

Please kindly note that the submission by the State of Portugal entails

- 1) The submission by the Direção-Geral da Política de Justiça;
- 2) The submission by Ministério de Administração Interna.

Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances

Study on standards and public policies on effective investigations on enforced disappearances

ANSWERS PROVIDED BY PORTUGAL

1) The offence of enforced disappearance is foreseen as a specific and autonomous offence in Article 9 i) of Law no. 31/2004, of 22 of July, which adapts the Portuguese criminal law to the Statute of the International Criminal Court, by typifying the conducts that constitute a violation of international humanitarian law.

- a. The offence of enforced disappearances is a crime committed intentionally (*dolum*). This means that any enforced disappearance such as an arrest, detention or kidnapping promoted by the State or a political organization, or with their authorization, support or agreement, followed by a refusal to recognize such situation of deprivation of liberty or the refusal of providing any information about the situation or location of the missing persons, with the purpose of denying the protection of the law for a long period of time, will be subject to a criminal sanction.
- b. Article 6 of Law no. 31/2004, of 22 July, establishes the criminal responsibility of the military commander or any other hierarchical superior in relation to the subordinates under his/her effective authority and control in what regards the crime of enforced disappearance.

For instance, this provision would be applicable to situations where a squadron's captain under the command of a colonel – the latter being the immediate military superior officer – being aware or having the obligation to be aware that the soldiers under his/her command were committing or preparing to commit an offence foreseen under this law, does not adopt all necessary and appropriate measures to prevent or repress its commission or does not give immediate notice to the appropriate (and immediate) military superior officer.

Under this provision, the superior shall be criminally liable and may be punished with the sentence corresponding to the crime or crimes that were committed.

- c. Whoever commits the crime of enforced disappearance shall be punished by imprisonment from 12 to 25 years.

2) Not applicable.

3) Pursuant Article 7 of Law no. 31/2004, of 22 July, the crime of enforced disappearance is not subject to any statute of limitation.

The Criminal Code (Articles 118 to 121) establishes the statute of limitation of various types of offences (which is established in accordance with the applicable penalties in abstract). Those Articles 118 to 121 also foresee the rules regarding the beginning of the term, interruption and suspension of the statute of limitation.

With regard to continuing offences, Article 119 (2) (b) of the Criminal Code establishes that the statute of limitation begins the day the last act of the offence is committed. The statute of limitation may be suspended or interrupted, and in the latter case, after each interruption, the limitation period starts running again.

4) No one has ever been convicted for the crime of enforced disappearance, since no offence of this nature has occurred or has been tried in Portugal so far.

5) No special units of the Prosecution Service and in the law enforcement authorities are particularly in charge of the offence of enforced disappearance. The DCIAP (Central Department for Criminal Investigation and Prosecution) is a special department within the Public Prosecution Service which is in charge of the investigation and prosecution of all serious crimes, where corruption, money laundering, trafficking in human beings and enforced disappearance, *inter alia*, are included. The competent law enforcement authority for investigating these offences is the Criminal Police (*Policia Judiciária*), where a forensic lab and a psychology unit, both with specialized staff, exists. It should also be pointed out that the National Institute for Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences is staffed with professionals in the area of forensics, anthropology and psychology and their support may be requested by the investigative authorities.

6) Criminal law in Portugal is guided by the principle of legality, as foreseen in the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic and in Article 1 of the Criminal Code.

According to the principle of legality, upon receiving a report of the commission of an offence or of an alleged offence, the Public Prosecution Service – as the competent authority for criminal action – shall promptly launch an investigation in order to confirm the commission of the reported offence and to prosecute the offenders. The Public Prosecutor is assisted by law enforcement authorities, namely the Criminal Police in what regards enforced disappearance.

As set forth in Article 266 (2) of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic, all bodies and public officials are subject to the Constitution and the law and, when performing their duties, they must act with respect to the principles of equality, proportionality, justice, impartiality and good faith. The Public Prosecution Service, as well as the Criminal Police, must respect these principles when carrying out a criminal investigation.

Where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a person has been subject to an enforced disappearance, the Public Prosecution Service and/or the Criminal Police shall launch an investigation *ex officio*, even if there has been no formal complaint. In fact, the offence of enforced disappearance is classified in Portugal as a ‘*public offence*’ (“*crime público*”), meaning that a formal report/complaint by the victim or other person is not a precondition for the competent authorities to launch an investigation. They only need to know, to be made aware or to strongly suspect that the offence was committed.

Further, the other unlawful conducts punishable under the Criminal Code and with which the crime of enforced disappearance has some connecting elements are also classified as ‘public offences’ and, as such, can be investigated *ex officio* by the mentioned authorities.

Moreover, under Article 55 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, criminal police bodies, such as the Criminal Police, are competent, on their own initiative, to intervene in any incidents of a criminal nature and to prevent, as much as possible, its consequences, to identify the perpetrators and to take all necessary and urgent action in order to preserve evidence. Notwithstanding the foregoing, some of these measures must be communicated to a court and subject to validation by the examining judge. Therefore, as soon as the Criminal Police is made aware that an enforced disappearance might be occurring, it shall promptly take the necessary action to avoid serious threat to the life or integrity of any person.

7) The law enforcement authorities (Criminal Police) and the Public Prosecution Service have the necessary powers and resources to conduct investigations of enforced disappearances. The Public Prosecution Service has the power to compel witnesses to testify and to surrender relevant documents, including police, military and intelligence files as well as to have access to archives containing information, directly or with a previously requested warrant, granted by the Investigation Judge.

8) According to the Code of Criminal Procedure, the families or representatives of the disappeared person cannot participate directly in the investigation, specifically in the enquiry phase, which aims to gather evidence, to confirm the commission of the facts and to confirm the identity of the offender in order to prosecute him/her. In the enquiry phase, only the Public Prosecution Service, with the support of law enforcement authorities, can participate.

These family or representatives of the disappeared person may participate in another phase of the criminal proceedings - the instruction phase - which purpose is to confirm the decision to prosecute or to withdraw charges. Depending on this decision, the case either goes to trial or is dismissed. The instruction phase may be requested by the offender or by the victim (“*assistente*”), in relation to facts for which the Public Prosecution Service did not file charges. The constitution of “*assistentes*” is regulated in Article 68 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, and includes family members and legal representatives.

However, the family or representatives of the disappeared person have the right to be informed about the results of the investigation, as foreseen in the Code of Criminal Procedure (Article 67-A) and in the Statute of Victim, annex to Law no. 130/2015, of 4 September (Article 11).

As foreseen in the same Statute, the Judge (or, during the criminal investigation phase, the Public Prosecution Service) may determine – if necessary to protect the victim and after obtaining his/her consent – that psychosocial support should be provided (Article 15(3)).

9) The Public Prosecution Service is responsible in Portugal for the criminal investigation, which includes the investigation of enforced disappearances and the law enforcement authority responsible for the investigation of serious crimes is, as said before, the Criminal Police.

Thus, whenever there is suspicion that an officer, a unit or the Criminal Police itself, are involved in the alleged commission of these offences, they will be excluded from the

investigation. In this event, the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure are still fully applicable to every suspect, irrespective of him/her being a law enforcement officer or not.

10) According to Article 161 (f) of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic, Parliament is the competent entity to grant amnesties and/or pardons.

This means that Portugal does not have in force permanent legislation regarding amnesty or pardon, only adopting legislation on these matters when Parliament so decides. In Portugal, the last amnesty legislation enacted was granted in 1999, through Law no. 29/1999, of 12 of May, which was only applicable to criminal offences committed until 29 of March of same year.

Enforced disappearances were only autonomously criminalized in 2004, through the aforementioned Law no. 31/2004, of 22 July. So it is possible to state that, in theory, as can be inferred from the amnesty law of 1999, amnesties – but not pardons – could be granted when it comes to enforced disappearances.

According to Article 1, in the case of offences committed up to 25 March 1999, a year will be reduced on all penalties applied by courts or one-sixth of the imprisonment sentences of up to 8 years, or an eighth or 1 year and 6 months of penalties of prison term of 8 or more years, depending on which is more favourable to the convicted person.

Pursuant Article 2(2) of Law no. 29/1999, those convicted for committing offences against persons to imprisonment for more than 10 years which already have been reduced by a previous pardon cannot be granted a second pardon (only an amnesty). In addition, cannot be granted a pardon to persons convicted by illegal restraint (Article 158/Criminal Code), kidnapping (Article 160/Criminal Code), illegal taking of hostages (Article 161/Criminal Code) and trafficking in human beings (Article 169/Criminal Code), as well as those convicted by offences against mankind, by genocide and crimes of war against civil populations, (foreseen in Article 239 and 241 of the Criminal Code, both provisions revoked by Law no. 31/2004)

11) Portuguese criminal law provides for mitigating circumstances for those suspects/offenders whose actions were instrumental in keeping the victim alive or fore those suspects/offenders who voluntarily provide information that contributes to the investigation of the enforced disappearance.

As results from Article 72 of the Criminal Code (special mitigation of the sentence), the court may specially mitigate the sentence, beyond the cases explicitly foreseen in the law, when there are special circumstances – prior or subsequent to the offence, or even during the commission of said offence – which substantially reduce the unlawfulness of the act, the offender's guilt or the necessity to impose a penalty.

For the purposes of the previous paragraph, the circumstances which may be taken into consideration by the court are, amongst others, the following:

- a) The fact that the offender has acted under the influence of serious threat or under the influence of a person from whom he/she depends on or to whom he/she owes obedience;

- b) The fact that the offender's conduct has been determined by an honourable reason, by strong request or inducement of the own victim or by unfair provocation or undeserved injury;
- c) The fact that the offender subsequently committed acts which demonstrate his/her sincere regret, namely the repair, to the extent possible, of the damages caused;
- d) The fact that a long amount of time has elapsed from the commission of the offence and the offender maintains a good conduct.

However, the circumstance, pursuant to which or, together with other circumstances, gives rise simultaneously to a special mitigation foreseen in the law and to the mitigation foreseen hereunder may only be taken into account once.

12) Portuguese legislation does not foresee instances in which cases of enforced disappearances may be investigated or tried by special or military courts.

13) No truth commission or any other similar truth-telling mechanisms have been used in Portugal regarding enforced disappearances.

14) According to Article 4 of Law no. 31/2004, of 22 July, the provisions of the Criminal Code are subsidiarity applicable to the offences foreseen in the said law.

The provisions of Law no. 31/2004 can also be applicable to facts committed outside the national territory, provided that the offender is found in Portugal and cannot be extradited or when was decided not to surrender him/her to the International Criminal Court is made.

This means that the general rule set forth in Article 5 of the Criminal Code (acts committed outside the Portuguese territory) is applicable:

Unless provided otherwise in an international treaty or convention, Portuguese criminal law is also applicable to facts committed outside the national territory, when:

- a) Those facts constitute any of the offences foreseen in Articles 221, 262 to 271, 308 to 321 and 325 to 345;
- b) Those facts are committed against Portuguese citizens by other Portuguese citizens who usually reside in Portugal at the time of the commission of the facts and are found in Portuguese territory
- c) Those facts constitute any the offences foreseen in articles 159 to 161, 171, 172, 175, 176 and 278 to 280, provided that the offender is found in Portugal and cannot be extradited or surrendered as a result of the execution of a European Arrest Warrant or other instrument of international cooperation which bounds the Portuguese State;
- d) (...)
- e) Those facts are committed by a Portuguese citizen or by foreigners against Portuguese citizens whenever:

- i) The offender is located in Portugal;
- ii) Such acts are also punishable by the law of that territory where they have been committed, unless that territory is not subject to any punitive power; and
- iii) Such acts constitute an offence which allows for extradition and such extradition cannot be granted or it is decided not to surrender the offender in execution of a European Arrest Warrant or other instrument of international cooperation which bounds the Portuguese State;

f) Those facts are committed by foreigners located in Portugal and whose extradition has been requested, when constituting offences allowing for extradition and such extradition cannot be granted or it is decided not to surrender the offender in execution of a European Arrest Warrant or other instrument of international cooperation which bounds the Portuguese State;

g) Those facts are committed by a legal person or against a legal person having its registered office in the Portuguese territory.

The Portuguese criminal law is also applicable to acts committed outside the national territory whenever the Portuguese State, by international treaty or convention, has assumed the obligation to try those acts.

15) All the persons involved in the criminal investigation - the Judge, Public Prosecutors and law enforcement officers – including the complainant, his/her legal representative and witnesses - are protected against ill-treatment, intimidation or reprisal. They can be protected by the Public Security Police and its Personal Security Body. The Personal Security Corps (CSP) is a specially prepared force dedicated to the personal safety of high-ranking entities, members of sovereign bodies, witnesses or other citizens subject to threat (Article 41 (1) (c) and Article 44 of Law no. 53/2007, of 31 August, which approved the organic law of the Public Security Police).

Regarding witnesses, Law no. 93/1999, of 14 July, governs the enforcement of measures for the protection of witnesses in criminal proceedings where their lives, physical or mental integrity, freedom or property of a considerably high value are in danger due to their contribution to the obtaining of evidence regarding the facts which are subject to investigation. These protective measures can be extended to witnesses' relatives, persons living with them in a situation similar to a spouse and other persons in close contact with them.

Article 23 of the aforementioned law provides for the creation of a Commission for Special Programs of Security (CPES) under the direct authority of the Minister of Justice, who will be responsible for establishing and ensuring special security programs.

The witness, his/her spouse, ancestors, descendants, brothers and sisters, the person that lives with him in a situation similar to a spouse or any other persons in close contact with him/her, may benefit from a special security program during the criminal proceedings or even after its conclusion, provided the following concurrent conditions occur:

- a) The witness's testimony or statement concerns the offences referred to in Article 16 (1) (a);
- b) There is a serious danger to their lives, physical or psychical integrity or freedom;

c) The testimony or the statement constitutes a contribution which is deemed, or has proved to be, essential to the ascertainment of the truth.

16) Portugal can render the widest international judicial cooperation in criminal matters even in the absence of bilateral agreements and according to the principle of reciprocity in cases where an enforced disappearance offence is the subject matter of a request, since the nature of the facts of this offence do not determine the impossibility of rendering international cooperation.

As foreseen in Article 229 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (prevalence of international agreements and conventions), rogatory letters, extradition proceedings, delegation of criminal proceedings, effects of foreign criminal sentences and other relationships with foreign authorities and international judicial entities regarding administration of criminal justice are governed by the international treaties and conventions and, in their absence or insufficiency, by special law and also by the provisions of Articles 230 to 240 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Law no. 144/99, of 31 of August, approved the legal regime for international judicial cooperation in criminal matters and is applicable to extradition, transfer of proceedings in criminal matters, enforcement of criminal judgments, transfer of persons sentenced to any punishment or measure involving deprivation of liberty, monitoring of convicted persons or in parole and mutual legal assistance in criminal matters.

The identified forms of cooperation mentioned above shall be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the international treaties, conventions and agreements that legally bind the Portuguese State and, where such provisions are non-existent or not sufficient, with the provisions of this Law 144/99 (Article 3).

International judicial cooperation shall also be rendered in accordance with the principle of reciprocity. The absence of reciprocity shall not refrain the Portuguese State from complying with a request for cooperation where such cooperation:

- (i) is seen to be advisable regarding the nature of the facts, or the need to combat certain serious forms of criminality,
- (ii) (ii) may contribute to improve the situation of the concerned person and/or his/her social rehabilitation and
- (iii) (iii) may be used to clarify facts whose commission is attributed to a Portuguese citizen.

17) Portuguese criminal law is guided by the principle of legality, as foreseen in the Code of Criminal Procedure and Article 1 of the Criminal Code.

According to the principle of legality, upon receiving a notice of the commission of an offence or of an alleged offence, the Public Prosecution Service – which is the entity responsible for criminal investigation and prosecution – shall promptly launch an investigation in order to confirm the commission of the reported offence and to prosecute the offenders. The Public Prosecutor is assisted by law enforcement authorities, namely the Criminal Police in what regards enforced disappearances.

Where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a person has been subject to an enforced disappearance, the Public Prosecution Service and/or the Criminal Police shall launch an investigation *ex officio*. The Criminal Police acts under the direction and coordination of the Public Prosecution Service.

18) No challenges and/or obstacles have been identified in the investigation of offences of enforced disappearances, since no such situations have occurred in Portugal so far. To that extent, Portugal has no recommendations or proposals to offer.

Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances

Study on standards and public policies on effective investigations on enforced disappearances

Answers provided by Portugal

- **Question 1**

The crime of enforced or involuntary disappearance is not typified in the Portuguese legal system.

