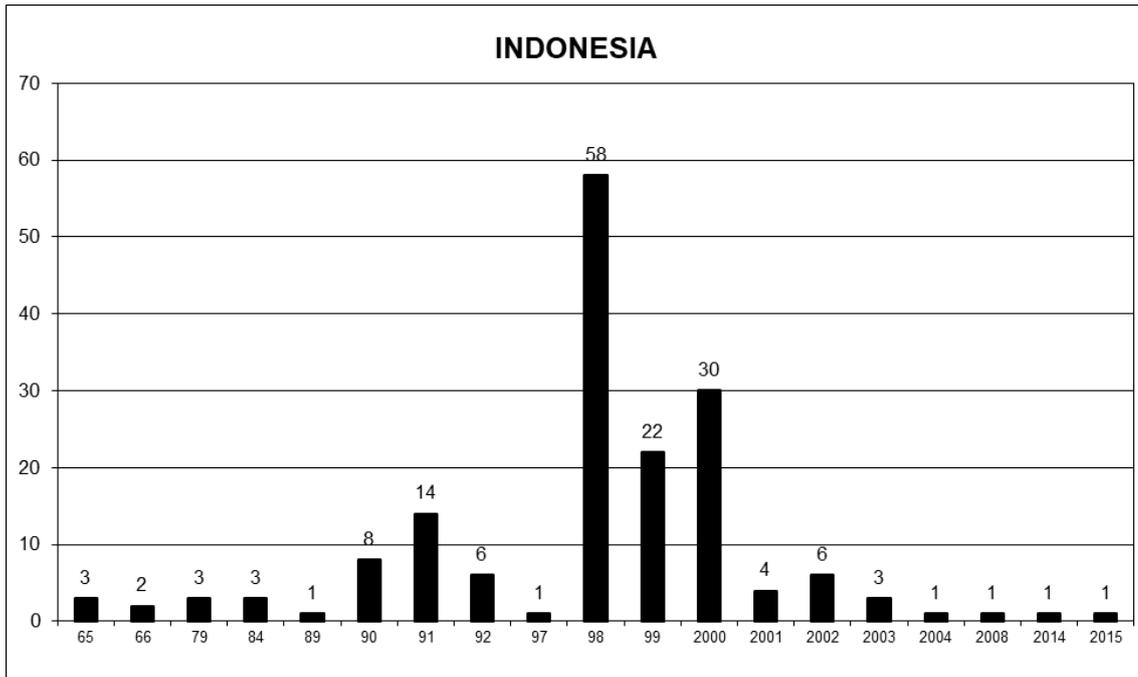


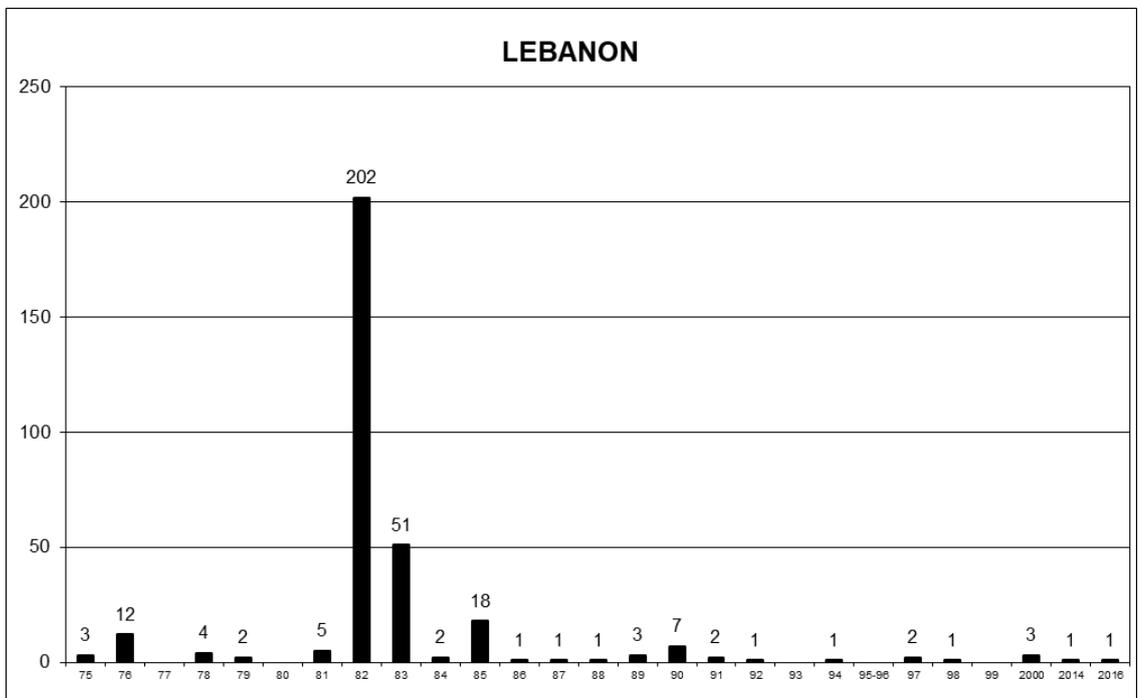
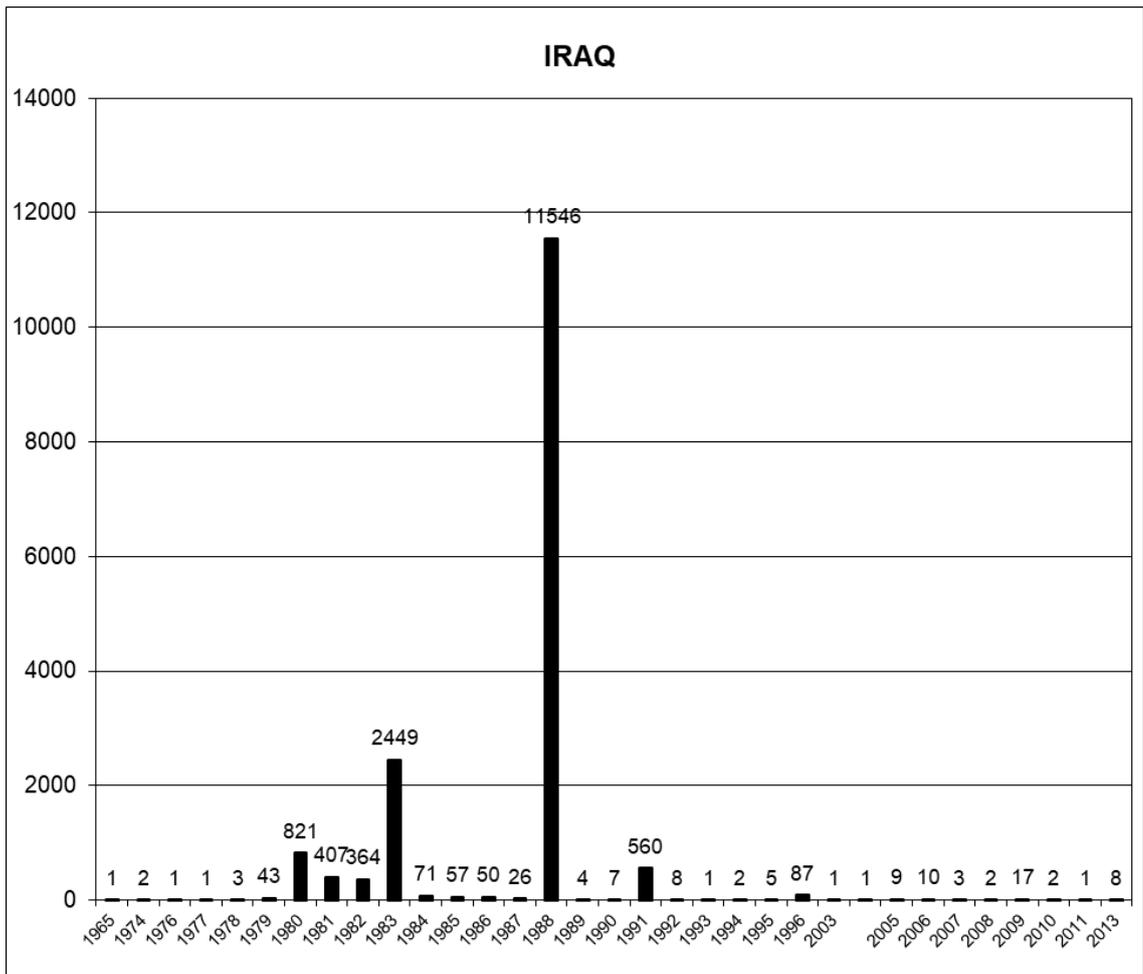


