

MEDIA ADVISORY

UN expert group meets in Argentina 35 years after its creation in response to dictatorship's disappearances

GENEVA / BUENOS AIRES (26 February 2015) – The United Nations Working Group* on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances will meet in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 2 to 6 March 2015, to mark the 35th anniversary of its creation as a response to the disappearances committed by the dictatorship.

The Group will hold its 105th session at the former site of one of the largest clandestine detention and torture centers that operated in the country at the time, the *Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada* (ESMA), which currently houses the Remembrance and Human Rights Centre of the National Archive of Memory.

“The creation of our body is strictly related to enforced disappearances which took place in the country during the dictatorship,” said the experts of the Working Group. “This triggered the international community to establish the Working Group, the first UN independent monitoring mechanism with the mandated to address a specific human rights issue.”

The 35th anniversary of the Working Group's creation will be commemorated with a public event held at the Salon Libertador of Palacio San Martin, premises of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on Monday, 2 March, at 18:15. “We are very grateful to the Government of Argentina for inviting the Working Group in this very symbolic opportunity,” the experts noted.

During its session, the five-strong group of experts will examine over 700 cases from 41 countries. It will also meet relatives of those who have disappeared, civil society representatives and different State authorities, to exchange information on individual cases as well as to discuss thematic issues related to enforced disappearances.

The Working Group will, in addition, examine allegations received regarding obstacles encountered in the implementation of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

The Working Group's 105th session is held in private. A **press release** will be issued at the end of the session, on 6 March 2015.

A public event with the participation of the members of the Working Group will be held at the Salón Rojo of the Law School of the University of Buenos Aires (UBA), on Thursday, 5 March at 18:00.

(*) The Working Group is comprised of five independent experts from all regions of the world. The

Chair-Rapporteur is Mr. Ariel Dulitzky (Argentina) and the Vice-Chair is Ms. Jasminka Dzumhur (Bosnia and Herzegovina); other members are Mr. Bernard Duhaime (Canada), Mr. Osman El-Hajjé (Lebanon) and Ms. Houria Es-Slami (Morocco).

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The Working Group was established by the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1980 to assist families in determining the fate and whereabouts of disappeared relatives. It endeavours to establish a channel of communication between the families and the Governments concerned, to ensure that individual cases are investigated, with the objective of clarifying the whereabouts of persons who, having disappeared, are placed outside the protection of the law. In view of its humanitarian mandate, clarification occurs when the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person are clearly established. The Working Group continues to address cases of disappearances until they are resolved. It also provides assistance in the implementation by States of the UN Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. For more information on the Working Group, log on to: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Disappearances/Pages/DisappearancesIndex.aspx>

The UN Working Groups are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. Their members are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

Check the UN Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance:
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/EnforcedDisappearance.aspx>

Check the latest reports of the Working Group:
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Disappearances/Pages/Annual.aspx>

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