

HEALING THE WOUNDS OF THE CONFLICT AND DISASTER: CLARIFYING THE FATE OF MISSING PERSONS IN THE OSCE AREA

HEARING BEFORE THE COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS SECOND SESSION

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February 28, 2012

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
WASHINGTON, DC

[The hearing was held at 2 p.m. in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC, Hon. Christopher H. Smith, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, presiding.]

Commissioners present: Hon. Christopher H. Smith, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; Hon. Steve Cohen, Commissioner, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; Hon. Michael C. Burgess, Commissioner, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; and Hon. Joseph R. Pitts, Commissioner, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Witness present: Her Majesty Queen Noor, Commissioner, International Commission on Missing Persons; Shawn A. Bray, Deputy Director, Interpol Washington, U.S. National Central Bureau; Amor Mašović, Member of the Board of Directors, Missing Persons Institute of Bosnia and Herzegovina; and Fatima Tlisova, Writer/Editor/Producer, Voice of America.

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Mr. SMITH. The Commission will come to order, and good afternoon to everybody. Today we will hear testimony on how governments and NGOs can more successfully identify and locate persons missing as a result of conflict, disasters, crimes such as human trafficking, and other violations of human rights; and hold accountable those responsible for perpetrating atrocities.

Across the OSCE, thousands of families await knowledge of what happened to a relative from these causes [inaudible] and humanitarian need that we cannot ignore. And of course this tragedy is replicated all over the world, where people are lost and loved ones try to ascertain: Where are they? Are they dead or alive? And that's why we meet today.

This Commission has not ignored this need over the years. Particularly since the mid-1990s, we have held many hearings and have had fact-finding missions that have touched on missing persons from the conflicts in and between countries of the former Yugoslavia. And both the International Commission on Missing

Persons and the Missing Persons Institute of Bosnia and Herzegovina have appeared here before as Commission witnesses.

Frank Wolf and I visited the Western Balkans, including Vukovar, in August 1991—and Srebrenica when the region was still engulfed in ethnic hatred. And I returned to Srebrenica in July 2007, where—more than 10 years after the genocide—I saw the coffins prepared for burial with the remains of hundreds of men slaughtered in 1995, recently identified through the technologies developed by the International Commission on Missing Persons. I'll never forget the words of Ray Search as he spoke at a very solemn ceremony, talking about the need for reconciliation but also the need for justice, as he tried to comfort many of those survivors and loved ones who were there at that internment ceremony.

But it is time also to take stock of this need—what governments and NGOs have done to respond to it, or have not done. And I think about how that response can be further improved. The greatest concerted effort that has been made within the OSCE is to identify and locate missing persons was in the Western Balkans in the conflicts of the 1990s.

More than 15 years after the end of the Bosnian conflict, and more than 10 years since the end of the heaviest fighting in Kosovo, most of the missing persons have been identified and located. We are in a position to take stock of those efforts there, and how lessons learned can be applied elsewhere: for example, in sub-Saharan Africa, where the number of missing persons is absolutely staggering.

I particularly want to draw attention to the magnificent work of the International Commission on Missing Persons, which has now located and returned the remains of over 18,000 victims of war alone, and is now in danger of losing ground gained because of difficulties over its legal status. One of the purposes of this hearing is to learn more about how we can support the ongoing work of the ICMP. At this moment I am preparing to introduce legislation that would call on the secretary of state to make every effort to advance at the U.N. a proposal for a permanent and internationally recognized legal status for the ICMP, so that it can carry out its mandate on a global scale.

I want to thank our distinguished witnesses for being here today: Queen Noor for making a very special effort to be here and to provide testimony for this Commission, which will give us additional information to act upon.

Finally, as the author of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act and its re-authorizations, I look forward to discussing with the witnesses the trafficking aspects of the missing person's tragedy: the identification and location of persons missing because they have been trafficked either on—in sex trafficking or in labor trafficking. I'd like to now yield to my good friend and colleague, Mr. Cohen, for any opening comments you might have.

**HON. STEVE COHEN, COMMISSIONER, COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just appreciate your hosting this hearing and having such a distinguished panel. The idea of missing persons in this age and time is anathema to civ-

ilized world, civilized society. And I know—I, as a—I was a history major and have always been curious about Raoul Wallenberg and is one of the missing persons of—after World War II—and why the Soviets apparently took him, must have imprisoned him—I mean, it's not really clear. But his whereabouts were unknown.

We've been concerned about our missing-in-action folks in Vietnam, and continue to, and want them—to know where they are, and bring them home if they're to be alive—and, if not, their remains. People want a resting place for their loved ones. It—that is a very important part of the healing process, and part of the family that they want to take care of the—their family members, even if they've been killed, and see that they're given a proper burial.

These particular instances where we see trafficking and people taking away—we have to find a way to use our scientific resources, which are great—our ability to conjure the sciences for DNA technologies and other opportunities to identify people—and use them to clear up mysteries and have a definity to the outcomes of war and crime. So with that, I just appreciate the opportunity to hear from the panel, to see what we can do as a Commission, and thank the Chairman for his work in scheduling the Commission, and yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Cohen, thank you very much. Dr. Burgess.

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS, COMMISSIONER, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Mr. BURGESS, M.D. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I—thanks for the recognition; thanks for calling this hearing. The existence of missing persons is unfortunately one of the many lingering effects of the conflicts and turmoil that have happened in several areas over which this Commission has observation for the last few decades. From the Balkans to the Caucasus to Cyprus, far too many people remain unaccounted, a fate that torments their families wondering about their status and their wellbeing.

The reasons for disappearance of individuals have multiple sources, from armed conflicts to human trafficking. At a state level we can try to prevent wars. But the astonishing cruelty associated with other activities like human trafficking have alluded governments, and we must do more to combat the blight.

I'll also just say, on a personal note—although it's not the subject of this Commission's hearing today—I did have the opportunity to accompany General James Conway to a mass grave site just outside the city of Al Hillah in Iraq in 2003, in an area that had just recently been opened up to the families. And I will never forget the pain that you could see etched on the faces of the families while they searched, sometimes with their bare hands, for evidence of a loved one that might have been interred in that—in that grave that was estimated to contain 200,000 shiite Muslims.

There have been some advances in piecing together clues to resolve the status of missing persons. In Cyprus, United Nations and other groups have helped the two communities come together, and identify some missing persons for the last few decades. But there is still so much to do. I hope the information that we hear from our witnesses today, and the work that this Commission is doing, can help find those who are missing and prevent misfortune from

happening in the future. Again, Mr. Chairman, it's an important subject, and I appreciate the recognition. I yield back the floor.

Mr. SMITH. Dr. Burgess, thank you very much. We are now also joined by the Chairman of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly: Mr. Turner, gentleman from Ohio.

**HON. MICHAEL R. TURNER (R-3) A MEMBER OF CONGRESS
FROM THE STATE OF OHIO**

Mr. TURNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for having this important hearing. And I want to thank the witnesses for their highlighting what is an important issue as we look to the aftermath at—of times of conflict. I was talking to Mr. Mašović and to Queen Noor that my community is Dayton, OH, where the Dayton peace accords were negotiated that brought peace to the Balkans. And from that, my community has an affinity for Bosnia and of course for the people there and the tragedy that ensued.

My first trip to Bosnia was in July 1996 with commerce secretary Mickey Kantor, as a follow-on to the tragic Ron Brown trip. Since then, in my community, Dayton is a sister city to Sarajevo. And many of our institutions are twinned—hospitals, universities. I had the opportunity, as the chairman was describing, a couple years ago to be at Srebrenica, where 535 bodies were returned to families for proper burial.

And I was struck, as the Chairman said, of the peace that you could sense with the families as they received the remains of their loved ones [inaudible] or identified by funding that the United States had provided, to try to bring an end to the wondering that people have of what happened to their loved ones, and to give them that sense of closure.

What you're doing in raising this issue is so important because it brings also the issue of responsibility. So many times where there has been a tragedy, and without the requisite proof, justice is also something that is not forthcoming. So I appreciate your work on an international level, and to highlight the need for this—not just in the Balkans, but as we look to conflicts throughout our globe. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Chairman Turner, thank you very much. I'd like to now introduce our distinguished witnesses, beginning with—and it is the high honor and extraordinary privilege for this Commission to welcome Her Majesty Queen Noor—who is an active patron, president and board member of numerous national and international organizations, including the United Nations organizations in the areas of mother and child health, education and women's development, environmental protection, culture and public architecture and planning.

In recognition of her efforts to advance development, democracy, and peace, the Queen has been awarded numerous honorary doctorates in international relations, law and humane letters, as well as other international awards. She heads the Noor Al Hussein Foundation, which was established in 1985 to support development through education, environment and cultural initiatives. And her Majesty became a Commissioner of the International Commission on Missing Persons in June 2001.

We then hear from Shawn Bray, who was appointed as the Deputy Director of Interpol Washington, a component of the U.S. Department of Justice, in February 2010. In this capacity Mr. Bray represents the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as its senior ranking official at Interpol Washington. He is responsible for managing law enforcement agents, analysts, and various specialists who operate in divisions dedicated to specific investigative areas: alien, fugitive, economic, crimes, drugs, terrorism, environment crimes, human trafficking and child protection, counterterrorism, state and local liaison operations. Very busy man. [Laughter.]

