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1. Executive Summary

The experience of families of missing persons in Syria illustrates how the disappearance of a loved one has evolved into a prolonged reality that reshapes every aspect of their lives, with far-reaching psychological, social, economic, and legal consequences. Thousands of families continue to search for the truth about the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones while facing significant obstacles to accessing reliable information, inadequate responses to their needs, and limited opportunities for meaningful participation in efforts to address the issue.

Jointly prepared by the Missing Persons' Families Platform in North and East Syria ([MPFP-NES](#)) and [Synergy Association for Victims](#), this report is based on an analysis of 30 testimonies, including 24 from family members of missing persons and victims of enforced disappearance, as well as six from survivors of detention and enforced disappearance in North and East Syria. The analysis is complemented by a review of relevant international standards and informed by consultations with experts and practitioners working on human rights and the issue of missing persons.

The report seeks to understand families' needs and priorities as articulated by the families themselves. In doing so, it aims to inform the development of policies and mechanisms that are more responsive to victims' rights while placing families' voices and lived experiences at the centre of national and international efforts to address the issue of missing persons.

The testimonies reveal that the consequences of disappearance extend across every aspect of family life. The prolonged uncertainty surrounding the fate and whereabouts of missing relatives has created cumulative psychological, social, economic, and legal burdens that have accumulated over many years, reshaped family roles and responsibilities, imposed additional burdens—particularly on women and children—and undermined families' ability to plan for the future and manage their daily lives.

The testimonies further demonstrate that, for many families, the search for the truth has become a long and exhausting journey marked by the absence of reliable channels for obtaining information. As a result, many have been exposed to exploitation, extortion, and financial fraud, further depleting their resources and deepening their suffering.

At the same time, the testimonies of survivors of detention and enforced disappearance highlight their important contribution to truth-seeking efforts. Their knowledge and lived experience of places of detention and patterns of enforced disappearance can provide valuable information for uncovering the truth, provided that their participation is voluntary, safe, and supported by appropriate protection measures.

Despite differences in the circumstances of disappearance and the actors responsible, the findings reveal a clear convergence in families' priorities. Establishing the truth emerges as their foremost priority, as the essential first step towards ending years of uncertainty. Families consistently link this priority to justice, reparation, and meaningful participation in shaping the policies, mechanisms, and programmes that address the issue, recognising these elements as inseparable components of a comprehensive response.

The review of relevant international standards further demonstrates that these priorities reflect not only families' aspirations but also rights firmly established under international law, including the right to know the truth, the right to justice, the right to reparation, and the right to participation. This underscores the close alignment between families' demands and the international legal framework governing the rights of victims.

The report concludes that developing a more effective response to the issue of missing persons in Syria must begin by listening to families of missing persons, understanding their needs and priorities, and ensuring their safe, meaningful, and effective participation in all efforts aimed at establishing the truth, achieving justice, and providing reparation.

Building on these findings, the report presents a set of recommendations that provide a practical roadmap for translating families' priorities into actionable policies and mechanisms. These recommendations are intended to support national and international stakeholders in developing a more effective response that is grounded in families' needs and fully aligned with international standards.

2. Introduction

The issue of missing persons and enforced disappearance remains one of Syria's most complex and enduring humanitarian and human rights challenges. After years of conflict and widespread violations, tens of thousands of families still do not know the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones. They continue to live with the profound consequences of loss amid persistent uncertainty, limited access to reliable information, and the continued absence of truth.

In recent years, the issue has received growing attention at both the national and international levels, leading to the establishment of new mechanisms and initiatives aimed at clarifying the fate and whereabouts of missing persons, supporting victims and their families, and advancing accountability for violations. While these developments represent important progress, their effectiveness ultimately depends on their ability to respond to the needs of families of missing persons and to ensure their meaningful participation in efforts to address the issue.

It is from this perspective that the present report places the experiences of families of missing persons and survivors of detention and enforced disappearance at the centre of its analysis, recognising them as rights holders and essential partners in all efforts to establish the truth, achieve justice, and provide reparation.

The report does not seek to document every case of missing persons in Syria or provide a comprehensive account of the violations associated with them, as these have already been extensively documented elsewhere. Rather, its contribution lies in amplifying the voices of families of missing persons and analysing their priorities and perspectives on national and international responses. As those most directly affected, they are best placed to define their own needs and priorities.

