



INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE
OF THE RED CROSS

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Lebanese authorities must pass a law on missing persons

Beirut, Lebanon. Forty-two years after the civil war began in Lebanon, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) calls on the Lebanese authorities to pass a law that will help clarify the fate of those who have gone missing during armed conflicts in the country since 1975. The ICRC also urges the authorities to approve a project to collect biological reference samples from the missing persons' families.

“The families of missing persons have been waiting for years, anxious to receive news about their loved ones,” said Fabrizio Carboni, head of the ICRC delegation in Lebanon. “Unfortunately, we are running out of time: mothers and fathers are dying heartbroken without knowing what happened to their sons and daughters. They have a right to know, and it is the responsibility of the Lebanese authorities to provide some answers.”

Thousands of people from all sides and backgrounds went missing in Lebanon during the civil war, and their fate remains unknown. Under international humanitarian law, government authorities are required to clarify the fate of persons who go missing in conflict situations. However, Lebanon has yet to take the necessary steps.

“Looking at the priorities of the Lebanese government, we feel that the suffering of missing persons' families is underappreciated,” said Carboni. “This should change. A law on missing persons and a mechanism to provide answers should be made a priority.”

Since 2012, the ICRC has actively supported the Lebanese authorities in fulfilling their responsibility to clarify the fate of missing persons. The organization has been interviewing families to gather crucial and detailed information about their missing loved ones and collecting biological reference samples from their close relatives for future DNA analysis and identification efforts.

The ICRC is standing by the families and responding to their specific needs. In 2015, it launched an accompaniment project in Aley, Baabda, Chouf and Sidon to create a support network for them. Carboni said: “The families have a pressing need to learn the fate of their missing loved ones. Since the beginning of the civil war, we've been helping them. Today, we need the Lebanese authorities to assume their responsibilities.”

The ICRC has been present in Lebanon since 1967 and has carried out its humanitarian work through periods of conflict, including the 1975-1990 civil war. The organization is currently responding to the rapidly growing needs of displaced people fleeing war and violence across the region along with the communities hosting them.