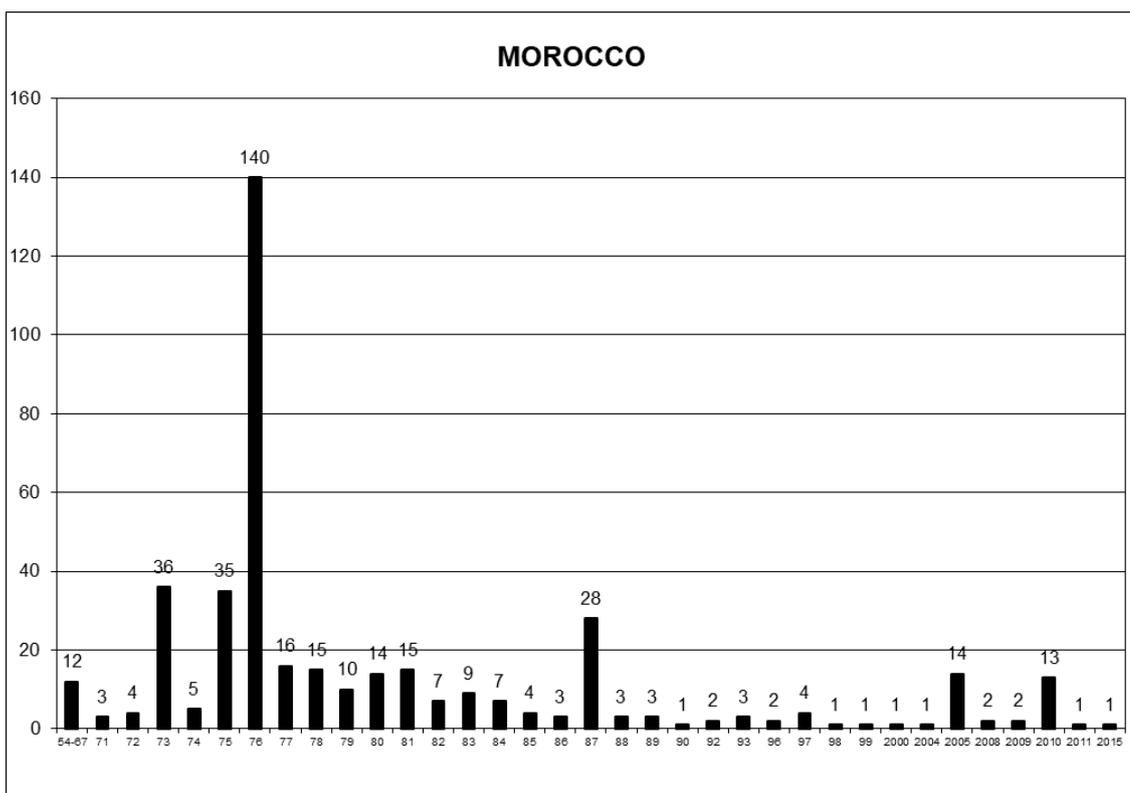
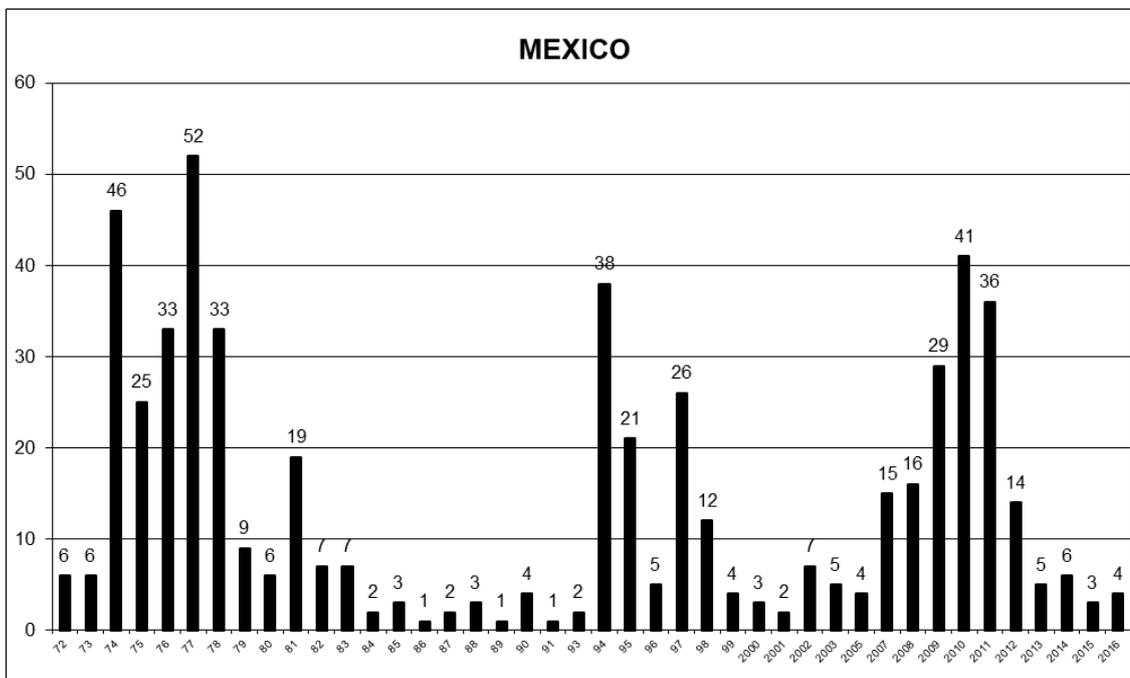