To this end, the report draws on an analysis of 30 testimonies collected specifically for this study, alongside a review of relevant international legal standards and consultations with experts and practitioners working on human rights and the issue of missing persons. It aims to contribute to the development of policies and mechanisms that are more responsive to victims' rights while strengthening the role of families in policy discussions and decision-making, thereby supporting efforts to establish the truth, achieve justice, and provide reparation.

3. Methodology

This report employs a qualitative research methodology to examine the experiences of families of missing persons and victims of enforced disappearance in Syria, and to analyse their needs, priorities, and perspectives on national and international responses. Rather than focusing on individual cases, the analysis identifies recurring themes and patterns across the testimonies, providing deeper insight into families' experiences and informing the development of policies and mechanisms that are more responsive to victims' rights.

The report is based on 30 testimonies, including 24 from family members of missing persons and victims of enforced disappearance, and six from survivors of detention and enforced disappearance from the governorates of Al-Hasakah, Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, and Aleppo. Participants were purposively selected to ensure diversity in gender, backgrounds, and lived experiences. The sample comprised 15 women and 15 men, providing broad representation of the different experiences and impacts of loss across diverse contexts.

Testimonies were collected using a semi-structured interview guide developed specifically for this study. The interviews explored the circumstances surrounding the disappearance, families' efforts to trace their missing relatives, the challenges they encountered, the psychological, social, economic, and legal consequences of disappearance, as well as participants' needs, priorities, and perspectives on truth, justice, reparation, and participation.

The analysis was further informed by a review of international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and relevant international standards relating to victims' rights and transitional justice. It also drew on consultations with experts and practitioners working on human rights and the issue of missing persons, as well as relevant reports, studies, and other reference materials.

The testimonies were analysed using a thematic analysis approach. They were first coded according to key themes and then systematically analysed to identify recurring patterns relating to the consequences of disappearance, the search for truth, families' needs and priorities, and their perspectives on addressing the issue.

Throughout the research process, the study adhered to internationally recognised ethical principles for human rights documentation and research involving victims. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after the purpose of the interviews and the intended use of the information had been fully explained. To safeguard the security, privacy, and confidentiality of participants and their families, pseudonyms were used throughout the report, and any information that could reveal participants' identities or place them at risk was removed or anonymised. All interview data and related documentation were securely stored and handled in accordance with procedures designed to ensure confidentiality and prevent unauthorised access.

The report relies primarily on participants' testimonies as the principal source for understanding their experiences, needs, and priorities. Wherever possible, factual information contained in the testimonies was corroborated through supporting documentation or other reliable sources. The analysis and conclusions presented in the report are based on recurring patterns identified across the testimonies as a whole, rather than on individual cases.

4. Why Does the Issue of Missing Persons Remain an Ongoing Crisis?

The testimonies show that the continuing uncertainty surrounding the fate and whereabouts of missing persons is the defining feature of their families' experience. Its impact extends well beyond not knowing what happened to a missing relative. It shapes families' psychological, social, economic, and legal circumstances, transforms their roles and responsibilities, and influences both their priorities and their expectations of national and international responses.

Despite differences in the circumstances of disappearance, the actors responsible, and the periods during which cases occurred, the testimonies reveal remarkable similarities in families' experiences and the consequences they continue to face. This demonstrates that the impact of disappearance extends beyond individual cases and reflects a broader reality created by the nature of disappearance itself and the continuing absence of truth.

▪ Persistent Uncertainty Prolongs Families' Suffering

For most families, the passage of time has not eased their suffering. What continues to weigh most heavily on their lives is not the passage of years itself, but the absence of reliable information about the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones. Participants repeatedly described living with conflicting possibilities, unable to determine whether their relatives were still alive, where they might be, or what had happened to them.

This uncertainty has profound psychological consequences. It generates persistent anxiety, fear, and grief, while making it extremely difficult for families to plan for the future or make important life decisions. Caught between hope and despair, many remain unable to move beyond an indefinite period of waiting.

The findings further show that uncertainty not only deepens families' suffering but also shapes their priorities. Establishing the truth consistently emerged as their foremost priority because it represents the essential first step towards addressing the broader consequences of disappearance. Access to reliable information enables families to make informed decisions, regain a measure of stability, plan for the future, and pursue justice and reparation.