- **Question 2**

Despite the fact that enforced or involuntary disappearance is not an autonomous crime, Article 9 (i) of Law nr. 31/2004, of 22 July, which adapts the portuguese criminal law to the Status of the International Criminal Court, criminalizes enforced disappearance as a crime against humanity, since it is deemed as a violation of international humanitarian law.

Pursuant to article 6 of Law 31/2004, of 22 July, *“the military chief or the person that acts as such, who, being aware or should have been aware of the fact that forces under their effective control and command or under their effective control and responsibility, are committing or are preparing to commit any of the crimes foreseen in this law, does not adopt all the necessary and adequate measures to prevent and prosecute its practice or does not immediately inform the competent authorities about it, is punished with a sentence that corresponds to that of the crime or crimes that will be effectively committed”*.

Proceeding Article 7 (Imprescriptibility) as follows: *“The criminal procedure and the penalties imposed for crimes of genocide against humanity and war are imprescriptible.”*

And, in this sense, Article 9 (Crimes Against Humanity) states as follows: *“Who, within the framework of a generalized or systematic attack against any civilian population, practices forced disappearance of persons, including detention, imprisonment or abduction promoted by a State or political organization, or with their authorization, support or agreement, followed by a refusal to recognize such a state of deprivation of liberty or to provide any information about the location or location of such persons, for the purpose of denying them the protection of the law for a long period of time, is punished with a prison sentence of 12 to 25 years.”*

In the same line, Law 100/2003, of 15 November (Military Justice Code), also applicable to the National Republican Guard (*Guarda Nacional Republicana*, GNR) [according to Article 4], which is under the tutelage of the Ministry of Home Affairs, states in Article 48: *“The hierarchical superior who, having or ought to be aware that a subordinate is committing or is preparing to commit any of the offenses provided for in this chapter, does not take the necessary and appropriate measures to prevent or repress his practice or to knowledge of the competent authorities shall be punished with the penalty corresponding to the crime or crimes actually committed.”*

Additionally, article 26 of the Portuguese Criminal Code also typifies that *“A person who executes the fact, by oneself or through a third party, or takes direct part in its execution – by agreement or together with other element or elements -, and a person who, culpably, determines another person to practice the fact, is punishable as author, provided that the execution or the beginning of the execution takes place.”*

However, following the consideration of Portugal’s first national report during the 259th Meeting of the 15th Session of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED), the Committee recommended that *“the State party review the definition of enforced disappearance as a crime against humanity in article 9 (i) of Law 31/2004 in order to ensure its full compliance with articles 2 and 5 of the Convention”* and that *“the State party adopt the legislative measures necessary to ensure that enforced disappearance is criminalized as an autonomous offence, in accordance with the definition contained in article 2 of the Convention, and that the offence carries appropriate penalties that take into account its extreme seriousness. The State party should also take the measures to hold criminally responsible any person who commits, orders, solicits or induces the commission of, attempts to commit, is an accomplice to or participates in*

an enforced disappearance is duly punished, in accordance with article 6 (1) (a) of the Convention”.

- **Question 3**

Pursuant to article 7 of Law 31/2004, of July 22, crimes against humanity are not subject to the statute of limitations. Besides, in accordance with article 119 (2) (b) of the Criminal Code, the term of limitation for continuing offences would start when “the last act was practised”.

Nevertheless, CED recommended that *“the State party ensure that, in line with article 8 of the Convention, the statute of limitations for an offence of enforced disappearance is of long duration and proportionate to the extreme seriousness of the offence”.*

- **Question 5**

Portugal adopted measures to ensure in practice that a prompt and impartial investigation is conducted into allegations of enforced disappearances. In addition to what is mentioned in the first national report submitted by Portugal:

- Before 27 August 2008, Directive 1/2002, of 4 April, of the Public Prosecutor's Office, defined the delegation of powers regarding criminal investigation;
- Law nr. 49/2008, of 27 August – Law on the Organization of Criminal Investigation -, establishes the organization and the specific legal competence in the field of criminal investigation of each organ of criminal police.

As such, any and every case of disappearance, for which there is a suspicion of crime, is immediately investigated, without the need of a direct order issued by the Public Prosecutor, which is the holder of the criminal action.