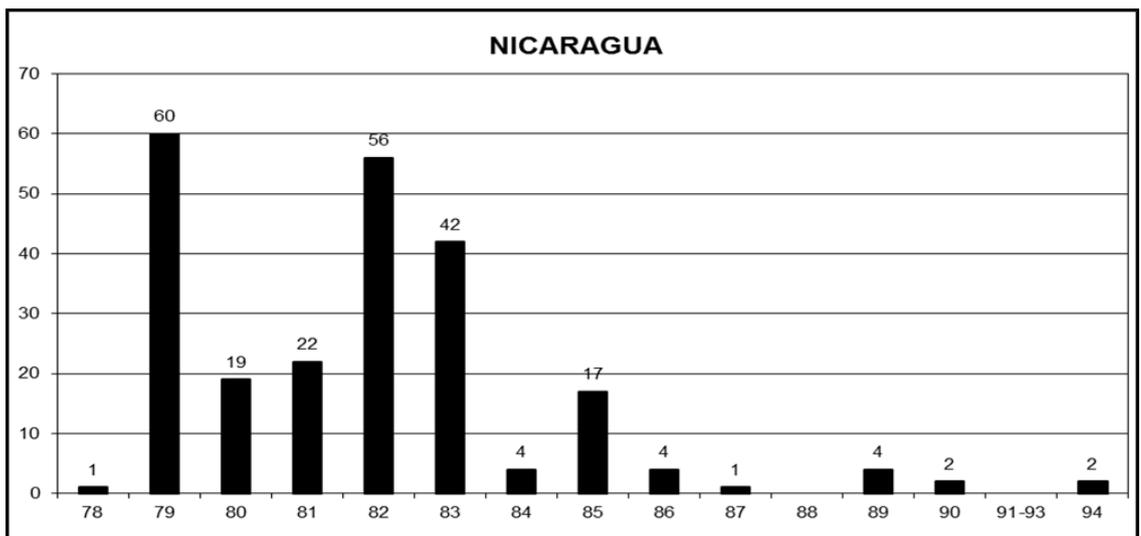
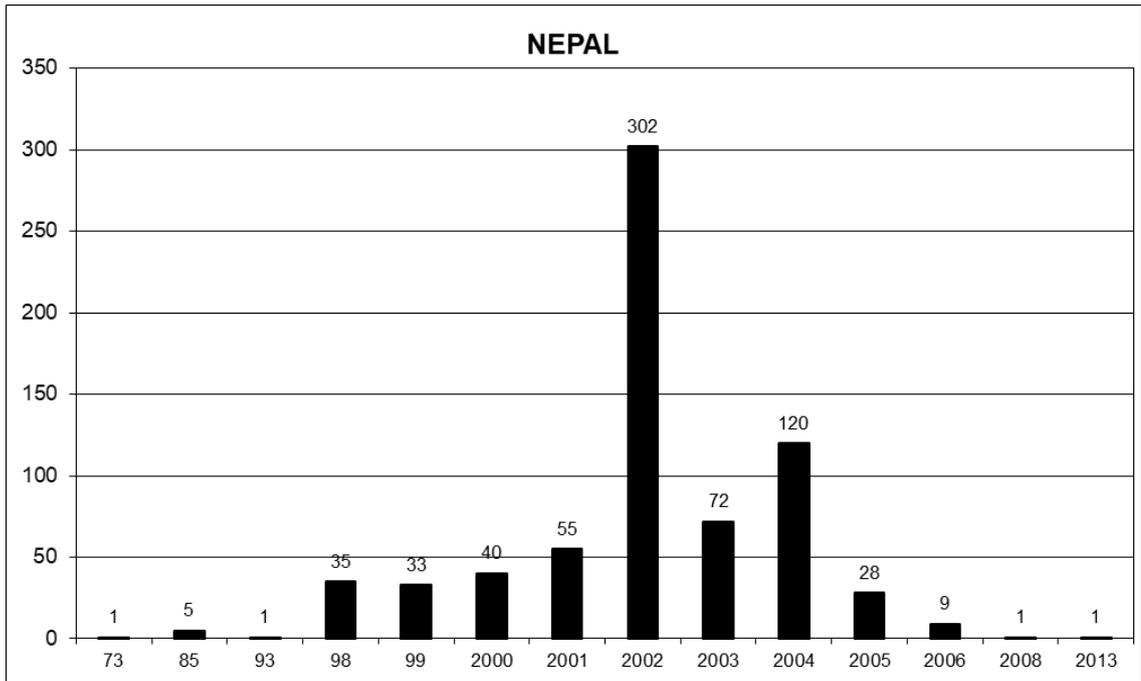


