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Forced disappearance must not be accepted by the international community

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK ([AOHR UK](#)) states that on the International Day of Victims of Enforced Disappearances, the international community has largely failed to put an end to this criminal practice, as used by repressive regimes across the world.

The international community and decision-makers across the world must enact concrete measures to eliminate enforced disappearance, which is a crime against humanity according to the United Nations and to international law. However, those same laws remain largely unenforced, and indeed recent developments suggest that certain regimes enjoy a quasi-impunity to commit enforced disappearance against their citizens.

In the Arabic-speaking region currently, enforced disappearance is widely used by regimes as a weapon to break the will of their opponents — a weapon that is particularly effective since it involves entire families in the painful search for their loved ones.

In Egypt, practically every political detention involves enforced disappearance for varying periods, in some cases extending for years at a time. According to lower estimates, there are currently 60 thousand political detainees in Egyptian prisons, most of whom have been subjected to enforced disappearance. Approximately 60 people have remained missing since the current regime took power 9 years ago.

Over the same period many people in Egypt have been subjected to enforced disappearance before being killed, as happened to the Italian doctoral student Giulio Regeni and the Egyptian economic researcher [Ayman Hadhoud](#). Others have



appeared months after their disappearance only to give coerced confessions on television.

In Syria, which has suffered a terrible civil war since 2011, at least 100,000 people, including 3,041 children and 6,642 women, have been subject to enforced disappearance at the hands of the regime since that year.

In Iraq, the number of people forcibly disappeared in the governorates of Nineveh, Anbar, Salah al-Din and Diyala in just two years has been estimated at 23,000. Approximately 250,000 people have been disappeared in Iraq since the US invasion in 2003.

In Yemen, human rights groups, trade unions, victims' groups, and the families of the disappeared continue to call for accountability. Hundreds of civilians are languishing in the prisons of the various parties engaged in the conflict, which include Saudi Arabia, UAE, and the Iran-backed Houthi forces.

In [Saudi Arabia](#), [the UAE](#), and Bahrain, the regimes utilise enforced disappearance against activists, intellectuals, and human-rights defenders, as well as subjecting them to unfair trials, harsh sentences, and a general denial of their basic rights.

AOHR UK underlines the need for the international community to deal much more effectively with this serious crime. Countries that claim to respect human rights cannot seriously do so whilst pursuing normal relations with regimes that [systematically](#) commit crimes against humanity against their own citizens.

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK)