



South Sudan: Thousands of families living with uncertainty, in search of their loved ones.

JUBA (27 Aug 2026) – The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the South Sudan Red Cross (SSRC) documented more than 180 new cases of missing persons in South Sudan between January to June alone, largely due to the ongoing conflicts in Sudan and South Sudan. During the same period, the ICRC and the SSRC were able to clarify the fate of 188 missing persons out of a total caseload of over 6200 active cases of Missing Persons across the country, a figure that continues to be a source of personal and collective trauma afflicting families, relatives, friends, and communities.

The International Day of the Disappeared (IDoD), commemorated every 30th of August, provides the world and South Sudan with an opportunity to honor the tireless efforts of families searching for their loved ones and remind the public that families have the right to know the fate of their missing loved ones. This year, the ICRC and the SSRC are commemorating the day under the theme: ‘Together in hope, united in love.’

“Thousands of people – sons, fathers, mothers and daughters – have gone missing in South Sudan due to protracted and devastating armed conflict and violence. Many of them never returned and have never been heard from again, leaving families in painstaking uncertainty for years, or even decades, unable to grieve, find closure or rebuild their lives,” says the ICRC Head of Delegation, Daniel Bunnskog. “Society can help by continuing to show compassion, empathy, and support towards families struggling to find answers about the fate of missing relatives,” added Mr. Bunnskog.

Along these same lines, the SSRC calls for joint effort with the public in the search process. “The public is part and parcel of the search process; there is a need to join hands to work together and provide the needed answers to the families of the missing,” declares John Labor, the Secretary General of the SSRC. “The search for the missing persons is a deeply emotional journey whose results take time, and it needs patience and endurance,” John explained.

In order to understand the specific needs and challenges faced by families as a result of the disappearance of one or several members of their family during conflict, the ICRC and the SSRC conducted a Family Needs Assessment with the Families of the Missing in 2021 to help identify and address difficulties and coping mechanisms used and developed by the families of missing persons when dealing with the ambiguous loss of their loved ones. Based on the findings of the assessment, the ICRC and the SSRC supported the needs of the families, and specifically the psychosocial needs through a 10-week Accompaniment Program. To date, this program has benefited 123 family members of the missing across South Sudan. Additionally, the ICRC and the SSRC contributed to the formation of a Families of the Missing association which advocates for the rights of the missing and supports family members both psychosocially and economically. Working with authorities who have the primary obligations to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons, the ICRC offers its technical support to the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management (MHADM) that has the lead on the Missing Person's Bill. The ICRC aims to reinforce the ministry's capacity on missing persons to create an adequate national Mechanism while jointly mobilizing stakeholders for the adoption of the Bill which is awaiting review by the Minister of Justice.

Meanwhile, the ICRC and SSRC continue to remind parties to the conflict that preventing people from going missing is possible if they adhere to international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL) and that families have the right to know the fate and whereabouts of their missing loved ones.

For more information:

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