

International Committee of the Red Cross Speech

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International Day of the Disappeared 2024

Dear families, dear friends, dear all,

Another year has passed and we from The International Committee of the Red Cross wish to extend our appreciation to the Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Disappeared in Lebanon (CFKDL) for the invitation to be here with you today on 30th August to commemorate the International Day of the Disappeared.

*Hundreds of thousands of people around the world are missing today. Many of them unfortunately never return and are never heard of again. By the end of 2023, more than 239,700 missing persons were registered by the ICRC Movement around the world. We know this figure only captures a small percentage and does not convey the true extent of the pain, the sufferings and the multiple consequences a missing person has on his or her surroundings. In Lebanon, 35 years after the end of the civil war, the fate and whereabouts of thousands of persons remains is still unknown.

*As many of you here know personally, behind every missing person, many more are suffering immeasurably from the anguish and uncertainty of not knowing the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones and struggling with the multiple consequences that their loss has on their lives. Families have the need and the right to know what has happened to their loved ones.

*Even years after conflict has ended, how States and parties to a conflict choose to address the issue of missing persons shapes the fabric of many societies long after the guns fall silent, and it remains a crucial element of broader peace and reconciliation processes.

* In Lebanon, the passing of Law 105 and the establishment of the National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared constituted two important achievements promoted by the families as well as a numerous allies from the civil society. While the road has been paved for the clarification of the fate and the whereabouts of the missing, further efforts, including political and state support, are still needed for these mechanisms to yield fruits.

* The ICRC is deeply grateful to the CFKDL for its continued and relentless advocacy. Moreover, our profoundest appreciation goes to the families of the missing, who refuse to let their loved ones stay in the unknown. The ICRC will continue its efforts to help strengthen the mechanisms that exist today in Lebanon and will continue to stand with the families and those who support them in advocating for their right to know. Giving visibility to this cause is essential, because for the families time may pass, but life will only truly go on once they are provided with the answers that allow for closure. In that sense we will keep celebrating this day until the last answer has been given.