We'll then hear from Mr. Amor Mašović, who is the Chairman of the Bosnian Federal Commission for Missing Persons. He is a member of Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and a member of the International Association of Genocide Scholars. As Chairman of the Commission for Missing Persons, he is responsible for maintaining the records of individuals missing since the Bosnian war. Efforts to trace such individuals—recording and identification of bodily remains; investigation of mass and individual graves; cooperation with local courts in conducting—exhuming, autopsies, identification, and evidence gathering in cooperation with U.N. specialized agencies and other international and national organizations.

We'll hear then from Ms. Fatima Tlisova, who is currently a writer, editor and producer of Voice of America's Russian service. She is also—has experience as an investigative journalist, researcher, and expert on the Northern Caucasus region of Russia. She has written extensively on Circassian nationalism, the role of Islam in regional affairs, human rights abuses during the military operations in the North Caucasus, torture, disappearances and corruptions. She was editor-in-chief of Regnum News Agency, worked as a special correspondent in Gazeta, and reported for RFVRL and for the Associated Press. She has also appeared twice before our Commission to witness on human rights and media freedoms in Russia.

Queen Noor, the—yield to you for [inaudible] such time as you may consume.

HER MAJESTY QUEEN NOOR, COMMISSIONER, INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON MISSING PERSONS

Queen NOOR. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, members of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, thank you for using this occasion to highlight the issue of persons missing from wars, violations of human rights, natural disasters. Thank you as well for inviting me—as a Commissioner of the ICMP, the International Commission on Missing Persons—to address an issue that I believe deserves much more attention than it receives.

The missing are silent. They cannot plead their own cause. By definition, and often by design, there are no horrific images or messages in the media to galvanize public outrage. And they do not tweet from the scene, nor set up Facebook pages to organize protests. They are simply gone.

When people go missing, particularly through state-sanctioned violence, the family members left behind—usually women and children—are terrified to seek answers about the fate of their loved ones. In most of the world today, family members have no legal re-

course to demand answers. Those brave enough to ask often fear reprisals from the very authorities responsible for the disappearance in the first place, or who are seeking to cover up the crimes of previous regimes. After all, it is a fundamental tenet of systems of law that, if there is no body, there is no crime.

And so the silence persists. Breaking that silence is a vital part of dealing with the past following violent conflict. It is important for reconciliation, nation-building, and securing peaceful future. It is critical for the healing process of the families left behind. Most importantly, addressing the problem of the missing is crucial to preventing future conflict.

Mr. Chairman, ICMP estimates that in the world today there are 1 million persons missing from war, violations of human rights, human trafficking, drug-related violence and other causes; and that approximately 150,000 persons go missing every year from natural or manmade disasters. They, and those who mourn them, need help to break the silence.

Mass graves are like open wounds. If these crimes are left unresolved, they breed hatred and can perpetuate a cycle of violence. The legacies of these crimes, particularly in the former Yugoslavia, are a painful reminder of that fact. It remains in the interest of the United States to help stop the cycle of violence by assisting post-conflict states in resolving the problem of the missing.

The International Commission on Missing Persons was created in 1996 at the G-7 summit in Lyons, France, at the initiative of United States president Clinton, as the only international effort to deal exclusively with the issue. I've had the privilege of serving as a member of ICMP for over a decade, and I take great pride in its work as a independent human rights organization.

ICMP has a unique mandate. We work with governments to ensure that they take responsibility for ending the cruel uncertainty inflicted on the families of the missing; that they build rule-of-law institutions that allow for the missing to be located, recovered and identified; and that they are held accountable for atrocities committed; in short, that they end the silence.

Equally important, we work with the families of the missing. We educate and empower them. We help with reconciliation efforts between families from different groups or different sides of the conflict. We help rebuild trust between civil society and states emerging from conflict by creating a space for dialogue between government authorities and the families of the missing, so that they can demand answers. And we help craft legislation so that the right to information is enshrined in law.

We also assist judicial institutions, both domestic and international, so that families of the missing can seek justice and perpetrators are held accountable. In cases of natural or manmade disasters, as with the cases of missing persons from conflict and human rights abuses, ICMP uses the technology it is perhaps best known for: an integrated, scientific approach based upon DNA identification technology. ICMP has so far assisted governments in making, as you just heard, over 18,000 DNA-based identifications.

While ICMP now assists governments around the world, it was initially created to address the issue of persons missing from the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia—Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ser-

bia, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Macedonia—where an estimated 40,000 persons disappeared. With the ICMP's help, of those 40,000, 70 percent have been accounted for. That is an unprecedented achievement compared to any other region in the world that has had to deal with this issue.

I know Srebrenica well. The name of that small town has become a symbol, a byword for inhumanity—the only recognized genocide on European soil since World War II—where 8,100 men and boys were executed in a matter of days, and their bodies hidden in a series of mass graves strewn across the Bosnian countryside.

I first visited in 1996, a year after the massacre, to bring humanitarian supplies from Jordan and to meet with thousands of grief-stricken survivors to express solidarity and support. Years later, I returned as an ICMP commissioner to meet and often weep with Bosniak, Serb, and Croat women and men, as they struggled to come to terms with the disappearances of their husbands, sons and fathers—killed in some cases by the husbands or sons of those sitting across the table from them.

I remember their stories of being shunned from government offices and living neglected in collective centers, many with their fatherless children. ICMP reached out to them—to all of the families of the missing—regardless of ethnic, religious or national origin. And they became our partners in a first-ever effort to systematically, scientifically locate and identify their loved ones.

Remarkably, many of them united across religious lines and worked together to fight for answers and to create lists of the relatives of the missing. And, armed with this information, we began a large-scale effort across the former Yugoslavia to collect blood samples for DNA testing. Providing a blood sample soon became a powerful symbol for many of these families, to declare their loss and to give of themselves to identify their loved ones.

Mr. Chairman, I have been in the mass graves. I am still haunted by the memory. I still cannot comprehend the barbarism that mankind is capable of inflicting on his fellow man and the calculated, systematic attempts to strip these people of their humanity, to hide their bodies repeatedly so that they would never be identified, in order to deny that these atrocities took place.

And I've been in our ICMP DNA labs where identifications take place. We first started using DNA because all other methods to identify the missing have proved to be inadequate. I remember well that when I first became a commissioner, it seemed inconceivable that such a large number of persons could be identified and—could be located and identified. ICMP made a bold decision to do something that had never been done before: to use a technology, one that was still controversial in those days, even in court cases, and one that had certainly never been used following violent conflict where large numbers of persons were missing.

Skeptics said it was impossible, that at best we would be able to identify a thousand people, or that it would take a hundred years, or that the costs would be prohibitive. I remember our early efforts to teach families of the missing about DNA. But this powerful scientific tool proved invaluable in efficiently providing irrefutable evidence of the identity of tens of thousands.

Through painstaking work and exquisitely sensitive techniques of DNA analysis, ICMP is able to make genetic matches between DNA profiles taken from skeletal remains recovered from mass graves and DNA profiles provided voluntarily by living family members, thus merging state-of-the-art science with human outreach in the service of justice and human rights. In a politically charged post-conflict region like the former Yugoslavia, where denial regarding mass killings is prevalent, having this type of precision helped combat the myth that events such as Srebrenica never happened.

Today, of the approximately 8,100 persons killed and missing from the fall of Srebrenica, ICMP has helped identify 6,700. Simultaneously, we worked with regional authorities to build the political, legal and technical infrastructure that would allow governments to search for the missing regardless of their ethnic, religious or national origin.

Critically, we helped them build rule-of-law institutions, such as the Missing Persons Institute in Bosnia, that work with the prosecutor's office to ensure that each illicit grave site or mass grave is investigated as the scene of a crime—in these cases, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Recently we held a series of town hall meetings in the countries of the Western Balkans with the families of the missing.

Now that a majority of missing persons have been accounted for, the narrative has shifted from a desire to know the fate of the missing to want justice. The holistic approach of ICMP—working with governments, civil society, justice institutions, and providing scientifically based process of locating, recovering and identifying the missing—has set the parameters that will help the families pursue their legal rights and their desire for justice.

Mr. Chairman, ICMP has broken the silence. And we hope that this new, modern approach, which has demonstrated that the missing can be found, will reverberate across other conflict regions. In order to expand on the success of the countries of the former Yugoslavia, as well as the heroic efforts of thousands of affected families in accounting for such a large number of missing persons, we have developed a set of principles which are listed in the documents that we have provided the commission.

While these principles provide important guidance for governments around the world faced with the issue of the missing, I am particularly concerned with countries in the OSCE states outside of the Western Balkans. The issue of missing persons affects almost one quarter of the OSCE states. Unfortunately, limited progress has been made over the past decade. For example, there are still 3,000 to 5,000 missing in Chechnya. Only 310 of the 1,500 to 2,000 people reported missing in Cyprus have been accounted for, and the almost 5,000 people are still reported missing from Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

I would like to reiterate, by comparison, that the countries in the Western Balkans, in just over a decade, have been able to account for 70 percent of those missing, of which the vast majority were identified by DNA. These achievements are still not widely known. But ICMP stands ready to help these countries in the rest of the

OSCE region break the silence on missing persons just as dramatically.

I'd like to thank the U.S. Helsinki Commission for its tireless work in taking on tough human rights issues in Europe. I very much look forward to ICMP providing support to OSCE countries. With your support, the issue of missing persons as a result of armed conflict in Europe can be resolved. The silence on this issue cannot continue, and I hope this hearing will resonate throughout the OSCE region and beyond.