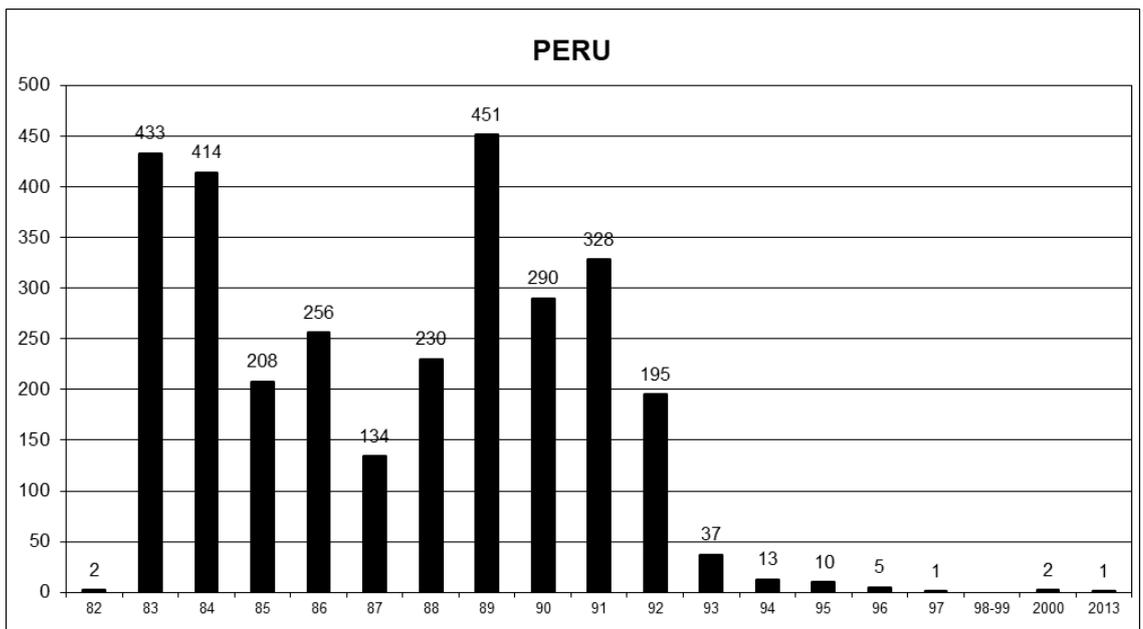
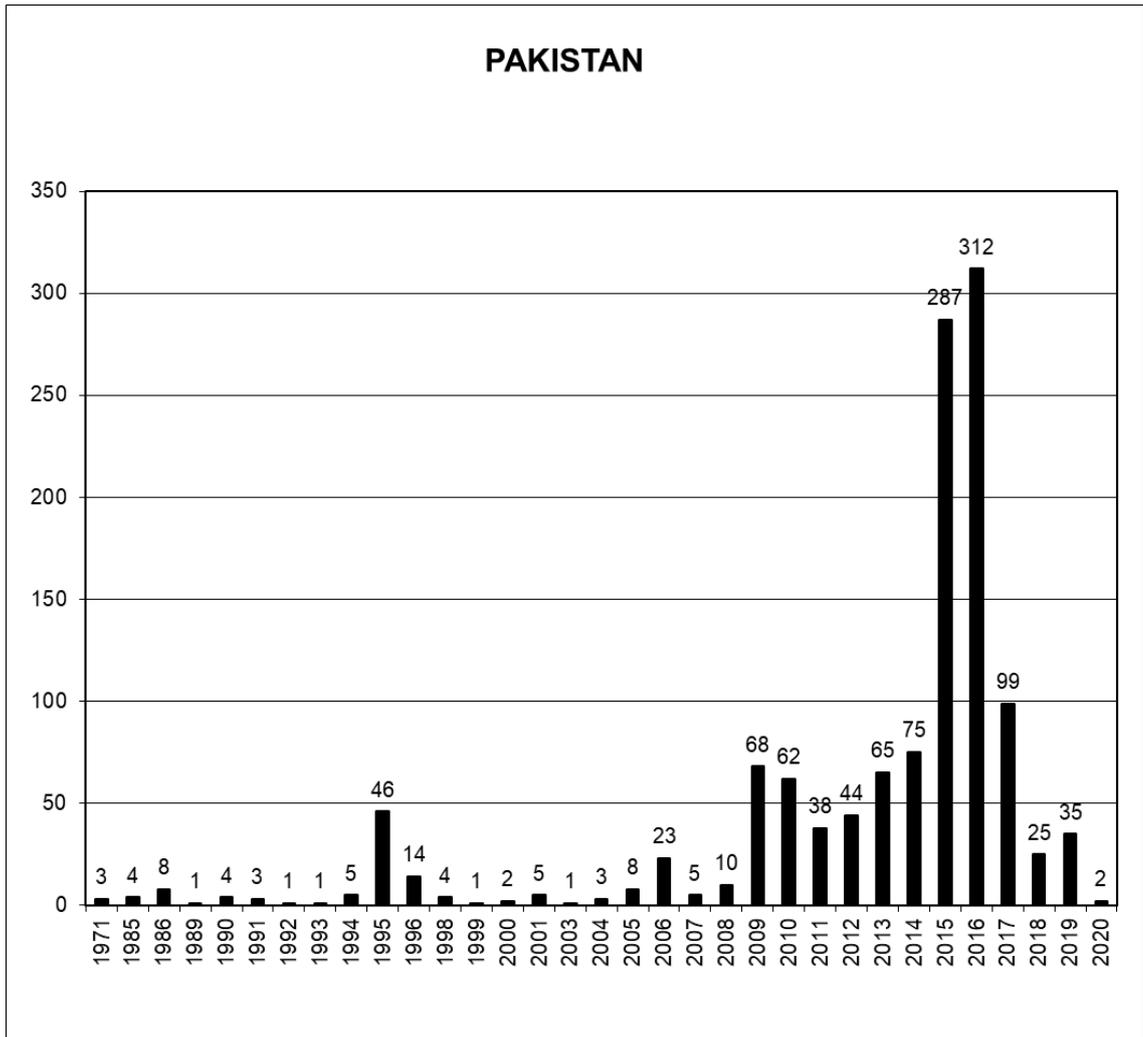