▪ Disappearance Reshapes Family Life and Responsibilities

The impact of disappearance extends to the family as a whole, fundamentally reshaping family roles and responsibilities. As uncertainty persists, many families are forced to adapt to a new reality without the information they need to make informed decisions about their future.

The testimonies show that women often assumed new responsibilities following the disappearance of a husband, father, or other family breadwinner. They became responsible for supporting their families financially, caring for their children, managing household affairs, and continuing the search for their loved ones.

Raghda described the impact of her husband's arrest on her daily life:

"I became the sole caregiver for my three daughters. The eldest was only three years old when their father was arrested."

At the same time, many children have grown up without one or both parents, with lasting consequences for their family life, education, and social development. Rojin described this experience:

"His daughter was born shortly after his arrest and has grown up without ever knowing or seeing her father."

These testimonies demonstrate that disappearance continues to shape family life for years, affecting decisions related to education, employment, property management, and childcare. They also underscore the importance of responses that recognise these long-term changes and provide families with the support they need to manage new responsibilities and strengthen their resilience.

▪ **Disappearance Gradually Erodes Families' Resilience**

The testimonies reveal that the economic consequences of disappearance intensify over time, particularly when the missing person was the family's primary breadwinner. Many families experienced a significant reduction—or complete loss—of household income while facing rising expenses associated with daily living and the continued search for their missing relatives.

Several participants described spending substantial sums over many years on travel, contacting intermediaries, and pursuing information about their loved ones. Some also reported being exploited, extorted, or defrauded by individuals who promised information about the fate of missing relatives or their release.

Dilo described his family's experience:

"The children grew up without their father, their sole breadwinner. My aunt and her daughters were forced to shoulder additional burdens and responsibilities."

These experiences illustrate how prolonged uncertainty prevents families from regaining even a basic level of economic stability. Limited resources must continually be divided between meeting everyday needs and continuing the search for the truth, steadily undermining families' resilience over time.

▪ **Uncertainty Creates Persistent Legal and Administrative Challenges**

The testimonies also show that the lack of reliable information about the fate and whereabouts of missing persons leaves many families facing ongoing legal and administrative obstacles that directly affect their daily lives. Without clarity regarding the legal status of the missing person, families are often unable to resolve issues relating to personal status, property, inheritance, or financial rights.

Fatima described this reality:

"The absence of any official confirmation of my uncle's death keeps alive the hope that he may still be alive. At the same time, it leaves us unable to end this prolonged waiting or fully come to terms with reality."

This reflects a dilemma shared by many families. They do not wish to give up hope, yet they also need legal solutions that allow them to manage their daily affairs without compromising either their right to know the truth or the rights of the missing person.

The findings confirm that an effective response to the issue of missing persons requires legal and administrative measures that take families' circumstances into account, enable them to manage their daily lives, and safeguard both their right to know the truth and the rights of missing persons.

5. The Search for the Truth

For families of missing persons, the search for the truth begins the moment a loved one disappears. From that point on, most families pursue every possible lead that might help clarify the fate and whereabouts of their relatives, exhausting all available avenues despite the risks, challenges, and burdens that often continue for years.

Although the circumstances of disappearance and the actors responsible differ from one case to another, families describe remarkably similar search experiences. Most have approached official authorities, de facto authorities, places of detention, hospitals, intermediaries, and other potential sources of information, while also relying on personal networks and information shared through social media. Yet, in many cases, these efforts have failed to produce reliable information about the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones.

Dilyar described this reality:

"I want to know the truth, no matter how painful it may be. Knowing his fate is better than remaining trapped in an endless cycle of waiting and uncertainty—for both us and his young family."

This testimony reflects a recurring theme throughout the interviews: for families, the greatest burden is not the truth itself, but the uncertainty that surrounds it.

▪ Searching Without a Clear Process

The testimonies reveal that, in the absence of a clear lead institution or a coordinated search mechanism, families have felt compelled to pursue every possible lead, regardless of its credibility. Over time, the search itself becomes an ongoing burden, consuming time, emotional energy, and financial resources without providing the answers needed to end years of uncertainty.

This fragmented process also reflects limited coordination and information-sharing among the institutions involved. As a result, families often find themselves repeating the same procedures with different authorities, without knowing whether the information they provide has contributed in any way to advancing the search.

