

Families must be at the center of the search for the missing

Geneva, 12 December 2024 – The events in Syria over the past days mark a turning point in its history and in Syrians' quest for truth and justice. Many families have been reunited with their loved ones who for years had languished in detention sites. Many more families are yet to find answers on what happened to their missing relatives.

The IIMP was created to support victims' right to know the truth. It was established by the United Nations' General Assembly in response to the urgent calls from family members of Syria's many thousands of missing persons to determine their fate and whereabouts. The IIMP takes a victim-centered approach, is inclusive of families and is guided by the principle of 'do no harm'. These principles are of paramount importance in dealing with the rapidly changing context.

At this critical juncture, it is essential to ensure the protection and preservation of information, data, and sites of vital relevance to clarifying the fate and whereabouts of missing persons. All parties to the conflict in Syria are required to fully cooperate with the IIMP, as set out in UNGA resolution 77/301 and in line with their obligations under international law. Authorities in Syria are expected to take all necessary measures to facilitate the work of the IIMP. They must also preserve and protect records and information which may be valuable to families knowing what happened to their missing relatives and take measures to protect mass graves throughout the country.

While the past few days have reignited families' hope in reuniting with their loved ones, many have been severely impacted by rumors and inaccurate reports. The IIMP urges all actors, including media outlets, to refrain from circulating unverified information, or any information detrimental to families' wellbeing and survivors' dignity. Moreover, assistance to survivors and families is of utmost importance – the IIMP is committed to working jointly with other actors towards an effective response in light of the massive needs.

Much work lies ahead to clarify the fate and whereabouts of all missing persons in Syria. The IIMP will work towards this end, including with relevant stakeholders. It is also receiving relevant information, including primary source data, on archives, records, and lists from detention centers, prisons, courts, cemeteries, coroners, and information about potential or known burial sites. We encourage all actors with such information to securely submit it to the IIMP via: <https://forms.office.com/e/DG72AQhkrr>

** The IIMP will at a later stage start receiving individual cases and search requests, and will announce when this process begins.*