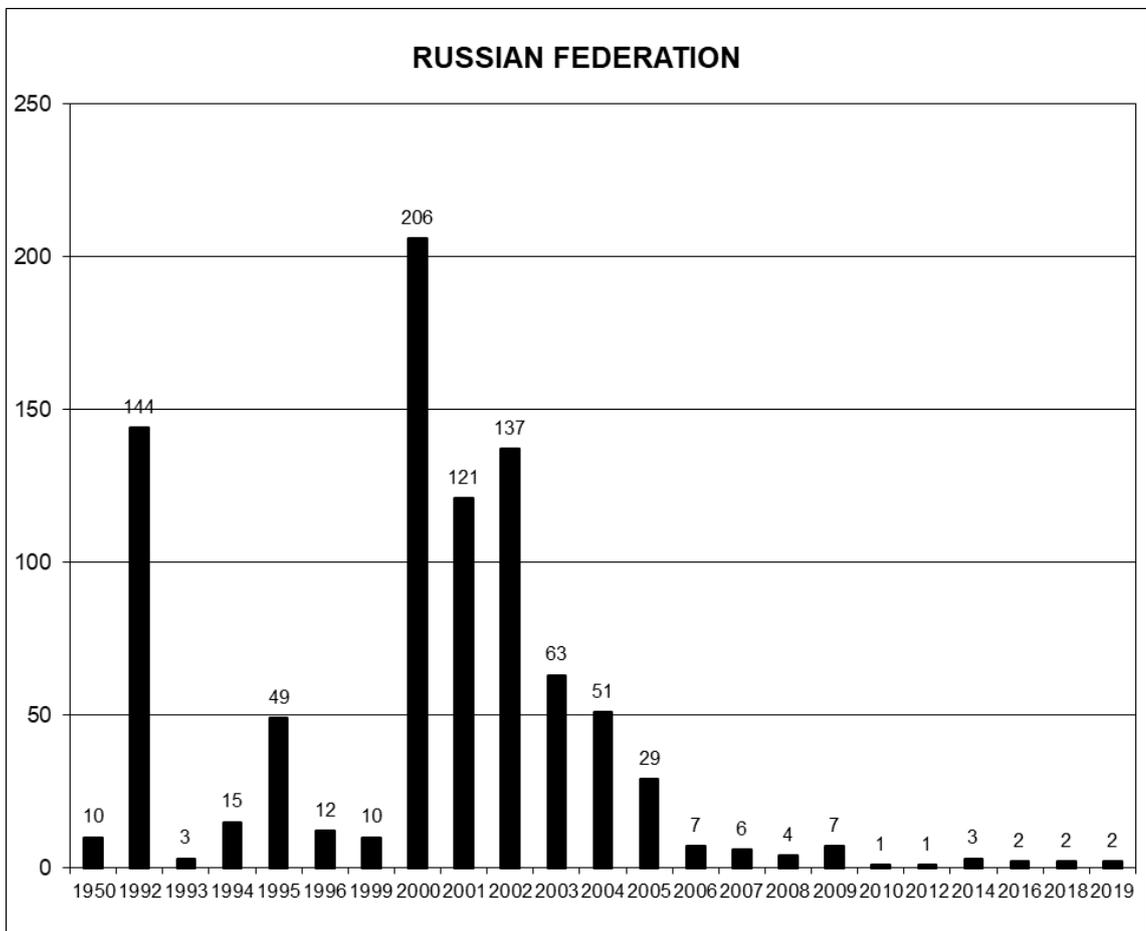
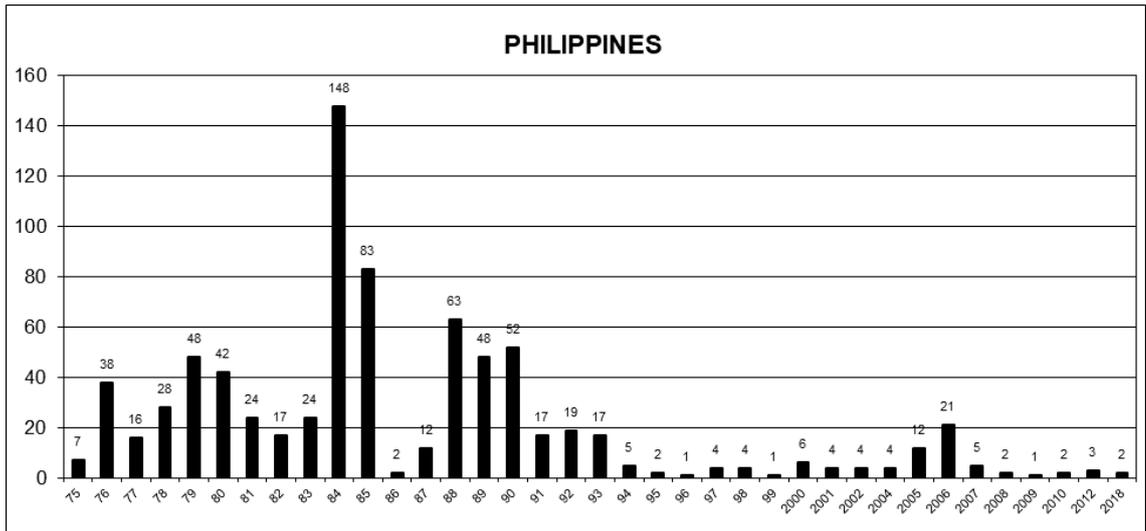