▪ **The Lack of Information Fuels Exploitation**

The testimonies show that the absence of reliable information about the fate and whereabouts of missing persons has created opportunities for financial and personal exploitation. Several participants described receiving promises that information about their loved ones' whereabouts—or even their release—could be secured in exchange for money or other forms of assistance. In most cases, these promises produced no meaningful results.

The scarcity of reliable information has also led many families to pursue virtually every lead, even when the source was of questionable credibility. The widespread circulation of unverified information on social media has further compounded this problem, with each new rumour briefly reviving hope before giving way to renewed disappointment when it proved to be unfounded.

These findings demonstrate that providing families with accurate and regular information is essential not only for advancing efforts to establish the truth, but also for reducing exploitation and extortion, strengthening trust in the institutions concerned, and reducing families' dependence on unreliable sources of information.

▪ **Lack of Communication Undermines Trust**

The testimonies indicate that most families do not expect immediate answers. Rather, they expect to be kept informed about the progress of the search and the efforts being made to establish the truth, even when there are no significant developments regarding the fate of their loved ones. Yet prolonged silence and the absence of updates have left many families with the impression that they are excluded from processes intended to serve them.

Conversely, the testimonies suggest that regular communication—even in the absence of significant developments—helps build trust and reduces families' sense of exclusion by explaining what has been achieved, the challenges facing ongoing efforts, and the steps that are expected to follow.

▪ **Survivors as Partners in Establishing the Truth**

The testimonies of survivors of detention and enforced disappearance demonstrate that they possess valuable knowledge and lived experience that can make an important contribution to efforts to establish the truth and clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons. Many witnessed conditions inside places of detention, encountered other detainees, were transferred between detention facilities, or acquired information that may help reconstruct events inside detention centres and trace the movement of detainees.

Despite this potential, survivors' knowledge remains underutilised, while many continue to live with profound psychological and social consequences. Their participation in truth-seeking efforts should therefore be based on their free and informed consent and take place in a safe environment that fully respects the **do no harm** principle. Appropriate protection and support should be provided before, during, and after their participation.

6. What Do Families of Missing Persons Expect from Future Responses?

The testimonies show that the needs and priorities of families of missing persons have been shaped by years of searching, waiting, and living with the consequences of disappearance. Although every case is different, participants expressed strikingly similar priorities and shared a common vision of what national and international responses should seek to achieve.

The findings demonstrate that families do not view truth, justice, reparation, and participation as separate or competing objectives. Rather, they see them as mutually reinforcing elements of a comprehensive response—one that enables them to establish the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones, address the consequences of disappearance, restore their rights, and help prevent future violations.

▪ Establishing the Truth Comes First

For families, establishing the fate and whereabouts of missing persons is the highest priority. This means knowing whether their loved ones are alive, where they are, what happened to them, the circumstances of their disappearance, who was responsible, and—if they have died—where their remains can be found, so that years of uncertainty can finally come to an end.

Many participants said they were prepared to accept any truth, however painful, provided it ended the uncertainty and offered a reliable account of what had happened.

Abdul Qader expressed this sentiment:

"I want to know whether my brother is alive or dead. Even if he has died, we have the right to bury him with dignity and to have a grave where we can always visit him."

The testimonies make clear that establishing the truth is the foundation upon which families can begin addressing the wider consequences of disappearance. It enables them to make informed decisions, begin rebuilding their lives, address the psychological, social, economic, and legal consequences of prolonged absence, and pursue justice and reparation.

▪ Justice Means Accountability and Guarantees of Non-Recurrence

The testimonies show that justice is a central priority for families and is inseparable from establishing the truth. Participants consistently emphasised that clarifying the fate and whereabouts of missing persons must be accompanied by accountability for those responsible, recognition of what occurred, redress for victims, and guarantees that such violations will not recur.

Somaya, whose husband disappeared during the 2019 Baghouz offensive involving the Syrian Democratic Forces, supported by the Global Coalition against the Islamic State (ISIS), explained:

"Justice means having the right to know the truth and for my husband to receive a fair trial. If he is proven guilty—and he is not—then let him serve a sentence proportionate to his crime. But for no one even to acknowledge that he exists, disclose where he is, or bring him before a court is one of the greatest injustices."