Our breakthrough in using an integrated, scientific approach to identify the missing also applies following natural or man-made disasters. ICMP has assisted Germany, Norway and Austria in dealing with missing-persons cases. In partnership with Interpol, ICMP has helped Thailand and the Maldives following the 2004 tsunami, and the Philippines following Typhoon Frank in 2008. ICMP and Interpol are now in the process of expanding their partnership to create a permanent disaster-victim identification platform.

Mr. Chairman, the issue of missing persons presents a global challenge that demands a global solution. ICMP, with its specialized technology and expertise, is the only organization in the world capable of doing so effectively and efficiently. ICMP's work has expanded since our early days in the former Yugoslavia, and we are currently assisting Iraq, where up to 1 million persons are reported missing. And we have helped Colombia, Chile, South Africa, El Salvador deal with missing persons from human rights abuses and conflict.

ICMP's work has also benefited the United States. I'm proud to say that ICMP helped the state of Louisiana identify missing persons following Hurricane Katrina. And I vividly remember meeting with the mayor of New York City soon after the 9/11 disaster to offer our assistance. His articulation, if you will, of the—of what he had been told by the surviving family members of victims of the World Trade Center disaster, in fact, were verbatim what I had been hearing from families in Serbia, Croatia, Kosovo, and Bosnia.

Sadly, in many other places where a request for our assistance has come from governments or NGOs—such as Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Lebanon, Algeria, Morocco, and most recent Libya—we've had great difficulty in gaining support and funds to provide desperately needed assistance—despite our successes, particularly in the Western Balkans, where we will soon end our active engagement. In addition, we are receiving increasing demands to help with missing-persons cases related to human trafficking, drug-related violence and a whole host of other causes.

The need for knowledge, for closure in these situations is universal. And providing it is critical to overcoming anger and despair and restoring stability to families, communities and nations. The fundamental human rights work of ICMP is not only palliative, it is preventative. The healing and recovery it provides to victims, as well as the process of accountability it helps foster with governments, are absolutely integral to the process of healing, reconciliation, justice and ultimately conflict prevention.

In closing, I would also like to thank my fellow ICMP commissioners from around the world who volunteer their time to assist ICMP. And in particular I would like to acknowledge and thank the current and previous chairpersons of ICMP, including Cyrus Vance, Bob Dole, James Kimsey, and the current Chair, Ambassador Thomas Miller.

I would also like to thank the governments that support ICMP's work, particularly the United States. The support of the U.S. State Department was critical in creating ICMP and making it a success story. I hope that this important support will continue. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much for a very, very eloquent statement, comprehensive, and for the great work that you and your organization does on this behalf. We are joined by Commissioner Pitts, as well as by Chairman Pitts and Chairman Frank Wolf. Frank, would you—OK—caught him as he was sitting down.

I'd like to now ask to Mr. Bray, if you have [inaudible] provide your testimony.

**SHAWN A. BRAY, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, INTERPOL WASHINGTON,
U.S. NATIONAL CENTRAL BUREAU**

Mr. BRAY. Good afternoon, Chairman Smith, distinguished members of the Commission, ladies and gentlemen. It is an honor to appear before you today on behalf of Interpol to discuss how the International Criminal Police Organization is helping law enforcement overcome obstacles to locating and identifying missing persons around the world as well as here at home.

Interpol Washington is a component of the U.S. Department of Justice and is co-managed by the Department of Homeland Security. We are the statutorily designated representative to Interpol on behalf of the attorney general. As such, we become the official point of contact for all Interpol-related matters in the United States.

Although primarily noted for its work in locating and apprehending transnational criminals and fugitives, Interpol plays a significant and important role in responding to requests for humanitarian assistance that may involve such matters as missing persons, victim identification, death notifications, threatened suicides, and health and welfare checks for persons around the world.

Using a sophisticated communications network, Interpol provides the world's law enforcement authorities with access to a variety of tools and resources that are being used to great effect in these humanitarian efforts—as part of either an individual inquiry or investigation, or in response to a larger-scale disaster. One of Interpol's most important functions is to enable the world's police to exchange investigative information quickly and securely.

Accordingly, Interpol has developed the I-24/7, a noted system that is encrypted, Internet-based, establishes communications, and a network that facilitates police-to-police interaction in real time, enabling users in 190 member countries to share crucial police data and access Interpol data bases and services each day. Services that are currently available through the I-24/7 include secure messaging, direct access to Interpol's data bases of nominal information such as fingerprints, photographs, DNA profiles, and biographical details on subjects of Interpol notices.

These notices, which are color-coded to indicate their specific purpose, are distributed to law enforcement authorities in the Interpol member countries for purposes that include, but are certainly not limited to: locating and seeking the arrest of fugitives, such as the famous red notice; locating missing persons or helping identify persons who are not able to identify themselves, as a yellow notice; and seeking information about unidentified persons who are deceased, which is a black notice.

These very systems which have allowed Interpol member countries to locate and apprehend serious and violent criminal offenders around the world also enable the organization to provide real-time assistance in locating and identifying missing persons, as well as others who are of official interest or concern to law enforcement. For example, Interpol is currently implementing the Fast ID system. This is a system that began with a conceptualization and a realization that no centralized, truly global police data base exists for use in identifying missing persons and/or unidentified bodies.

Accordingly, Interpol began development of such a data base with the objective of providing decentralized access to its member countries through the I-24/7 and for use in conjunction with the larger-scale disasters and regular policing activities that they face every day. The data used in the Fast ID system will be obtained from Interpol's disaster victim identification program, its forms and deployments, together with information provided in the corresponding yellow and black notices and its data sets.

Once entered, the data is processed through three separate components designed to increase opportunity for positive identification. The system merges components collected from the Interpol notices—secondary identifiers but certainly important identifiers such as clothing, body markings, piercings, jewelry—and ultimately will include facial recognition. However, the main component collects primary identifiers from the existing data bases which you've heard about today, such as fingerprints, DNA and dental records.

Interpol launched a prototype of the Fast ID system in 2011. Interactive testing of that system is currently being conducted with the objective of moving to full-phase testing later in 2012, followed by full implementation across its member countries. Fast ID is the newest component of Interpol's well-developed services that constitute its DVI program.

Interpol's DVI program utilizes internationally recognized processes and standards for identifying victims of major disasters, such as terrorist attacks or earthquakes, where visual recognition—pardon me, recognition—is not possible or may be severely limited. Under such circumstances, comparison by fingerprints, dental records, or stored DNA samples are typically required for conclusive identification.

Interpol's DVI services include command and coordination assistance, fully deployable incident response teams that can provide on-site investigative support or direct connectivity to Interpol's investigative data bases and command center. Interpol's DVI activities are led by the organization's standing committee on disaster victim identification. This committee is comprised of forensic and police experts from around the world that meet regularly to discuss improvements to standards and procedures in these matters.

Interpol's standards and guidelines for disaster victim identification are backed by specific training programs that include victim care and family support, compliance with international standards and forensic quality assurance controls, information sharing and exchange, and operational assistance to countries lacking disaster victim identification capacity. Many of these standards were developed in partnership with organizations and member countries. Such organizations as the International Commission on Missing Persons have been crucial in these efforts.

I am also pleased to report that in 2014 Interpol will open its Interpol Global Complex for Innovation, or IGCI. This state-of-the-art facility in Singapore will focus on innovative research and capacity-building for law enforcement agencies worldwide. One of its primary functions will be to enhance Interpol's DVI forensic capabilities and serve as a global resource and ultimately a platform for ensuring adequate levels of disaster preparedness.

Interpol actively supports its member countries' law enforcement efforts to investigate serious transnational crimes, including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Interpol's fugitive investigative support subdirectorates focus specifically on three key areas of assistance to provide support to its member countries. It focuses on operations, networking and training.

While operational support is achieved through the publication of the red notices—an international alert for locating and apprehending fugitives and wanted persons—training support is also provided to enhance capacity and proficiency in law enforcement agencies around the world, specifically with processing forensic evidence related to mass atrocities, skills that are necessary in locating, recovering and identifying victim remains, and successfully prosecuting perpetrators of these horrific crimes.

In the United States, Interpol Washington uses the I-24/7 and the Interpol notice system to support domestic and foreign law enforcement efforts to locate missing children, abducted children, missing adults and unidentified deceased persons. For example, within the framework of our missing and abducted children's program, Interpol Washington's human trafficking and child protection division publishes yellow notices and diffusions to seek the location and safe return of missing U.S. children to their parents.

Similarly, incoming requests from our foreign law enforcement counterparts are entered into U.S. indices, including the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. This information is promptly shared with law enforcement agencies nationwide in regard to children who are missing, removed from or brought to the U.S. by a noncustodial parent. In furthering these efforts, Interpol Washington also coordinates with the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues, which manages the complementary Hague Convention cases that we undergo.

Through our international missing persons program, Interpol Washington's alien/fugitive division utilizes yellow notices to locate and identify persons over the age of 18 who have been reported missing by domestic and foreign law enforcement agencies. Similarly, the International Unidentified Dead Body Program uses Interpol black notices and directs inquiries from member countries

to assist in identifying remains of unidentified deceased persons recovered by law enforcement authorities worldwide.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the commission, the theme of today's testimony is: How can we overcome obstacles to locating and identifying persons who have become missing from a variety of causes, both man-made and natural in nature? As we are all aware, efforts to locate and identify missing persons oftentimes have an international dimension that truly requires an international response.

In order to respond effectively, U.S. law enforcement authorities and our foreign counterparts must be able to overcome the very real linguistic, cultural and legal barriers that complicate the exchange of investigative information and often prevent support across international boundaries. As the world's largest organization for policing, Interpol provides the necessary communications network, framework for police cooperation, and investigative tools and services essential to our success.

As the national central bureau of Interpol for the United States, Interpol Washington is an active partner in international law enforcement efforts to ensure the timely location and identification of such persons. I would like to conclude by thanking the U.S. Helsinki Commission, and your professional staff in particular, for your continuing and tireless efforts to promote human rights. The hearing is certainly a continuing testimony to your commitment and dedication to such a worthy cause. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Bray, for your testimony and for your outstanding work, which this Commission and really the Foreign Affairs Committee has—since I work on human rights—we followed very carefully. Thank you so much.

I'd like to ask Ms. Tlisova, if she would proceed.

FATIMA TLISOVA, WRITER/EDITOR/PRODUCER, VOICE OF AMERICA

Ms. TLISOVA. Thank you, Chairman Smith and the members of the Helsinki Commission, for the honor to speak here today. I appear before you in my professional capacity as a reporter for VOA's Russian service and not as a private citizen. And I will—I will testify honestly and from the best of my knowledge.

At the VOA Russian service, we run a special section called Caucasus Today. In this series of reports, we are aiming to present interviews and opinions of experts who are focused on the situation in this region, as well as giving voice to the people from the North Caucasus, among whom are journalists, lawyers, and human rights activists, members of the government forces, and victims of the human rights abuses.

As a journalist responsible for the Caucasus section at the VOA Russian, I personally am in direct contact with representatives of society in the North Caucasus on a daily basis. To give you an impression of the extent of those connections, I can tell you that the night before yesterday a Skype call woke me—woke me up at 2 in the morning. It was a human rights activist from tiny Republic of Ingushetia, begging me to spread information on the latest disappearance—23 years old, Rustam Aushev was kidnapped.

His relatives were able to collect a visual recording from security cameras that show how Rustam was taken by men in civilian clothes. Relatives also have eyewitness testimony from the local highway patrol officers who said that upon the request to remove a vehicle from a restricted area, the person in the van presented them the ID of an FSB officer. This was the same car that, as recorded on the video, drove away from—with Rustam Aushev.

The human rights activist who called me that night said Rustam might still be alive. With day by—with days passing, the chances that his family will ever see him again are vanishing. Usually after 2 weeks, people start collecting money to bribe officials to buy back the body of their loved ones. This is a story not of just one particular person. This is a story of hundreds of families and thousands of young men and women.

I'm not—I'm not referring to the statistics in my testimony. The numbers are available in the—in the regular reports of the major human rights organizations. As impossible as they sound, according to the information from the local NGOs, they do not represent the real data, which is much larger. My testimony is based on an observation of the [inaudible] latest reports performed by the VOA Russian service. I will address main issues by quoting certain stories.

First [inaudible] the special amendment to Russia's criminal court introduced by Vladimir Putin puts the FSB, the former KGB, in a special position, which gives them unlimited authority in initiating and performing counterterrorism operations, so-called KTO. In his video interview to VOA, the United Nations special rapporteur on human rights and counterterrorism, Martin Scheinin, underlined that the main problem with Russia's definition of terrorism is that it often used against—that is, it is often used against political opponents, giving the authorities the ability to expand the usage of anti-terrorism law against persons and groups who do not employ terrorist methods. Based on the current law, the Russian security services are able to create blacklists, which do not imply any legal mechanism for the people who are on those lists to defend their lives and their reputation.

The role of security services: in a Skype interview to VOA [name inaudible] the former officer of the [inaudible] Caucasus confirmed that the Federal Security Services are directly involved in forced disappearances. Kidnapped persons are being subjects of brutal torture and posthumously labeled as members of terrorist, extremist groups. The bodies are disposed. And thousands of families have never granted a luxury to properly bury their loved ones.

The role of judiciary system: [inaudible] kidnapped is now [inaudible]. For 2 weeks, his family did not know anything of his whereabouts. When his name appeared, then his name appeared among detainees accused in an attempt to overthrow Russian government. In his letter from prison to the European Court of Human Rights [inaudible] wrote: For a very long time, I was beaten brutally in a perverted manner. After I signed empty sheets of paper, they brought me to the judge, naked and covered in blood. I do not remember the face of the judge who gave them a warrant for my arrest without even asking a single question about my condition.

In her interview to VOA, independent lawyer from [in Russian] [name inaudible] said that kidnapping is followed by detention, in which the victim is tortured to the point where he signs blank papers. After that, he can be accused in any crime. Her colleagues from Dagestan in Chechnya [inaudible] when interviewed by VOA said that detained persons are denied the right to an independent lawyer. They have to accept the lawyers appointed by the state. The three of them independently made a statement that the judiciary system in the North Caucasus is fully under control of the security services. Decisions are political motivated, predetermined and—predetermined by the orders from the FSB and do not represent justice.

A former member of the Russian Presidential Commission on Human Rights and the well-known journalist, Maxim Shevchenko, when interviewed by VOA, underlined that the Kremlin's brutal policy toward the North Caucasus is the very source of radicalization in every nation of the Caucasus. He said that people are forced to live with the knowledge that for this state, their lives value zero.

Violence committed by the government forces produces hatred and vengeance. Without a fundamental change of policy, this region is doomed to become a threat not only to Russia but to Europe in whole. There are many other aspects of this problem—to this problem. To the best of my ability, I gave you a very few major issues that support the system, where forced disappearances are not only possible but represent a very basic and a common tool for mass violations of human rights in the North Caucasus.

Thank you for your attention.

MR. SMITH. Thank you so very much for your testimony. Mr. Mašović?

**AMOR MAŠOVIĆ, MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS,
MISSING PERSONS INSTITUTE OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

MR. MAŠOVIĆ [through interpreter]. Honorable Members of Congress, ladies and gentlemen, for the past 20 years I've participated in the process of identifying and registering missing persons in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina whose disappearances is a result of an armed conflict which occurred in the beginning of the 90 century—'90 in the past century.

In the period between 1992 through present, I was leading many teams and institutions who managed to locate over 500 mass graves and more than 5,000 individual gravesites filled with human remains and more than 60,000 victims of forced disappearances. As a result of war, genocide, crimes against humanity and international law, it has documented the disappearance of approximately 30,000 people in Bosnia and Herzegovina and approximately 10,000 in Croatia, Serbia, and Kosovo.

Generally, I'm speaking of civilian population—men, women and children—who disappeared in eastern and western parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The geographical territory in the east is along the flow of river Drina, which banks' borderlines the country of Serbia, and in the west, along the flow of river Sana.

More than quarters of all missing persons were men and boys that disappeared during the military and police force aggression

conducted by Karadzic and Mladic. These forces operated on territory in and around the town of Srebrenica, which was protected by the flag of U.N. peacekeeping forces. The facts are that only that in the period—a few days in the month of July 1995, at least 8,300 Bosnians were assassinated in the shooting range or mercilessly killed. All these atrocities happened while the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina were under the protection of the U.S. peacekeeping forces.

All above mentioned facts are the obstacles in the process of finding and identifying the victims of enforced disappearances. Particularly, the fact is that the largest number of the enforced disappearances were result of genocide and the forms of war atrocities committed against civilians, and only a small number of disappeared were members of the military and police forces, which were missing in action.

On the other hand, it is the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina in a decade and a half still is not prepared to face the past and confront the organizers and perpetrators of the mass crimes. Not a small number of government representatives from the low-level positions to high-level positions are not willing to act with the accordance of the international obligations, neither with the accordance of the laws of Bosnia and Herzegovina, such as the law of the missing persons of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Mr. Chairman, we face chronic absence of information about the perpetrators of the crimes, about the victims and of forced disappearance, about the locations and the identity of victims, about dislocated primary into the secondary gravesites. All above mentioned facts are the main obstacles that Bosnia-Herzegovina is still facing and the obstacles that are still in the way for solving the problems of missing persons.

Accountable individuals and accountable government officials—not only that they refuse to supply the information which would help in locating the gravesite, yet they refuse to support the state court and Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia-Herzegovina and directly obstruct the process of determining the truth and achieve the justice.

The state court and Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the collaboration with International Criminal Court, for the former Yugoslavia, accused and convicted certain number of responsible persons for the forced disappearances. But the absence of political and all other forms of help and support are preventing them to be even more effective. International prosecutors and judges who are involved in the local judicial institutions suffer constant attacks and pressure from the certain politicians, which do not only not perform their duties but recently tried to minimize and altogether negate the occurrence of the crime—war crimes, including genocide and forced disappearances.

This behavior of certain individuals and government groups leave consequences on the family members of missing persons, especially the family members that are still searching for their loved ones. And because of this behavior, they're becoming more and more aware that their loved ones might not ever be found. The shortcomings is in a clearly stated political will to confront our past and truth, no matter how horrifying it is. It is an obstacle in a faster

and more effective solution of the missing persons problem, not only in Bosnia-Herzegovina but in whole region.

Absolutely the same conclusion was realized by the Working Group of Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances organized by the United Nations. Therefore, is extremely important—it's of extreme importance that the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina implements without any delay the recommendations by the working group and creates conditions for speeding up the process of exhuming and identifying the victims.

