



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK**

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SECURITY COUNCIL – ARRIA-FORMULA MEETING

MISSING PERSONS IN ARMED CONFLICT: 5TH ANNIVERSARY OF SCR 2474 (2019)

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CHRISTIAN WENAWESER

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. President,

We thank you for convening this important discussion, which addresses an essential and painful challenge in the humanitarian area which is often not given sufficient attention. The discussion today also ensures continuity and follow-up to Resolution 2474, adopted five years ago under the leadership of Kuwait, wherein the Council established mechanisms to investigate missing persons and return their remains. War has inevitable and numerous tragic consequences and leads to untold human suffering, which can only be prevented when war itself is. The recent worrying trends with respect to the use of force must lead to a new focus of our work which should emphasize the need to prevent illegal war-making and to ensure accountability where the relevant rules of international law are blatantly violated. The reality is that the human suffering resulting from armed conflict cannot effectively be mitigated or accounted for.

Nevertheless, of course, it is our collective obligation to help alleviate the fate of those who suffer, often for long years, from anxiety and uncertainty about the fates of loved ones who have gone missing, in particular during armed conflict. Losing a loved one through violence and the use of force is a cruel experience in and of itself. Living in uncertainty about the fate of the person in question and being unable to find closure while going through a rollercoaster of – often false

– hope and despair is an ordeal that no human should have to suffer.

Armed conflicts always lead to the disappearance of human beings, for a variety of reasons. But often, people do not simply go missing, but they are “disappeared” by a State or an armed group, removed from the protection of the law and from any accounting including to the families and loved ones affected. This crime, invented in Nazi Germany and systematically used by military juntas in the 70s and 80s, in particular in Latin America, has long been criminalized under international criminal law and outlawed under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court as a crime against humanity. It is one of the most complex and vicious crimes committed against humanity as a whole and should be prosecuted vigorously and as a matter of priority both in national and in international courts.

If the fate of missing persons is a tragic reality in many conflict situations, the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic since 2011 certainly stands out, through the sheer numbers which far exceed 100,000 missing persons. We therefore welcomed and actively supported the creation of a Mechanism on missing persons, with the mandate to clarify the fate and whereabouts of all missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic and to provide adequate support to victims, survivors and families of those missing. We are gratified to see that good progress has been made since the decision was adopted last year and look forward to the fully and speedy operationalization of the mandate in the coming weeks. The mechanism has an important and strictly humanitarian mandate to play, which addresses a key human rights issue and is complementary to the important work that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been carrying out so ably for decades.

I thank you.