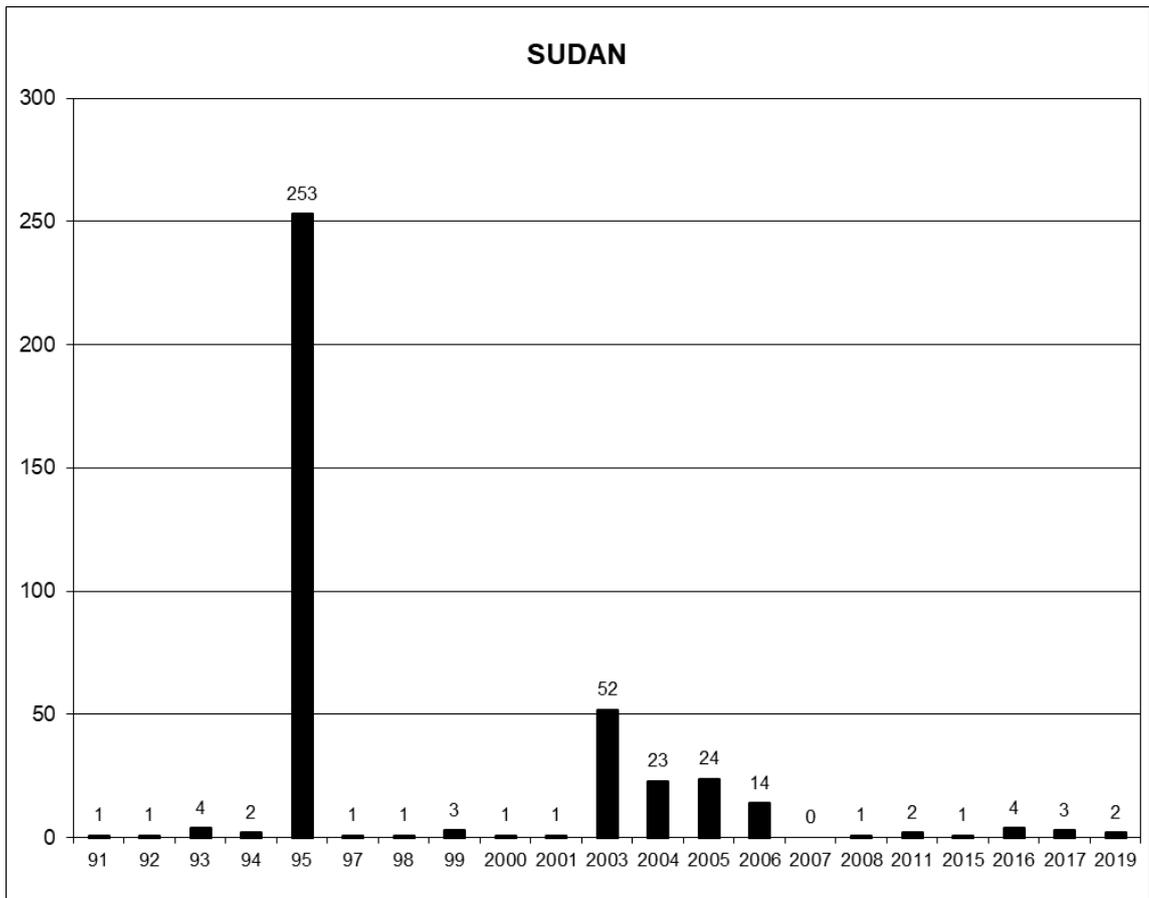
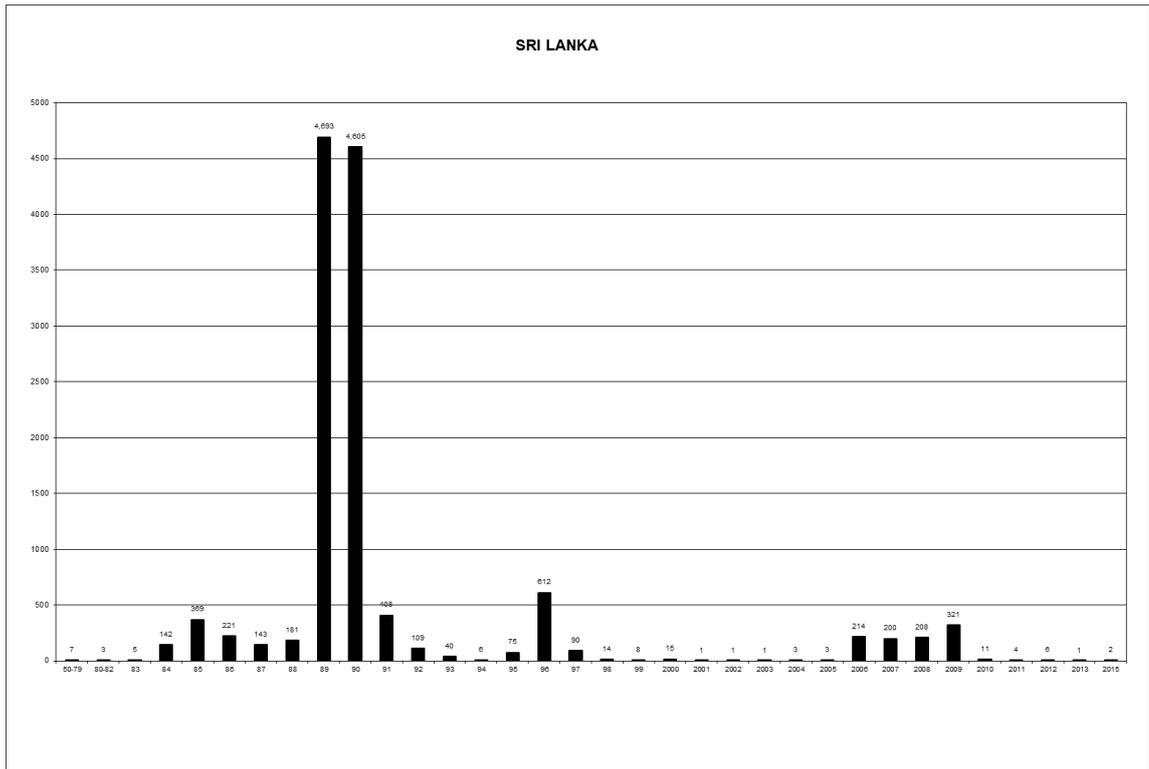