To that effect, the following points are essential: to support and empower the independence of the Institute for the Missing Persons of Bosnia-Herzegovina, provide more resources and require technology for finding mass graves. The government of Bosnia-Herzegovina needs to: provide more political and financial support to the institutions for the missing persons; increase the number of prosecutors who are engaged in [inaudible] and criminal prosecution of war criminals; provide fruitful negotiations between the government and the families of the missing persons, in order to ensure their rights to find the truth and repair the lost trust; provide larger number of forensic pathologists to ensure a faster process of identification; establish a functional forensic center on the state level; bring to justice key commanders and all other criminals, in order to strengthen the process of revealing the truth; strengthen the program of protection for witnesses in order to come forward with information for the location of the mass gravesites; provide support to the families of the victims, who are still exposed to attacks, threats and harassments; legislating a criminal law that enforced disappearance is an individual, criminal act, so in cases where it's not possible to convict for the crimes against humanity, prosecution will still be able to convict and sentence; to make impossible to grant amnesty for the accused of enforced disappearance; regard enforced disappearance as a continuous crime, which is going to enable implementation of all other laws which are passed after the occurrence of forced disappearances.

This will not undermine the principle of the retroactive implementation of the newly passed laws. Working Group on Forced and Involuntary Disappearances by the U.N. specifically points out in their recommendation to the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the key role of the international commission for the missing persons, and recommends that the commission remains active and stays active in the future involvements in Bosnia- Herzegovina.

Mr. Chairman, last I would like to emphasize that in spite of the obstacles previously mentioned, Bosnia-Herzegovina remains the leader in the world for solving the missing persons cases. I am sure that this opportunity to testify that was given to me by the Helsinki committee and—under leadership of honorable Congressman Smith, who was honored with the biggest award given by the families of the victims called [in Russian] and the testimony of all others involved future motivate United States of America and European community continue this successful project, or a story about discovering the final destinies of the missing in Bosnia.

I believe that my country will never be able to properly thank the people of United States of America, the U.S. Government, State Secretaries, Members of the Congress, Senators, members of the

U.S. armed forces, negotiators, diplomats, and many others for every assistance and effort to stop the war and successful prosecution of the war criminals.

Members of my team and hundreds of citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina requested that today, in front of this Commission, I convey their most heartfelt thanks and deep gratitude to the former Chairmans of the ICMP, Secretary of State, Mr. Vance, Senator Dole, Mr. J. Kimsey, present Chairman, Ambassador Miller.

Special gratitude to Her Majesty Queen Noor, who was able to recognize the pain and suffering that was in the hearts of Bosnian mothers, sisters, and daughters, and lend a hand in soothing the grief from human tragedies. Special gratitude to Katherine Bloomberg; without her, we would not have a law for missing persons or the Institute for Missing Persons. Special thanks to Katherine Bloomberg and her assistant—tens of thousands of Bosnian women and men have found their peace.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Mašović, thank you very much for your testimony and for the acknowledgements of all the key players, but you left out yourself, because you have been a key player for so long and have done an extraordinary job.

Let me just ask a few opening questions. And, first of all, to Queen Noor, if you could, do you find that when families are apprised of the findings, gruesome as they may be, from a mass grave, that they accept it? Or is there a time lag where—or that they doubt it? How does that work?

Push the button, please. Thank you.

Queen NOOR. It—to some extent it depends on the circumstances, how long it has been. But it is absolutely critical that they do finally have that information. And as I was saying, I found that families in New York City were using exactly the same words to describe their need for closure as families in Bosnia and elsewhere in the region have used, to describe their need for that information in order to achieve a personal, emotional, if you will, and psychological closure, but also in order to begin to move forward and to look forward to a future in which there can be active participants that ultimately can have an impact on the role that they can play in promoting reconciliation and stability in their communities and in their countries.

And we found that, in fact, in bringing together those who had suffered these losses from a different—the different religious, ethnic and national groups, that in fact—that they were able to find some measure of common—something in their common suffering that enabled them together to look at a different way of living in the future that we also consider to be of great value.

Mr. SMITH. You know, you mentioned the 9/11—almost 60 individuals from my district died in the World Trade Center. And I got to know many, not all, but many of the survivors. And I got to know them quite well. And your point is very well taken. Kristen Breitweiser, who is one of the widows from 9/11, and she was affectionately known as one of the Jersey girls, because they were the ones who led the effort to get the 9/11 Commission. And they were absolutely tenacious—three—she and three others.

But she told me and a group down here, the first time I met her, that she—you know, had—even though she knew the last point

where her husband was in the World Trade Center—last location—she still wondered, was he there? You know, was he—because she wasn't on the phone with him. And it was when she got her ring back—his ring, obviously the wedding ring—with a finger—as gruesome as that is, and it is gruesome—that she began to have closure that he did indeed die.

And yet, we all watched—I mean, there was no question where it all happened. Now, in a battlefield, obviously, and natural disasters there's certainly greater room for skepticism about—so—which is why the DNA is so important. Let me ask you—or just—back in 1998, March 31st, sitting right where Mr. Bray is sitting, I chaired a hearing of my subcommittee. It was called the Subcommittee of International Operations and Human Rights.

And we heard from Hasan Nuhanovic, who was the translator when Mladic met with the Dutch peacekeepers. And this was 3 years after the 1995 genocide occurred. As a matter of fact, we had a hearing that I also chaired right here on mass graves and other atrocities in Bosnia in December of '95. But the full weight of what had happened there was still streaming out. In 1998, here's the man who had his whole family—or much of his family disappear right in front of his midst, said: The Dutch not only turned the people over to the Serbs, but also tried to hide the evidence about it. They hid the list of 239 people from the Potocari camp. They did nothing to find out what had happened to those men and boys—we know it was 8,000 strong—including some women, including my mother, until I visited the Dutch Defense Ministry in The Hague in January of 1997. And he went on to say: There was no news about the fate of the people, still. This was 3 years after that genocide.

The need for reorganization and the work of all of you is so extraordinarily important, one, for the families; second for governments, including friendly governments, you know, the so-called safe haven at Srebrenica where the Dutch peacekeepers literally handed over to Mladic people for slaughter—that, you know, what ensued thereafter was anything but a transparent and open investigation. There was efforts to hide what had happened. So the importance of holding to account governments, holding to account friendly governments—not just those who perpetrate the crimes—I think cannot be understated.

So I thank you for the work that you're doing. I would ask you, you know, if—and if any of you would like to answer it—you know, dictatorships are always harder to deal with, and whether or not you have found, in your work, where access to the battlefield or even access to a natural disaster is hindered or hampered by the fact that it might be a dictatorship like China. Even Vietnam—you know, their—we have Americans—World War II, 73,000 MIAs; Korean War, almost 8,000; Vietnam 1,689 still MIA.

The latter two—World War II we had access to the battlefield globally—or almost total access. Many died on ships so those men and women will never be known where they died. But in Korea, no access to North Korea at all—very little, you know, over the years. And Vietnam, obviously, it has been done very, very slowly over the course of many years. So my question is about the access in dictatorships or authoritarian regimes. Has it been your experience to

find that's harder? You mentioned 9 million in Iraq. I'm not sure if that was during Hussein or more recent.

Queen NOOR. Well, Iraq breaks that—well, one footnote to your—what you were saying initially, at the beginning, about the translator. We have actually, in fact, identified now all of Hasan's family. It's just a small footnote, but it is—

Mr. SMITH. It's important.

Queen NOOR [continuing]. It is a little example of what ICMP—the impact that we've had on so many families—I wish all of them, but a large percentage of them.

Yes, it does depend on—every country's circumstances are slightly different. And we've had a range of experiences that are very much affected by the legal and political systems in different countries. And in Iraq, we have been training people from Iraqi ministries in scientific methods to evacuate mortal remains.

But just as in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Balkans, in countries like Iraq and others, like Libya, which have asked for our help as well, and Lebanon, there are different parties that have different vested interests in either exposing the full truth and all the information about these cases or in trying to conceal them, and as I said in my remarks, or cover up for previous regimes.

So there are a variety of different circumstances. I don't know if you have perhaps some observations on that. And we, as an independent, impartial organization, feel that we are well-suited. And we have been able to provide information and court cases, because we are respected and understood to be an impartial organization, able to operate in ways that other entities, like ICRC and other entities, are not as able to do today.

Mr. BRAY. I would agree that it depends country-to-country. With Interpol you have 190 member countries that come together voluntarily. Within the United States we refer to a thin blue line connecting law enforcement at all our levels—Federal, State, local, and tribal. But I would submit that this line also exists between countries, particularly through Interpol.

We often get much accomplished, despite geopolitical differences, because we're communicating law enforcement to law enforcement to solve crime, to promote humanitarian efforts. I think that's where organizations such as these come into their own.

Now, can I say that across the board that level of cooperation exists within every country? I would not submit that to you. But I would say that every effort that we can make, every tool in the box should be utilized in such efforts.

Mr. SMITH. We do have a vote on the floor. There's three, but they'll—it'll only take about 10 minutes and then we'll come back. But I would like to yield to Mr. Pitts. And I know if people have schedules they have to meet, we certainly understand. But we would like to, if you could, just bear with us for 10 minutes after Mr. Pitts' questioning.

**HON. JOSEPH R. PITTS, COMMISSIONER, COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Mr. PITTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Your Majesty, thank you for your work. And thank you all for your compelling testimony. I would like to ask you, I mean, your—how can the ICMP's success

be transferred to other OSCE states faced with the issue of missing persons? And what has been the ICMP's work within OSCE outside of Western Balkans?

