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**Baranowska, G. & Kolaković-Bojović, M. (2025) *Enforced Disappearances: On Universal Responses to a Worldwide Phenomenon*.  
Cambridge University Press**

**Marina Matić Bošković<sup>a</sup>**

Published by Cambridge University Press in March 2025, and edited by Professor Grażyna Baranowska and Dr. Milica Kolaković-Bojović the book *Enforced Disappearances: On Universal Responses to a Worldwide Phenomenon* discusses the UN human rights (both treaty bodies and special procedures) response to the key challenges of missing persons and enforced disappearances, including search and identification, reparations, family rights, involvement of non-state actors, the role of NGOs as well as migrations and armed conflicts as contexts of disappearances. A pioneer project in this field, the book resulted from joint work of two editors (who are in parallel coauthors of two chapters) and eleven authors,<sup>2</sup> where all of them are experts in this issue working across a global range of juris-

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dictions, including, but not limited to the membership in the UN treaty bodies and special procedures, NGO, academia and a research community. The book has been divided in two parts and ten chapters, where the first part deals with the horizontal issues associated to enforced disappearances worldwide, such as enforced disappearances in armed conflicts, strategies and means to improve the process of search and identification or to ensure access to social and economic rights for victims. In the second part, the book also includes several illustrative case studies from Latin America, Africa, Mexico, Western Balkans, and the Asia-Pacific region, which demonstrate the current challenges and problems relating to enforced disappearances in domestic or regional settings.

This title is available as a hardcopy, but also through the open access on Cambridge Core.<sup>2</sup>

The first part of the book is consisted of the five chapters:

In their coauthored, the introductory chapter, *Dealing with Uncertainty: On Addressing Enforced Disappearances Universally*, the editors used the notion of uncertainty as a highlight, underlining that „this simple word does not sound strong enough to describe all the seriousness and gravity of the consequences of an enforced disappearance.” The editors further elaborate on the legal, economical and psycho-social consequences caused by enforced disappearances to the direct victims and their family members. This chapter also explores the regional and global developments from the pilot steps towards legal recognition of enforced disappearances to the present mechanisms of international human rights law and international criminal law. The chapter further elaborates on the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED, Convention) and the role of the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances and the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

Chapter 2, *Enforced Disappearances in Armed Conflict through the Lenses of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance*, written by Ivan Jovanović, explores the differences between enforced disappearances and the term ‘missing persons’ existing in international humanitarian law. It also demonstrates how the ICPPED fills gaps in IHL, highlighting the advantage of an international treaty in contrast to customary law, - in particular for practitioners -, as well as the potential of the continues nature of enforced disappearances for accountability efforts. Furthermore, limitations of the ICPPED in the context of armed conflict are shown, particularly not including non-state actors among the potential perpetrators. The author underlines that the fact that victims of enforced disappearances are a narrower group within the broader category of missing persons should not exclude large numbers of families of missing persons from access to support and reparation. Chapter 3, exploring the origins and assessing the impact of the Guiding Principles on the Search for Disappeared persons adopted in 2019, was written by Maria Clara Galvis Patiño and Rainer Huhle. The chapter explores the impact the Guiding Principles have during their first 4 years of existence (2019-2022) in the

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<sup>2</sup> Available in open access: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/enforced-disappearances/DE76D4C043ABF8E3F299032AE055041B#findtn-information> (Accessed: 27 February 2026)

