

30 August 2014

**Message of H.E. John W. Ashe
President of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly,
for the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances**

More than 20 years after the adoption by the UN General Assembly of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, this appalling practice continues to be used to repress and silence people and foster a climate of fear and intimidation. On this International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, we are reminded that nothing can justify such practice. Whether it is used to fight terrorism and organized crime or to silence voices calling for democracy and human rights, enforced disappearances cannot and should not be tolerated. In the face of contemporary forms of enforced disappearance, including the placement of victims in secret detention outside the protection of the law, we need new strategies to counter this crime and protect the victims.

Today in many countries, decades after internal conflicts and political repression, the fate of thousands of peoples remain unknown. Behind each disappearance is a personal story and a family seeking the truth, justice, and the right to an effective redress. Relatives of disappeared persons and civil society groups are often the only voices reminding us of the plight of the victims. They play a fundamental role, yet many of them are vulnerable to intimidation and face numerous obstacles in their fight to bring an end to enforced disappearances. Effective measures are needed to protect them and other members of the community from threats and prevent and punish any act of intimidation, persecution or reprisal.

Largely thanks to the efforts of victims' families, the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance entered into force on 23 December 2010. For the first time, a treaty established the right of any person not to be subjected to enforced disappearance. The Convention also recognized the right of all the persons affected by enforced disappearance to know the truth about the circumstances of this crime and the fate of the disappeared person.

I commend the 43 States that have already ratified the Convention. On this International Day, I call upon all other Member States to commit to eradicating this crime and to consider becoming a party to the Convention so that in every corner of the world, the right not to be subjected to enforced disappearance becomes a reality.