Queen NOOR. We—I think that we've demonstrated that, first of all, bringing international attention to an issue like this—and that's exemplified by the creation of ICMP in the first place—is—has—is one very important factor. And certainly this meeting is a great asset to all of our efforts in that regard. Our pioneering DNA technology is another asset and factor that can be applicable to successfully addressing these problems in other OSCE countries.

The fact that governments in the region of the Western Balkans demonstrated the political will to address this issue was absolutely critical to our success. And the fact that we also adopted an adherence to the rule of law approach, not just a humanitarian approach to the issue, also was critical because where persons are missing from conflict and human rights abuses, it's a consequence of criminal activity. And that's very different from persons missing from, for example, natural disasters.

And it's that government cooperation working, in this case, with the International Criminal Court and domestic courts help to expedite the process of locating missing persons. And then our use of DNA technology, enabling them to accurately identify the missing, that combination was critical to our success in the Western Balkans and also is certainly applicable to the larger OSCE countries.

Mr. PITTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We've only got 5 minutes. So I think I'll have to submit my questions in writing. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Well, just to best use—I hope I don't miss the vote—let me ask a couple of other questions. The ICMP has stated that it needs certain immunities to cover its operations outside of the Western Balkans, where it has been granted quasi-international status. How does the absence of these immunities impact or impede the ICMP's work?

Queen NOOR. Well, there are—it is finding that the ad hoc—we've been finding that the ad hoc approach that we have had to date is not really sustainable. We haven't had a permanent formal legal status, but rather a series of bilateral agreements with various countries.

And for example, just to be very specific, some countries have claimed to be reluctant to conclude agreements with us because we don't have a permanent internationally recognized legal status. And this has stopped at least one project from going ahead in Colombia that would have supported U.S. interests in resolving dubious claims about the armed struggle against the FARC guerillas. It also makes it difficult for us to assist in excavation of mass graves related, for example, to the regime crimes in Iraq and providing DNA-based identity testing assistance.

It is, I think, absolutely critical that we are able to continue this independent, impartial approach. And while we've demonstrated its efficacy in the Western Balkans, and to some extent in other services we've provided to other countries, it—we are finding that this—what we've been talking to the commission about and what we very much hope the United States will be able to advocate for us in terms of that international formal legal status, will enable us to be able to respond to and much more effectively address the—

a range of different problems in different countries that are urgently asking for our help. And those range from Iraq, but also, as I mentioned earlier, Libya and Latin America and elsewhere, of course.

Mr. SMITH. Let me ask Ms. Tlisova—about 5,000 Chechens still remain unaccounted for from the first and second Chechen wars. Without Russian cooperation, what can be done? I mean, there's a lack of international law on this. As a matter of fact, even if there were access, the concern would be, you know, has a building gone up over a mass grave, has it been concreted—you know, turned into a parking lot?

Where—how do you preserve—I remember when you—even when—and our Commission—was very active on this during the whole Balkan Wars issue—the Balkan Wars, I should say—and that was—there was a loss of information even, firsthand accounts of atrocities, never mind the finding of the people who've been slaughtered, but peoples'—you know, because there was insufficient money being put aside to do—initiate war crimes investigations. So what happens when you have a Russia who says no?

Ms. TLISOVA. Well, actually—and that's a very difficult question.

Mr. SMITH. I'm going to leave the record until you've done your answer. I will come right back, as will the members as soon as the hearing—as soon as we're done voting. But please continue with your statement.

Ms. TLISOVA. There is a human rights organization called Memorial in Russia. They do a great job by helping people to discover the bodies of their loved ones. And Memorial is not very much loved or favored by the Russian Government. And there is no actually job done from the Russian government side or ever—and very little job done by the Chechen Government to discover mass graves and to punish this crime.

Also, there's another issue. During the war, a lot of Chechens were detained, and they remain in prison. And they're still reported as missing persons. That's another part of the problem. I really don't know what can be done if—when Russian side says no. It's a difficult question. The only—my suggestion is probably to work to the—with—directly with the human rights organizations in Chechnya and in Russia to support them and to help them to organize this search for mass graves.

Thank you.

Mr. MILOSCH [Chief of Staff, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe]. Thank you, Ms. Tlisova. The Congressman has three votes, and then we'll resume. So we're going into temporary recess. Thanks.

[Recess.]

Mr. SMITH. The Commission will resume its hearing. And I apologize profusely for that delay. There were three votes on the House floor. Let me just ask you a question with regard to human trafficking. In 2010, we saw victim identification drop in Europe. There are 14,650 trafficking victims found in 2009, but only 8,548 were found in 2010. In Bosnia, specifically, authorities identified 37 trafficking victims in 2010, compared with 46 victims in 2009.

The annual TIP report, or Trafficking in Persons report, required by my legislation, indicates that local experts report police are not

using proactive identification techniques to locate victims increasingly kept in more private locations throughout the country. All stakeholders report a lack of clarity in the current procedures used for identification and referral. And local experts report multiple instances of potential victims not being recognized as such.

My question, I guess, to all of you—Mr. Bray to you as well—would you agree with that assessment? Are we seeing any other factors? Have you noticed an overall shift, perhaps, in deprioritizing the recovery of missing persons?

Mr. BRAY. From a U.S. perspective, I wouldn't say we have any shift. I wouldn't say it's been deprioritized here at all. As a matter of fact, the Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security both have very robust programs, specific through the FBI and ICE, on victim identification. I think there are persistent issues that still exist with victims, particularly those in the United States obtaining correct identification, making a positive assessment of status. Those all play into that.

As far as Interpol and in the international community, I know that victim identification continues to be an issue there, and it becomes part of their training regimen and their capacity-building regimen, which we'll see deployed here in the near future in Central American and in partnership with the U.S. Government. So we'll look to identify the weaknesses through an assessment, and then act on those and build some capacity, and then follow that up with an operational phase and see if we can't help shift that a little bit.

Mr. SMITH. OK, thank you.

Queen NOOR. And I would just add that—

Mr. SMITH. Could you push the—thank you.

Queen NOOR. I would add simply that there is currently no mechanism outside of the International Commission on Missing Persons that can link governments and families of the missing on a global level. So if a trafficked woman from Ukraine, for example, goes missing in another country, there is currently no way to search for her in a way that uses genetic information in cross-border or in a global context.

So we have a proven track record of sharing this information and—helping to share this information in real time, online with governments and families of this missing. So that is one—another role that ICMP is able to play today and that hopefully will also be part of a larger, more effective international approach.

Mr. SMITH. Could you describe the joint platform for disaster victim identification? Mr. Bray.

Mr. BRAY. Essentially, there's a proposal—a concept, if you will, between ICMP and Interpol to establish a platform by which there's a standing regimen for international response. It would include creating multidisciplinary, multinational response that has been seen and proven effective. I believe the last deployment was Typhoon Frank in 2008. The bottom line is they'll have to establish international standards so it can be monitored and updated as needed, though it will have to develop cost effective technology solutions.

Right now we have capacity when it comes to fingerprints and, to a certain degree, odontology. However, the standards for odon-

tology are still under debate in the United States and Europe as well. But DNA—access to high-capacity processing of DNA simply isn't there. That's one of those areas that I think ICMP is leading the charge with.

And I know that Interpol is looking forward to standing up their Global Complex for Innovation in Singapore, and making that one of the platforms for forensic sciences there. And then, of course, training, capacity building, will become a key portion of that strategy. But ultimately, those issues will be what rounds out that platform. Well, that and international communications among the member countries of Interpol to make all that work.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Mašović, have the other countries come to your Missing Persons Institute seeking guidance and recommendations, lessons learned if you will?

Mr. MAŠOVIĆ [through interpreter]. Yes. Some countries from Latin America—

Mr. SMITH. I can't hear you.

Mr. MAŠOVIĆ [through interpreter]. Yes. In fact, that's true. Some countries from Latin America region requested our help. They recognized our Bosnian model—so-called Bosnian model that today exists in Bosnia, that is in fact a good way of identifying the missing persons and finding them. Mostly, right now, interested non-government-led organizations, and mostly are family members that are involved in these non-government organizations.

This Bosnia model can be based on three main factors. And that's collaboration between the government and the victim's families, then help from the international community. As well, the forensic specialists that are involved in the international community and helping us to identify, and not just forensic pathologists, but many experts that are holding—giving their hands in effort to help.

I believe that this Bosnian model can in fact be used in many different counties—countries that are faced with natural disasters, disasters caused by human factors or caused by genocide and war crimes.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much. Ms. Tlisova, the—Fred Cuny of Texas disappeared in Chechnya. Are you aware as to whether or not any information was ever ascertained about him? Congressman Frank Wolf, who visited Chechnya during the second war there, asked me to ask that question.

Ms. TLISOVA. Actually, I'm not aware—

Mr. SMITH. OK.

Ms. TLISOVA [continuing]. Of—if there was ever any information, you know, to—we already knew that he is missing. No, there was no information, unfortunately.

Mr. SMITH. Let me ask Queen Noor, if I could, do you believe that there's sufficient prioritization within the international community on the work the organization and the work itself? I just came back from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Vienna—just got back with some of my colleagues on the staff.

And while we all have pointed to Bosnia over the years, and the Balkans in particular, you know, Russia still does not allow access, like in Chechnya. You mentioned Nagorno-Karabakh, you know, these frozen conflicts where the animosity continues unabated. I don't think we've spent enough time on it, and I would appreciate

your thoughts on that, whether or not you think we do, at the OSCE, at the European Union, and of course the U.S. Government and U.N.