This testimony reflects families' broader understanding of justice. For them, justice extends beyond court judgments to include acknowledging the victim, establishing the facts, identifying those responsible, and ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable.

Masrou expressed the same demand more simply:

"We want to know where my brother is, and those responsible for his disappearance must be held accountable."

The testimonies also show that the absence of accountability prolongs families' suffering and weakens their confidence in the possibility of establishing the truth or achieving justice. Conversely, accountability helps restore trust in institutions, affirms respect for victims' rights, and contributes to preventing future violations.

▪ Reparation Must Reflect Families' Real Needs

The testimonies show that reparation is another key priority for families of missing persons. For them, it is inseparable from acknowledging the harm they have suffered and addressing the long-term consequences of disappearance.

While families' needs vary, the testimonies reveal a consistent set of priorities, including psychosocial support, legal assistance, improved economic security, better access to essential services, and solutions to the legal and administrative challenges arising from the continued absence of missing relatives.

Many participants also stressed that reparation cannot be reduced to financial compensation. Rather, they see it as a broader process that helps restore a measure of stability, acknowledges their suffering, and responds to both their immediate and longer-term needs.

Hussein explained:

"We are not only searching for the truth about my brother's fate. After all these years of waiting and suffering, we also need someone to stand by us. Before ISIS arrested him from our home in 2017, he was a government employee whose modest salary supported his family. With his disappearance, they lost both their breadwinner and their only source of income."

The findings suggest that reparation programmes should be designed around families' own priorities, reflect the diversity of their circumstances, and ensure their meaningful participation in determining the forms of support they receive. Only then can such programmes respond effectively to families' realities and make a tangible difference in their lives.

- **Participation Is Essential to an Effective Response**

The analysis shows that many families want to play an active role in efforts to address the issue of missing persons, rather than being limited to providing information or receiving outcomes. Participants emphasised the importance of having their views heard, their experiences recognised, and their perspectives reflected in decisions affecting their rights and interests.

The testimonies also demonstrate that families have developed valuable knowledge through years of searching for their loved ones, coping with the consequences of disappearance, and engaging with numerous institutions and actors. This accumulated experience represents an important resource for understanding the challenges families face, identifying priorities, and developing responses that reflect their lived realities.

- **An Integrated Response Grounded in Victims' Rights**

Taken together, the testimonies show that families do not see truth, justice, reparation, and participation as competing priorities. Instead, they regard them as mutually reinforcing components of a single response. Establishing the truth enables families to confront reality; justice reinforces trust and ensures that perpetrators are held accountable; reparation helps address the enduring consequences of disappearance; and meaningful participation ensures that policies and programmes are shaped by the needs and experiences of victims themselves.

Any response that addresses these rights in isolation is therefore likely to have only limited impact. An integrated, victims-centred approach that brings these elements together provides the strongest foundation for a more effective, sustainable, and equitable response to the issue of missing persons in Syria.

7. The International Framework for Addressing the Issue of Missing Persons

The findings of this report demonstrate that the needs and priorities identified by families of missing persons are closely aligned with the principles established under international standards relating to victims' rights, enforced disappearance, and transitional justice. These standards provide a normative framework to guide national and international actors in developing policies, programmes, and mechanisms that better protect the rights of victims and their families while advancing efforts to establish the truth, achieve justice, provide reparation, and ensure meaningful participation.

Taken together, these standards offer a coherent framework for designing responses to the issue of missing persons that uphold the rights of victims and their families, respond to their needs and priorities, and ensure their meaningful involvement in all relevant processes.

▪ The Right to Know the Truth

International standards recognise the right of victims and their families to know the fate and whereabouts of missing persons, the circumstances surrounding their disappearance, and the identity of those responsible. This right entails an obligation on the competent authorities to take all feasible measures to search for missing persons, collect, preserve, and analyse relevant information, and share with families, on a regular and transparent basis, all information that can appropriately be disclosed.

These principles closely reflect the findings of this report, which identify continued uncertainty as the primary source of families' suffering and recognise access to reliable information as the essential first step towards addressing the broader consequences of disappearance.

▪ The Right to Justice and Accountability

International standards make clear that establishing the truth must be accompanied by independent and effective investigations and by accountability for enforced disappearance and related violations, through fair judicial processes that respect the rights of all parties.

Accountability is not limited to bringing perpetrators to justice. It also serves to acknowledge what occurred, recognise the harm suffered by victims, reinforce the rule of law, and help prevent the recurrence of violations.

