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To : Ambassador Höynck, Mission of Germany and Presidency of the European Union,  
c.c. : Hervé Magró, Mission of France,  
Mary Robinson, High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Fax numbers : (4122) 7343043, (4122) 7589137, (4122) 9179012

Date : 27 April 1999

Re : Review of the mechanisms, Recommendation one:

REQUEST TO MAINTAIN THE WORKING GROUP ON ENFORCED OR INVOLUNTARY  
DISAPPEARANCES

Dear Ambassador Höynck,

We write to you as we are concerned about the proposal of the Bureau of the Commission on Human Rights, to transform the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (UNWGEID) into a Special Rapporteur on Disappearances, a proposal which seems to find support belong a lot of members and observers of the Commission, including members of the European Union.

Before your country and the European Union will take its final decision on this matter, we request you to consider the following aspects:

1. The Working Group has been an essential and indispensable instrument for all the associations of relatives of the disappeared, both in the search for truth, justice and reparation, as in the prevention of new acts of enforced disappearance in our country. We share fully the arguments given by Amnesty International and other international NGOs in the sense that the unique mandate of the Working Group cannot be fulfilled by a single rapporteur.
2. Contrarily, the proposed measure would weaken drastically the possibilities of the victims of enforced disappearance for a special procedure to take in charge the adequate study of the cases and to clarify the whereabouts and the fate of the disappeared. It would also go against the expressed will of the Commission, to strengthen the protection and promotion of human rights.
3. The cost/benefit argument for the "rationalization" of procedures is not valid in the case of the UNWGEID. In the last 10 years, the UN Secretariat reduced already the number of officers to attend the cases of disappearances from 9 to actually 1 ½, meanwhile the number of pending cases grew from several thousand to 48.770 this year, forcing the personal in charge to rationalize to a maximum - i.e. reduce - the communications to governments, families and NGOs, with an negative impact on the effectiveness of the Group.
4. Finally, we agree with the recent statement of the Chairman of the Working Group to the current Commission, on the necessity "to reinforce its current mandate and renew its membership, in order to support, study, and contribute to the development and strengthening of this humanitarian mechanism."

We hope we can rely on you to defend this instrument, for the benefit of the victims, the relatives of the disappeared and the protection of human rights.

Yours faithfully,

Committee of Parents of Kidnapped in Lebanon  
Beirut, Lebanon

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