Queen NOOR. Clearly, the United States and those European countries that have supported—that supported the creation of the Commission on Missing Persons and then have partnered with us in the years since deserve, I think, an enormous amount of credit for taking a leap of faith in an organization that at that time was an outline, a concept, but no one, I think, could have anticipated what it could accomplish, and that I've already laid out today.

Today, we are deeply concerned by the fact that our mission in the Balkans is, at the moment, coming to a close in the coming year and that we are—we do not have the funding or, as I said, the international legal status to be able to take on the load of requests and challenges that the international community is presenting us today.

And many of these are problems not only in Europe, but also in other parts of the world that critically need the kind of support that we can provide—both scientific, training, the various different forms that I described earlier—in order to put conflicts of the past to rest on—in so many different levels—on the personal, communal, national, and even regional basis. And I—we are here today in part because we believe that the United States, in demonstrating its ongoing support to us, can have an impact on a number of other countries whose support we also need.

And, God willing, we will see a—you know, in your support and—your interest, which we hope will manifest itself in support—

Mr. SMITH. No, it's already there.

Queen NOOR [continuing]. In the support of your government, that we actually can perhaps move on to another—onto another level of operation internationally, and continue this pioneering work that really is playing such an important role in the international community.

Mr. SMITH. We are joined by Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers. I'd like to yield to my friend and colleague.

Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I was just here to listen, yes.

Mr. SMITH. OK. But we were talking about the hearing over on the floor, and Ms. McMorris Rodgers pointed out she read your book, according to her.

Queen NOOR. Thank you. We—I touched upon the Western Balkans in the book, but there's a great deal more. And we are leaving documents from the meeting today, in case you're interested in any of the work of the International Commission on Missing Persons and the other presentations here today.

But we're so grateful for the interest and the opportunity that we have today to talk about these issues that we've been—all of us, I think, are in agreement—are not given the attention that they deserve, and that if given, could probably have quite a significant impact on helping to promote stability through more effective recovery from conflict and, God willing, prevention of future conflict arising from the kinds of situations that missing persons, at least, from conflict—the dynamics that that can set in place if not ad-

dressed fully, as we have seen in the Balkans and we see today, unfortunately, in other parts of the Middle East and Asia and even Latin America.

So we're very grateful for the interest and support of this Commission.

Mr. SMITH. Let me just ask my final question. One of the other hats that I wear is as Chairman of the Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights Subcommittee. And it takes me to Africa frequently, including to Addis, where the African Union sits. And I'm wondering if the work of the ICMP has been sought by the AU, the African Union, whether or not David Crane's Sierra Leone court used some of the expertise that you've developed, whether the Rwandan court, for that matter—since obviously, they're very similar to the Yugoslav court.

Queen NOOR. [Off mic.]

Mr. SMITH. Could you put on your—

Queen NOOR. So sorry, again. We haven't been approached by the AU, and Rwanda also, no—we haven't been approached. We—are we providing technical assistance to any African country?

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE. No, not—

Queen NOOR. Not currently. We have received requests and Rwanda is one case. But at the moment, no, we're not.

Mr. SMITH. But that would also underscore why further—

Queen NOOR. Absolutely.

Mr. SMITH [continuing]. Strengthening of your ability to do international work—

Queen NOOR. Absolutely.

Mr. SMITH [continuing]. Is all the more warranted, so that you could share that expertise. Would any of you like to say anything before we conclude, final comments? Been an extraordinary panel, Mr. [inaudible] and I want to thank you so much. The information that you have provided will be shared very, very widely with all of the other members, the commissioners, and will help us in our conversations with the executive branch, especially—

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE. [Off mic, inaudible.]

Mr. SMITH. Oh, yes. Please. I yield to Ms. McMorris Rodgers.

**HON. CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS (R-5) A MEMBER OF
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF WASHINGTON**

Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS. [Laughter.] Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, I'll just ask a couple of questions, since we have some time here. First, to Queen Noor, how do you see the ICMP's work differing from the work carried out by the International Committee of the Red Cross?

Queen NOOR. We are an independent, impartial entity that is able to, in fact, work in different arenas, especially as so much of our approach is based on rule of law and the importance not only of science—also our emphasis on DNA distinguishes us—but also on the ability to introduce into court testimony, our findings, and that—which has proven to be part of the reason we've been so successful, for example, in the Western Balkans.

These are both areas that—in which our work differs from any other organization, really, and why we've been able to be effective at—in demonstrating that it's not just a humanitarian challenge,

but it is a rule-of-law and, really, government credibility challenge in so many different countries, in helping these—the countries who we've worked with craft legislation and develop rule-of-law institutions for tackling this problem. We've shown how important that approach can be in generating the kind of success which has been unprecedented.

Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS. Thank you. And then to Mr. Bray, disappearances in some countries occur without the knowledge and complicity of the very state agencies that have access to the Interpol system. What mechanisms does Interpol have in place to prevent such internal corruption from degrading the overall quality of the information Interpol maintains?

Mr. BRAY. Well, first off, Interpol is an organization of international law enforcement for law enforcement. So immediately, there should be a commitment—and I realize this sounds a little altruistic—but there should be a commitment to honor and respect the rules under which we all agree to operate. Having said that, there is a commission for the control of files which does review notices that are published in contradiction to the established rules, and certainly, the constitution of Interpol.

Having said that, Interpol constantly reviews these rules and updates them. The last update was just this past November at the general assembly in Hanoi. It was approved with an overwhelming majority and will be implemented in June. So that'll give Interpol a greater review authority and a greater ability to revoke those notices that fall outside of those specifications.

Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS. OK, thank you. And then Fatima Tlisova from the Voice of America, I just had a question. A direct consequence of the Russian government shying away from its responsibility in atrocities committed during the Chechen wars is a lack of commitment, on its part, to the identification cause. There are no laws in place to prevent actions that seriously compromise the identification process—construction workers building around and over graves, for example.

In current international law, there lacks a mechanism to protect the rights of the missing unidentified. And as a result, governments are able to block or hinder the identification process, making it exceedingly difficult for organizations and individuals to identify the missing. How can we begin to develop the mechanism or legislation to address this shortcoming in the current law? And it is feasible or it—has there ever been a movement in that direction, and what is the progress?

Ms. TLISOVA. I can start with an example. In the city of [inaudible] there are still refrigerators from the first Chechen war, full with the bodies of Russian soldiers, young men who were recruited by the government, sent to Chechnya, killed, and still are not identified and sent to their parents, their families. And they still are counted as missing. So for the government who does not care for its own soldiers, it is very difficult to believe that it's going to care for the other part, for the victims which it considered at the time as enemies, and for their—especially for the combatant part.

So in my view, if this bill will be passed and the commission will be granted the status probably—the immunity to be a global commission, with the possibility to access without government restric-

tions to any place, probably like Red Cross or other organizations, that would be a solution. The other part is to—as I said before, to deal directly, to contact to the nongovernment—to the nongovernment channels and to help people on the ground who try to be involved.

And also, there is a lack of personnel, a lack of finances, corruption—all together, all these problems create, you know, a major inability for the Russians, that maybe a lack of will to solve this problem. So my suggestion is to raise probably—to create an international organization probably to grant this commission access to the area without permission from the local governments, or to work directly with—and through internal channels.

Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS. Thank you. And it was great just to have the chance to hear some. I appreciate everything that you all are doing all around the world on this issue. Thanks.

Mr. SMITH. We have 3 minutes to vote, so the hearing's adjourned. Thank you so very much for your extraordinary——
[Whereupon, at 3:50 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDICES

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN NOOR, COMMISSIONER, INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON MISSING PERSONS

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), I would like to thank the U. S. Helsinki Commission for using the occasion of this hearing to highlight the issue of persons missing from wars, violations of human rights and natural disasters. Thank you as well for inviting me as a Commissioner of the ICMP, to address an issue that I believe deserves much more attention than it receives.

The missing are silent. They cannot plead their own cause. By definition, and often by design, there are no horrific images or messages in the media to galvanize public outrage. [They do not tweet from the scene or set up Facebook pages to organize protests.] They are simply gone.

When people go missing, particularly through state-sanctioned violence, the family members left behind—usually women and children—are terrified to seek answers about the fate of their loved ones. In most of the world today family members have no legal recourse to demand answers. Those brave enough to ask often fear reprisals from the very authorities responsible for the disappearance in the first place, or who are seeking to cover-up the crimes of previous regimes. After all, it is a fundamental tenet of most systems of law that, if there is no body, there is no crime.

And so the silence persists.

Breaking that silence is a vital part of dealing with the past following violent conflict. It is important for reconciliation, nation-building and securing a peaceful future. It is critical for the healing process of the families left behind. Most importantly, addressing the problem of the missing is crucial to preventing future conflict.

Mr. Chairman,

ICMP estimates that in the world today there are over 1 million persons missing from war, violations of human rights, human trafficking, drug related violence and other causes and that approximately 150,000 persons go missing every year from natural or man-made disasters. They, and those who mourn them, need help to break the silence.

Mass graves are like open wounds. If these crimes are left unresolved they breed hatred and can perpetuate a cycle of violence. The legacies of these crimes, particularly in the former Yugoslavia are a painful reminder of that fact. It remains in the interest of the United States to help stop the cycle of violence by assisting post-conflict States in resolving the problem of the missing.

The International Commission on Missing Persons was created in 1996 at a G-7 Summit in Lyon, France, at the initiative of U.S. President Clinton, as the only international effort to deal exclusively with the issue. I have had the privilege of serving as a member of ICMP for over a decade and I take great pride in its work as an independent, human rights organization.