This understanding is consistent with the views expressed by families throughout the report, who repeatedly link establishing the truth with achieving justice and regard the two as mutually reinforcing.

▪ The Right to Reparation

International standards recognise reparation as a comprehensive process aimed at addressing the harm suffered by victims and their families, restoring their rights, and supporting their recovery. Reparation encompasses a range of measures, including rehabilitation, psychosocial support, compensation, restitution, official acknowledgment of violations, and guarantees of non-recurrence.

These standards further emphasise that reparation programmes are most effective when they are designed around victims' own needs and priorities, taking into account the diversity of their circumstances and the different ways in which disappearance has affected their lives.

This approach is fully consistent with the report's findings. Families consistently emphasised that their needs differ according to their circumstances and that effective responses must be based on those needs, providing integrated forms of support that help restore a measure of stability after years of loss.

▪ The Right to Participation

International standards affirm the right of victims and their families to participate meaningfully in the design, implementation, and monitoring of policies and mechanisms that affect their rights. Such participation contributes to more responsive policies and programmes, strengthens transparency and accountability, and builds trust between victims and the institutions responsible for addressing the issue.

These standards also recognise that meaningful participation requires a safe and enabling environment, access to relevant information, respect for victims' views, and the removal of barriers that may hinder participation, with particular attention to those at greatest risk of marginalisation.

These principles closely mirror the views expressed by families throughout this report. Participants consistently emphasised that their participation should meaningfully influence priority-setting and decision-making, rather than being limited to symbolic or procedural consultation.

8. Conclusions

The findings of this report demonstrate that the issue of missing persons in Syria extends far beyond establishing the fate and whereabouts of those who remain missing. It continues to shape the daily lives of their families, with profound psychological, social, economic, and legal consequences. The testimonies consistently show that the continuing uncertainty surrounding the fate of missing persons remains the defining feature of families' experiences, shaping their needs and priorities after years of loss.

For most families, establishing the truth emerged as the foremost priority. It enables them to end years of uncertainty, understand what happened to their loved ones, and make informed decisions about their lives and future. Families also regard the truth as the foundation upon which justice, reparation, and the restoration of their rights depend.

The testimonies also highlight the persistent challenges that accompany the search for the truth, including the lack of reliable information, limited communication with the institutions concerned, and the exploitation and extortion experienced by some families. These findings underscore the need for more transparent and better coordinated mechanisms that provide families with regular access to information, strengthen confidence in ongoing efforts, and protect them from exploitation.

The report further demonstrates that families' needs extend beyond establishing the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones. They also include justice, reparation, and meaningful participation in the design, implementation, and monitoring of policies, mechanisms, and initiatives relating to the issue of missing persons. The testimonies show that families have accumulated valuable knowledge and experience through years of searching, which can make an important contribution to the development of more effective policies and responses, provided they are given safe and meaningful opportunities to participate.

The review of relevant international standards confirms that the priorities identified by families are firmly grounded in internationally recognised rights and principles, including the right to know the truth, the right to justice, the right to reparation, and the right of victims and their families to meaningful participation. These standards provide a strong foundation for national and international actors seeking to develop responses that are better aligned with families' needs and priorities.

Ultimately, the report concludes that a more effective response to the issue of missing persons in Syria requires placing families of missing persons at the centre of national and international efforts. Listening to their experiences, responding to their needs and priorities, and ensuring their safe and meaningful participation in efforts to establish the truth, achieve justice, and provide reparation are essential to building a response that is both effective and firmly grounded in victims' rights.

9. Recommendations

The recommendations presented in this report are informed by an analysis of testimonies from families of missing persons and survivors of detention and enforced disappearance. They are intended to support the development of a more effective national and international response to the issue of missing persons in Syria—one that is grounded in victims' rights, responsive to their priorities, and advances efforts to establish the truth, achieve justice, provide reparation, and ensure meaningful participation.