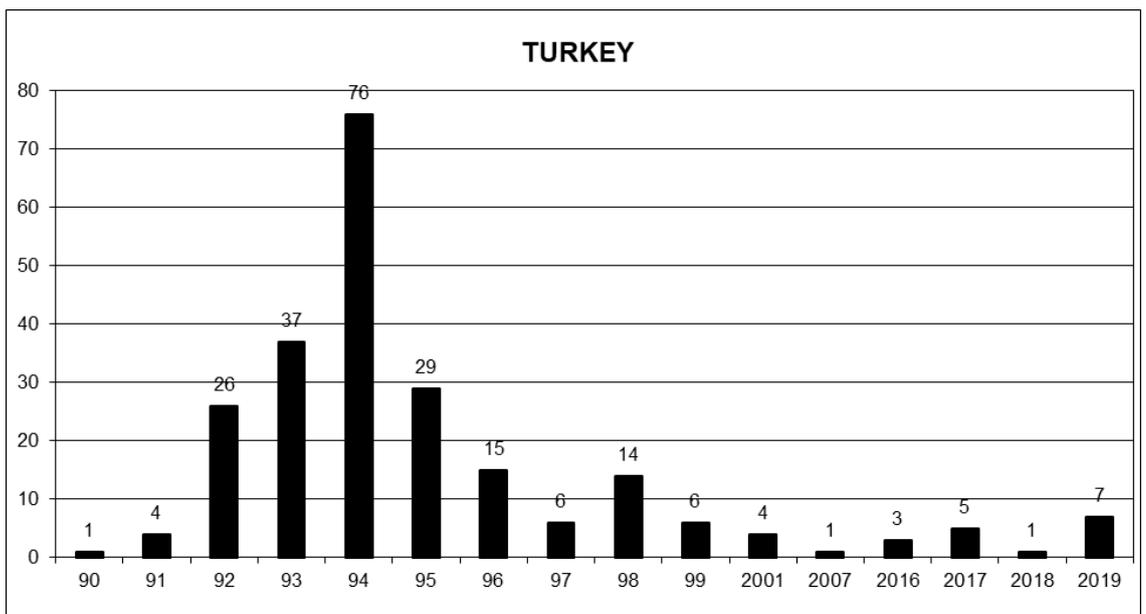
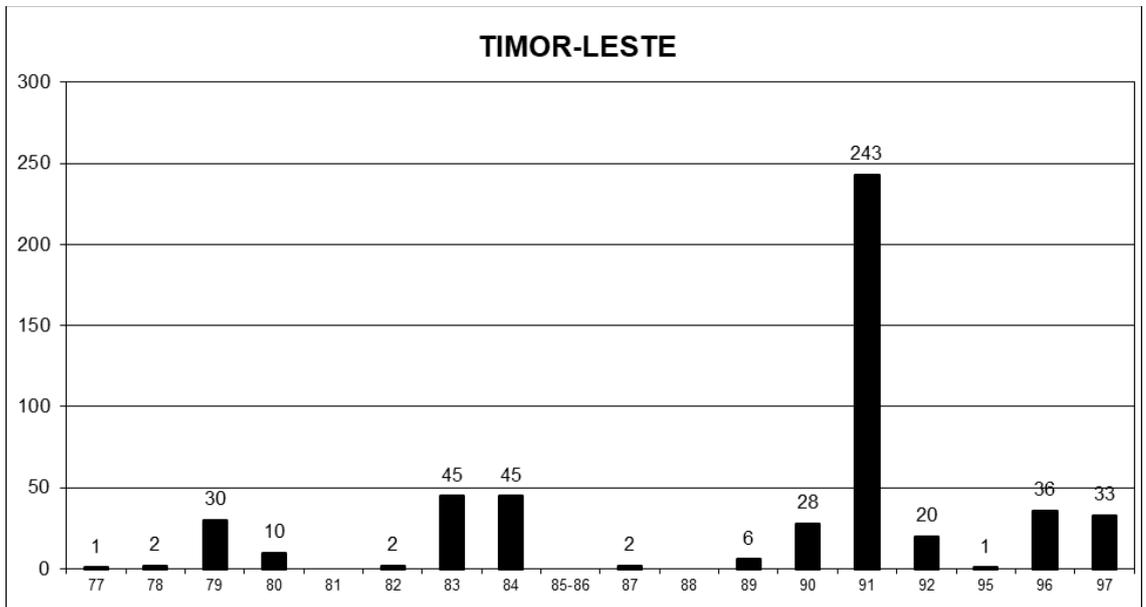
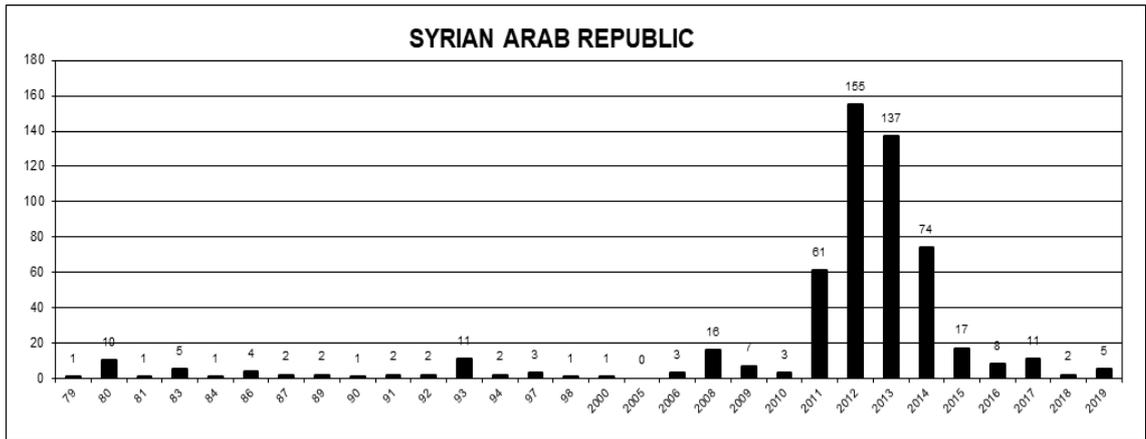