ICMP has a unique mandate. We work with governments to ensure that they take responsibility for ending the cruel uncertainty inflicted on the families of the missing; that they build rule of law institutions that allow for the missing to be located, recovered and identified; and that they are held to account for atrocities committed. In short, that they end the silence.

Equally important, we work with the families of the missing. We educate and empower them. We help with reconciliation efforts between families from different groups, or different sides of the conflict. We help rebuild trust between civil society and states emerging from conflict by creating a space for dialogue between government authorities and the families of the missing, so that they can demand answers. And we help craft legislation so that the right to information is enshrined in law.

We also assist judicial institutions, both domestic and international, so that families of the missing can seek justice and perpetrators are held to account.

In cases of natural or man-made disasters, as with cases of persons missing from conflict and human rights abuses, ICMP uses the technology it is perhaps best known for: an integrated scientific approach based upon DNA identification technology. ICMP has so far assisted governments in making over 18,000 DNA based identifications.

While ICMP now assists governments around the world, it was initially created to address the issue of persons missing from the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia—Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Macedonia, where an estimated 40,000 persons disappeared. With the ICMP's help, of those 40,000, 70 percent have been accounted for. This is an unprecedented achievement compared to any other region in the world that has struggled to deal with this issue.

I know Srebrenica well. The name of that small town has become a symbol, a by-word for inhumanity, the only recognized genocide on European soil since World War II, where 8,100 men and boys were executed in a matter of days and their bodies hidden in a series of mass graves strewn across the Bosnian country side.

I first visited Bosnia in 1996, a year after the massacre to bring humanitarian supplies from Jordan and to meet with thousands of grief-stricken survivors to express support and solidarity. Years later, I returned as an ICMP commissioner to meet and often weep with Bosniak, Serb and Croat women and men as they struggled to come to terms with the disappearance of their husbands, sons and fathers—killed, in some cases, by the husbands or sons of those sitting across the table.

I remember their stories of being shunned from government offices and living neglected in collective centers, many with their fatherless children. ICMP reached out to them, to all of the families of the missing, regardless of their ethnic, religious or national origin, and they became our partners in the first ever effort to systematically and scientifically locate and identify their loved ones.

Remarkably, many of them united across religious lines and worked together to fight for answers and to create lists of the relatives of the missing and armed with this information, we began a large scale effort across the former Yugoslavia to collect blood

samples for DNA testing. Providing a blood sample soon became a powerful symbol for many of these families to declare their loss and to give of themselves to identify their loved ones.

Mr. Chairman,

I have been in the mass graves. I am still haunted by the memory. I still cannot comprehend the barbarism that mankind is capable of inflicting on his fellow man, and the calculated, systematic attempts to strip these people of their humanity and to hide their bodies repeatedly so that they would never be identified, in order to deny that these atrocities took place.

And I have been in our ICMP DNA labs where identifications take place. We first started using DNA because all other methods to identify the missing had proved to be inadequate. I remember well that when I first became a Commissioner, it seemed inconceivable that such a large number of persons could have been located and identified. ICMP made a bold decision to do something that had never been done before—to use a new technology, one that was still controversial in those days even in court cases, and one that had certainly never been used following violent conflict where large numbers of persons were missing.

Skeptics said it was impossible—that at best we would be able to identify a thousand people, or that it would take a hundred years, or that the costs would be prohibitive. I remember our early efforts to teach families of the missing about DNA. But this powerful scientific tool proved invaluable in efficiently providing irrefutable evidence of the identity of tens of thousands.

Through painstaking work and the exquisitely sensitive techniques of DNA analysis, ICMP is able to make genetic matches between DNA profiles taken from skeletal remains recovered from mass graves and DNA profiles provided voluntarily by living family members, thus merging state-of-the-art science with human outreach in the service of justice and human rights.

In a politically charged post-conflict region like the former Yugoslavia where denial regarding mass killings is prevalent, having this type of precision helped combat the myth that events such as Srebrenica never happened. Today, of the approximately 8,100 persons killed and missing from the 1995 fall of Srebrenica, ICMP has helped identify 6,700.

Simultaneously, we worked with the regional authorities to build the political, legal and technical infrastructure that would allow governments to search for the missing, regardless of their ethnic, religious or national origin. Critically, we helped them build rule of law institutions, such as the Missing Persons Institute in Bosnia that work with the prosecutor's office to ensure that each illicit grave site, or mass grave is investigated as the scene of a crime—in these cases war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Recently, we held a series of town hall meetings in the countries of the Western Balkans with the families of the missing. Now that majority of missing persons have been accounted for, the narrative has shifted from the desire to know the fate of the missing to wanting justice. The holistic approach of the ICMP—working with governments, civil society, justice institutions and providing a scientifically-based process of locating, recovering and identifying the

missing has set the parameters that will help the families pursue their legal rights and their desire for justice.

Mr. Chairman,

ICMP has broken the silence and we hope that this new, modern approach, which has demonstrated that the missing can be found, will reverberate across other conflict regions.

In order to expand on the success of the countries of the former Yugoslavia, as well as the heroic efforts of thousands of affected families, in accounting for such a large number of missing persons, we have developed a set of principles. These should help other governments confronted with the issue adopt a holistic approach to accounting for the missing. They include:

- That the engagement of families of the missing and civil society is critical to any successful effort to address the issue;
- That the prosecution of perpetrators is essential to the process of justice and a demonstration of a State's ability to take responsibility for acts of atrocity;
- That the use of accurate, scientifically-based identifications are the most reliable;
- That illicit grave sites are crime scenes and that they should be carefully excavated by courts and their findings fully documented;
- And that States should ensure that the commemoration of the missing is universal in scope and that efforts are made to transcend the remembrance of victims only by national, ethnic or political group or by event.

These principles can be implemented through initiatives such as the following:

- The creation of domestic legislation;
- The creation of rule of law institutions;
- The creation of centralized State records and databases.

While these principles provide important guidance for governments around the world faced with the issue of the missing, I am particularly concerned with the countries in the OSCE states outside of the Western Balkans. The issue of missing persons affects almost one quarter of the OSCE participating States. Unfortunately, limited progress has been made over the last decade. For example, there are still 3,000 to 5,000 missing in Chechnya; only 310 of the 1,500—2,000 people reported missing in Cyprus have been accounted for, and the almost 5,000 people are still reported missing from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

I would like to reiterate, by comparison, that the countries in the Western Balkans in just over a decade have been able to account for 70 % of those missing, of which the vast majority were identified by DNA. These achievements are still not widely known. But ICMP stands ready to help these countries in the rest of the OSCE region break the silence on missing persons just as dramatically.

I would like to thank the US Helsinki Commission for its tireless work in taking on tough human rights issues in Europe. I very much look forward to ICMP providing support to OSCE countries. With your support, the issue of missing persons as a result of armed conflict in Europe can be resolved. The silence on this issue cannot continue, and I hope this hearing will resonate throughout the OSCE region and beyond.

ICMP's breakthrough in using an integrated scientific approach to identify the missing also applies following natural or manmade disasters. ICMP has assisted Germany, Norway and Austria in dealing with missing persons cases. In partnership with INTERPOL, ICMP has helped Thailand and the Maldives following the 2004 Tsunami and the Philippines following Typhoon Frank in 2008. ICMP and INTERPOL are now in the process of expanding their partnership to create a permanent Disaster Victim Identification platform.

Mr. Chairman,

The issue of missing persons presents a global challenge that demands a global solution. ICMP, with its specialized technology and expertise, is the only organization in the world capable of doing so effectively and efficiently. ICMP's work has expanded since our early days in the former Yugoslavia and we are currently assisting Iraq where up to 1 million persons are reported missing and we have helped Colombia, Chile, South Africa, El Salvador deal with missing persons from human rights abuses and conflict.

ICMP's work has also directly benefitted the United States. I am proud to say that ICMP helped the State of Louisiana identify missing persons following Hurricane Katrina. And I vividly remember meeting with the Mayor of New York City soon after the 9-11 disaster to offer our assistance. His stories of the desperate suffering and uncertainty of the victims' families struck me as tragically similar to those of families in Serbia, Croatia, Kosovo and Bosnia.

Sadly, in many other places, where requests for our assistance has come from governments or NGOs, such as Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Lebanon, Algeria, Morocco and most recently Libya, we have had great difficulty in gaining support and funds to provide desperately needed assistance despite our successes, particularly in the Western Balkans, where we will soon end our active engagement. In addition we are receiving increasing demands to help with missing persons cases related to human trafficking, drug-related violence and a whole host of other causes.

The need for knowledge, for closure, in these situations is universal, and providing it is critical to overcoming anger and despair and restoring stability—to families, communities and nations. The fundamental human rights work of ICMP is not only palliative, it is preventative; the healing and recovery it provides the victims, as well as the process of accountability it helps foster with governments, are absolutely integral to the process of healing, reconciliation, justice and ultimately conflict prevention.

In closing, I would also like to thank my fellow ICMP commissioners from around the world who also volunteer their time to assist ICMP and in particular I would like to acknowledge and thank the current and previous chairpersons of ICMP, including Cyrus Vance, Bob Dole, James Kimsey and the current chair, Ambassador Thomas Miller. I would also like to thank the governments that support ICMP's work, particularly the United States. The support of the US State Department was critical in creating ICMP and making it a success story. I hope that this important support will continue.



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