public policies, but also in the case law, legislation, academic literature, and civil society. It connects a broad and comprehensive consultative process that preceded the adoption of the Guidelines with their strong impact on the practice, but also recognises an importance of the involvement and activities of families of disappeared persons, who were involved in the consultation process and are now demanding the Guiding Principles to be implemented domestically. Chapter 4, *New technologies and enforced disappearances*, written by Gabriella Citroni explores both: opportunities and challenges in this area. In addition to the presentation of the main findings from the work of UN Special Procedures on new technologies, including the WGEID, the author addresses the connection between a use of modern technologies and enforced disappearances. The chapter further explores how the WGEID could better engage with new technologies in its work, especially during its country visits. It reflects upon a need to find the balance in use of (still necessary) traditional approaches and techniques and the new technologies. The author also sheds some light on the perspectives to improve UN CED work through the use of modern technologies. Chapter 5 of the book, titled *The Fate and Whereabouts of Social Rights in the Practice of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances*, written by Ariel Dulitzky, addresses the access to property, health care, education, religious facilities, and other social and cultural rights for direct victims and their family members. The chapter analyses both: positive aspects in the CED's approach to social rights, as well as showcases gaps. It also comprehensively discusses approaches of the WGEID, Inter-American Court of Human Rights, UN treaty bodies and special procedures, and offers the proposal on how to use these approaches to change the restrictive interpretations applied so far by the CED. The second part of the book comprises of the five chapters that analyse the universal challenges from regional or domestic perspectives (in Latin America, Africa, Mexico, Western Balkans and Asia). Chapter 6, written by Horacio Ravenna addresses *NGO Contributions to Eradicate Enforced Disappearances in Latin America* brings valuable testimony of the author who actively participated in the struggle of the family members (mothers and grandmothers) of those disappeared in Argentina during the dictatorship. The author describes the causes and roots of the movement born in Argentina, as well as its growth, evolution and fight for the global legal recognition and eradication of enforced disappearances. This chapter is also of the greatest importance for a proper understanding of NGOs' role nowadays when enforced disappearances occur in different contexts such as migration or armed conflicts. Chapter 7, *Contemporary Disappearances in Mexico* by Lene Guercke discusses a challenging topic of contexts and modalities of enforced disappearances in Mexico as well as legal issues arising from them. It especially focuses on unprecedented increase disappearances associated to organised crime and drug trafficking, discussing how these practices fits to the concept of enforced disappearances, taking into account 2023 CED's statements on non-state actors. The chapter puts into the focus whether a failure to identify dead bodies can be a form of enforced disappearances, and under which circumstances impunity can be assessed as form of acquiescence. Chapter 8, *Disappearances of Migrants in Africa*, written by Eva Nudd and Barbara Lochbihler shed a light on migration as a context of disappearances focusing on African region where the widespread disappearances occurring

to migrants and refugee seekers. Authors reflects upon the problem of missing migrants in Africa and the impact on their families adopted by the African Commission in 2021 and discuss practical challenges, such as the lack of understanding of the very concept and distrust in authorities. Chapter 9, *Enforced Disappearances and the Right to Reparation in Western Balkans*, written by Milica Kolaković-Bojović and Jasminka Džumhur, both researchers and practitioners from the Western Balkans, presents an in-depth analysis of the complex legal situation on reparation in the region associated to the consequences of massive armed conflicts occurred in 1990's where over 40.000 of people went missing. The authors underline the results of the search and identification processes resulted in clarified faith and whereabouts of more than 30.000 people but emphasise underdevelopments when it comes to granting reparation to victims. The chapter brings comparative analysis of the challenges in Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia and Serbia where a common denominator is the absence of the crime of enforced disappearances, which appears particularly surprising in a region where the violation was so widespread. It also analysing the capacities of EU accession processes to foster and shape reform processes in the region, including access to reparation for victims of armed conflicts in the region. Chapter 9, *The Strategies to Increase the ICPPED Ratification with Special Attention to the Asia-Pacific Region*, by Prof. Koji Teraya, focuses on the region with a lowest ICPPED ratification rate and explores causes, roots and challenges associated with the ratification. The author also underlines that a seriousness of enforced disappearances requires for to arrange symptomatic treatments, along with suggesting possible strategies to increase the number of ratifications in the Asia-Pacific Region. A broad thematic scope coupled with in depth analysis of a number of highly relevant issues done by the most respective authors in the field, but in the manner which makes it understandable for different groups of audiences, makes this book a great choice not only for academic and research communities, but also for practitioners in the field, students and human rights activist. A plenty of recommendations on how to improve legislation and practices makes it also being a valuable source of inputs for policy makers on international, regional and national level.

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