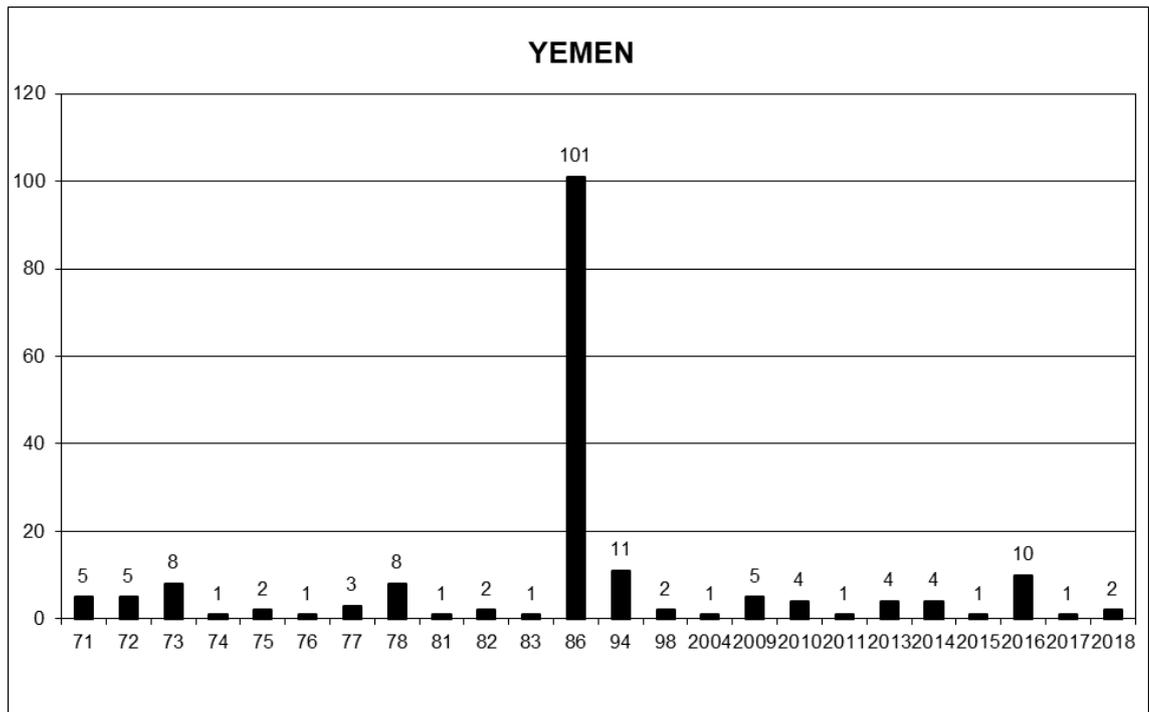












Annex IV

Press releases and statements

1. On 4 June 2019, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a press release condemning attacks on reintegrated former combatants in Colombia and urging the Government of Colombia to honour the security guarantees provided through the 2016 peace process.⁴¹
2. On 18 June 2019, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a press release calling for the liberation from detention of Mauritanian blogger and human rights defender Cheikh Ould Mohamed M'kheitir.⁴²
3. On 21 August 2019, for the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a press release calling on States to do more to stop hate crimes and to promote interfaith initiatives.⁴³
4. On 22 August 2019, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a press release calling on the Government of India to end the crackdown imposed in India-administered Kashmir on freedom of expression, access to information and peaceful protests, while expressing concern that the measures would exacerbate tensions in the region.⁴⁴
5. On 27 August 2019, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a press release expressing serious concern at the appointment of Lieutenant General Shavendra Silva as the chief of the army of Sri Lanka, and urging the Government to advance long overdue reforms of the security sector and to investigate past abuses.⁴⁵
6. On 29 August 2019, to commemorate the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, the Working Group, together with the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, issued a press release calling on States to act urgently to search for migrants who had been subjected to enforced disappearance, and to investigate such crimes.⁴⁶
7. On 11 September 2019, the Working Group issued a press release after presenting its annual report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/42/40), urging States to stop turning a blind eye to States that orchestrate enforced disappearances.⁴⁷
8. On 24 September 2019, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a press release calling on China to immediately end the harassment and surveillance of prominent human rights lawyer, Jiang Tianyong.
9. On 20 November 2019, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a press release criticizing Egypt over the ongoing detention of lawyer and human rights defender Ibrahim Metwally, despite him having been cleared in court of all accusations against him.
10. On 20 November 2019 the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a press release calling on Turkey to ensure the safety and security of Lisa Smith and her infant child, both Irish nationals, who were transferred to Turkish custody from a displacement camp in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic.

⁴¹ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24673&LangID=E.

⁴² See www.ohchr.org/FR/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24705&LangID=F.

⁴³ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24906&LangID=E.

⁴⁴ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24909&LangID=E.

⁴⁵ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24923&LangID=E.

⁴⁶ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24927&LangID=E.

⁴⁷ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24973&LangID=E.

11. On 29 November 2019, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a press release deploring the lack of significant progress in the implementation of the judgment issued by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the case of *Radilla Pacheco v. Mexico*.
12. On 20 December 2019, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a press release calling on the Iranian authorities to release all individuals arbitrarily detained and mistreated during protests, and expressed concerns over the hundreds of people who had been killed.
13. On 26 December 2019, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a press release expressing alarm at the situation of Tashpolat Tiyp, a Chinese academic of Uighur origin and former president of Xinjiang University, detained at an unknown location in China.
14. On 30 January 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a press release commending Ireland and Turkey for their cooperative and effective engagement ensuring the return of Lisa Smith and her infant child to Ireland in December.
15. On 13 February 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a press release urging the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to repatriate 11 individuals who were forcibly disappeared 50 years ago after their domestic flight in the Republic of Korea was hijacked.
16. On 6 March 2020, the Working Group joined the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, in a press release issued ahead of the International Women's Day on 8 March, calling on men around the world to be a part of movements for gender equality and become women's human rights defenders.⁴⁸
17. On 16 March 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a press release urging States to avoid overreach of security measures in their response to the coronavirus outbreak and reminding them that emergency powers should not be used to quash dissent.⁴⁹
18. On 23 March 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a press release expressing their grave concern about the welfare of three human rights defenders who were forcibly disappeared by the Chinese authorities shortly after their arrest in December 2019.⁵⁰
19. On 26 March 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a press release stressing that the COVID-19 crisis cannot be solved with public health and emergency measures only, and that all other human rights must be addressed too.⁵¹
20. On 27 March 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, joined the call by the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, to exercise solidarity and better protect older persons who are bearing the lion's share of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵²
21. On 9 April 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, endorsed a press release issued by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, alerting that tougher regulations under Egypt's sweeping anti-terrorism law further erode fundamental human rights and could result in more arbitrary detentions, enforced

⁴⁸ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25672&LangID=E>.

⁴⁹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25722&LangID=E>.

⁵⁰ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25735&LangID=E>.

⁵¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25748&LangID=E>.

⁵² <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25748&LangID=E>.

disappearances and allegations of torture, as well as a wider crackdown on freedom of expression, thought, association and of peaceful assembly.⁵³

22. On 17 April 2020, the Working Group, together with other special procedure mechanisms, issued a press release expressing grave concern at the multiplication of accounts of police killings and other acts of violence within the context of COVID-19 emergency measures.⁵⁴

23. On 14 May 2020, ahead of the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOBIT) on 17 May 2020, the Working Group joined a statement by the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, calling on Governments worldwide to ensure COVID-19 emergency measures do not worsen inequalities or structural barriers faced by people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, or lead to increased violence and discrimination against them.⁵⁵

⁵³ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25787&LangID=E>.

⁵⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25802&LangID=E>.

⁵⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25884&LangID=E>.