Recommendations to the Syrian Authorities

- Recognise the issue of missing persons as a national priority and address it as a humanitarian and human rights issue requiring a comprehensive and coordinated response.
- Support the work of the National Commission for Missing Persons by safeguarding its independence and ensuring that it has the human, financial, and technical resources required to fulfil its mandate effectively.
- Facilitate access to records, archives, and other information that may assist in establishing the fate and whereabouts of missing persons, while ensuring that evidence is preserved and protected from destruction, alteration, or tampering.
- Bring national legislation and policies into line with international standards relating to missing persons, enforced disappearance, and victims' rights.
- Adopt effective measures to protect victims, witnesses, and families of missing persons, ensuring that they can participate and provide information without fear of reprisals or intimidation.
- Strengthen cooperation with the National Commission for Missing Persons, the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic, United Nations entities, and civil society organisations to advance coordinated efforts to establish the truth and achieve justice.

Recommendations to the National Commission for Missing Persons

- Adopt a victims-centred approach that places the needs and priorities of families of missing persons at the heart of all policies, programmes, and operational procedures.
- Ensure the safe, meaningful, and effective participation of families of missing persons and survivors in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes, so that their participation meaningfully informs decision-making rather than being limited to consultation or symbolic representation.
- Establish clear, safe, and transparent mechanisms for receiving and verifying information provided by families and survivors, while ensuring the protection of personal data and confidentiality.
- Develop an institutional communications strategy that provides families with regular, accessible, and timely updates on the Commission's work, thereby strengthening transparency and trust.
- Develop programmes that respond to the psychological, social, economic, and legal needs of families of missing persons in coordination with the relevant authorities.

- Strengthen cooperation and information-sharing with the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic, relevant national and international actors, victims' organisations, and civil society organisations to support efforts to establish the truth.

Recommendations to the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic

- Continue strengthening mechanisms that ensure the safe and meaningful participation of families of missing persons and survivors throughout all aspects of the Institution's work.
- Strengthen coordination and information-sharing with the National Commission for Missing Persons, United Nations entities, and civil society organisations in order to reduce duplication and maximise the effectiveness of collective efforts.
- Draw on the expertise and experience of victims' associations and civil society organisations in developing search methodologies and communication strategies.
- Maintain regular communication with families by providing updates on the progress of the Institution's work whenever possible.
- Support the development of harmonised databases and information management methodologies to strengthen the collection, verification, management, and analysis of information.
- Ensure that information-gathering and interviews are conducted in ways that take account of participants' psychological and social well-being, with referrals to appropriate support services where necessary.

Recommendations to the United Nations and International Mechanisms

- Continue supporting efforts to establish the fate and whereabouts of missing persons and strengthen coordination among international mechanisms working on this issue.
- Promote information-sharing and coordination between international and national mechanisms in order to accelerate efforts to locate missing persons and establish the truth.
- Support capacity development for the National Commission for Missing Persons and other relevant national institutions to enable them to carry out their mandates in accordance with international standards.
- Promote approaches that ensure the safe and meaningful participation of victims and their families in all initiatives relating to the issue of missing persons.

- Integrate the needs and priorities of families of missing persons into programmes relating to transitional justice, institutional reform, peacebuilding, and early recovery.
- Support efforts to preserve evidence and information while strengthening international cooperation in search and truth-establishment efforts.

Recommendations to Syrian and International Organisations

- Develop awareness programmes on the risks of fraud, extortion, and misinformation relating to the issue of missing persons.
- Expand psychosocial, legal, social, and economic support programmes for families of missing persons in ways that respond to their evolving needs.
- Support initiatives that strengthen the participation of families of missing persons in advocacy, policymaking, and public awareness.
- Strengthen coordination and the exchange of expertise and information among organisations working on the issue of missing persons to improve the effectiveness of the overall response.
- Develop capacity-building programmes for victims' organisations and associations of families of missing persons to strengthen their participation in national and international efforts.
- Ensure that programmes and activities adopt gender-responsive approaches and take into account the needs of children and other groups in vulnerable situations.

Recommendations to Donors

- Provide sustainable, long-term funding for programmes addressing the issue of missing persons to ensure continuity of efforts and services for families.
- Support Syrian victims' organisations and civil society organisations and strengthen their role in documentation, advocacy, and service delivery.
- Allocate dedicated resources for mental health services, legal assistance, and social and economic support for families of missing persons.
- Support joint initiatives that strengthen cooperation among national institutions, international actors, and victims' organisations, contributing to a more coordinated, comprehensive, and effective response.

For further information, please contact The Missing Persons' Families Platform in North and East Syria ([MPFP-NES](#)):

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