Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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Missing migrants, refugees and asylum seekers – a call to clarify their fate

Motion for a resolution
tabled by the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

The issue of missing persons is usually associated with armed conflicts or other violent and post-conflict situations. In recent years, it has also become a matter for the international community in the context of migration and forced displacement.

The Parliamentary Assembly has drawn attention to the issue in a number of resolutions, including Resolution 2324 (2020) on *Missing refugee and migrant children in Europe*.

Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees go missing daily. In 2021, 3 130 deaths and missing were recorded with the identities of many of these persons remaining unknown. It happens in part because of the lack of legal migratory routes, gaps in search and rescue operations and pushback practices carried out by some countries.

As the International Committee of the Red Cross says, for every missing migrant, there is a family living in uncertainty – not knowing if their relative is alive or dead. Such a situation can dramatically affect families. The legal, social and psychological consequences can be so profound that continuing or rebuilding their lives after such an event is seriously compromised or even impossible. Families often struggle to access social benefits, sell or manage property or inheritance, remarry, or exercise parental rights.

European governments could jointly reduce the risk of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers from going missing and dying, as well as help families to clarify the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones. Disappearance in the context of migration bears challenges in the area of international co-operation for which traditional working methods on missing persons do not suffice. The Assembly should encourage the creation of an effective search process for missing migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, proper management of dead bodies, identification process, as well as support that could be given to their relatives.