- **Question 9**

Illustratively, the Discipline Regulations of GNR encompass the possibility of immediate suspension of duties during an investigation into a reported enforced disappearance

when the alleged offender is a State agent. Besides, the Code of Criminal Procedure provides for procedural mechanisms to exclude a military officer from an investigation if this person is suspected of committing the crime.

The premises and conditions listed throughout the four paragraphs of article 12 of the present Convention are guaranteed by the constitutional and infra-constitutional plans of the Portuguese legal system and, as such, are scrupulously observed by the security forces and services under the tutelage of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

- **Questions 14/16**

In relation to requests for judicial assistance or cooperation in the terms set out in articles 14 and 15 of the Convention, it is noteworthy mentioning:

- The provisions on the common provisions on different aid modalities set forth in article 145 of Law nr. 144/99, of 31 August, which approves the law of international judiciary cooperation on criminal matters;
- Decree-Law nr. 49/2017, of 24 May, which created the Single Point of Contact for International Police Cooperation (PUC-PCI) within the scope of the Internal Security System (SSI), which dependent on and under the coordination of the Secretary-General of the SSI. This development addresses, simultaneously, the need to improve the organization of this system within the scope of international police cooperation and the fulfilment of the commitments of Portugal in the framework of the European Union;
- Pursuant to article 2 of the Regulatory Decree nr. 7/2017, of 7 August, which establishes the organization and the functioning of the Single Point of Contact for the International Police Cooperation:

“1 - PUC-PCI is the operational centre responsible for the coordination of the international police cooperation, ensuring the dispatching of the national information requests, the reception, forwarding and national dissemination of information originating in foreign police authorities and the conveyance of information and of the replies to requests of the latter.

2 - PUC-PCI is competent for, namely:

- a) *Ensuring the international exchange of information between police services, as pursuant to Law nr. 74/2009, of 12 August¹;*
 - b) *Defining criteria and providing guidance on external interactions in the sphere of international police cooperation;*
 - c) *Safeguarding the operability of the mechanisms and instruments of international police cooperation;*
 - d) *Defining and implementing good practices observed at an internal level on international police cooperation, as well as executing the guidelines conveyed by the competent international fora;*
 - e) *Defining the criteria underlying the choice of the adequate information conveyance channels, in accordance with the law;*
 - f) *Identifying and promoting the use of effective processes of management solutions and defining the workflows specifically designed for international police cooperation on mutual legal assistance;*
 - g) *Ensuring the necessary coordination with the national structures responsible for international police cooperation;*
 - h) *Ensuring the coordination of the external representation at the European and international levels, within the scope of the international police cooperation, whether by itself or by the criminal police bodies that it integrates;*
 - i) *Programming and implementing actions of continuous training of employees in the public service in the field of international police cooperation, as well as of other law enforcement authorities.*
- 3 – *The coordination of PUC-PCI is ensured on a rotation basis by each of the office coordinators of the Management Office, so-called general coordinator while in the course of these duties;*
- 4 – *At the PUC-PCI, the following units are in operation:*
- a) *Sirene Office (Sirene National Office);*
 - b) *Europol and Interpol Office (Europol National Unit and Interpol National Office);*
 - c) *Office for the Police and Customs Cooperation Centres; and the*

¹ **Note:** approves the regime applicable to the exchange of data and information of criminal nature between the authorities of the Member States of the European Union, thus transposing to the national legal framework the Council Framework Decision nr. [2006/960/JAI](#), of 18 December.

d) Office for the Liaison Officers and for the Contact Points for the Prüm Decisions.

5 – The continuous functioning of the PUC-PCI is ensured by elements of the National Republican Guard, the Public Security Police, the Judiciary Police and of the Immigration and Borders Service, working on a shifts system.

6 – The internal procedures of PUC-PCI are defined in a regulation that shall be approved by the Secretary-General of the Internal Security System, on a proposal of the general coordinator, once all other coordinators have been heard.”

- **Question 17**

Security forces and services under the tutelage of the Ministry of Home Affairs carry out the necessary steps whenever required or whenever cases of disappearance are conveyed through established channels (*i.e.*, single point of contact for international police cooperation and police and customs cooperation centres, among others).