

Needs Assessment of the Families of Missing Persons in relation to the conflict in Eastern Ukraine

In 2016, the ICRC conducted a **needs assessment** of families of persons missing in relation to the conflict in Eastern Ukraine (FNA). 73 relatives of missing persons participated in semi-structured interviews. The interviews lasted between three and four hours and took place from April to June.

In 2018, the ICRC conducted a **cross-checking exercise** with the aim of understanding how the needs recorded two years earlier have been evolving over time and if the conclusions of the FNA are still valid today. 13 relatives of missing persons participated in four in-depth focus group discussions, which on average lasted for 5 hours, between July and August.

The objective was to learn the specific difficulties, expectations, needs, resources and coping mechanisms of the relatives of missing persons and to support the concerned authorities in addressing the multifaceted identified needs.

Despite the relatively limited scope of these assessments in view of the much larger number of persons believed to be missing in relation to the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, its conclusions can be taken as illustrative of the situation of any family. Any action undertaken by the authorities based on its lessons and recommendations will help to alleviate the suffering of other relatives of missing persons.

MISSING IN UA

There is no information about the exact number of missing persons in relation to the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Nonetheless, it is estimated that at least 1,500 persons remain unaccounted for as a result of the conflict.

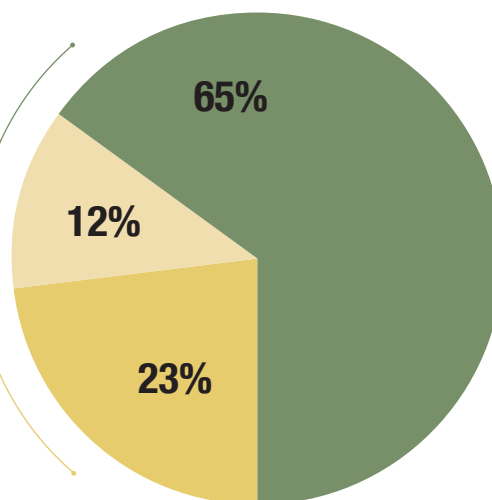
DEFINITION OF MISSING PERSONS

The ICRC defines “missing persons” as individuals of whom their families have no news and/or who, on the basis of reliable information, have been reported missing as a result of armed conflict, whether international or non-international, internal violence, natural disaster or other humanitarian crises.

2016 ASSESSMENT

WHAT DO YOU THINK HAS HAPPENED TO YOUR RELATIVE (SINCE THE LAST NEWS)?

- Missing relative is still alive
- The missing is dead
- Unsure



HOW HAS THE DISAPPEARANCE OF YOUR FAMILY MEMBER AFFECTED YOU AND YOUR FAMILY?*



68%

Lost an income as the result of the disappearance of loved one.



39%

Cannot cover daily needs as food and clothes.



The search for the missing adds more cost for the families (travel, paying for information).



66%

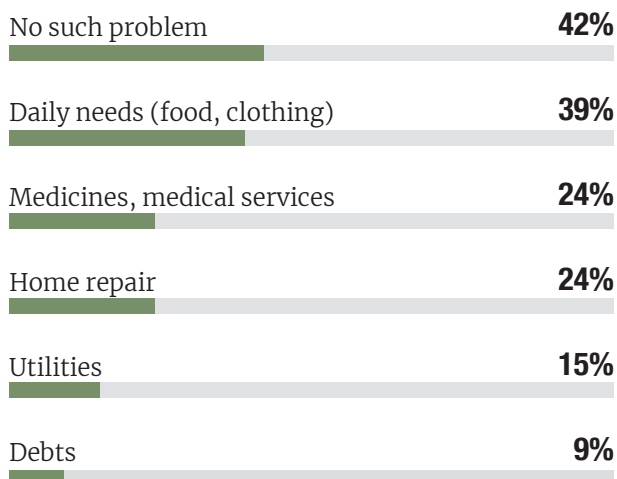
Psychological state has been deeply affected.



24%

Health has worsened after the disappearance.

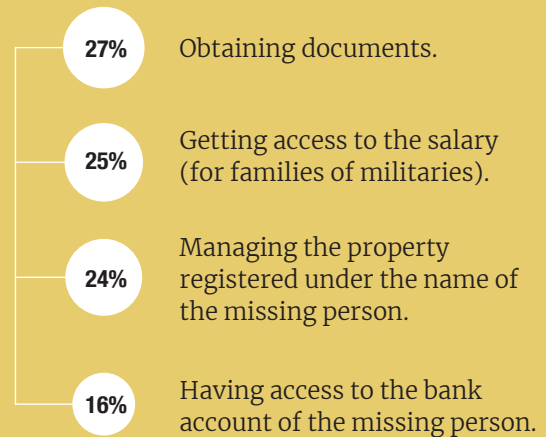
WERE THERE ANY ESSENTIAL NEEDS THAT THE HOUSEHOLD WAS UNABLE TO COVER SINCE THE DISAPPEARANCE OF YOUR RELATIVE?*



* The percentages surpass 100% because each family member could provide multiple answers to the same question.

56%

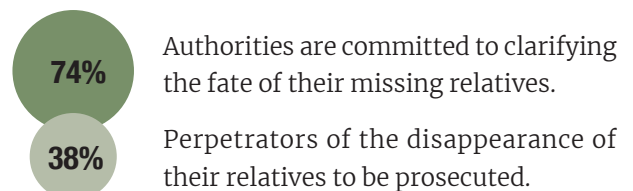
confronted with legal/administrative issues because of the absence of a clear status for their missing relative.



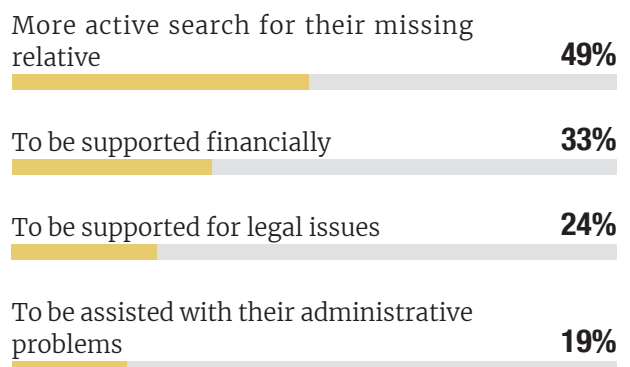
92%

their plight has been insufficiently recognized by the authorities.

MEANING OF JUSTICE*



PRIORITY ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN ACCORDING TO THE FAMILIES*



2018 CROSS-CHECKING

Families still **contact different authorities** and organizations hoping to find information about their loved ones.

Most families mentioned **insufficient coordination** between different authorities. On different occasions, they **received controversial information** about the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones from different institutions.

Families of missing persons **still have economic and financial problems** that are directly related to the disappearance of their loved ones.

Families strongly affirmed that **time does not heal the pain**.

Continuous psychological suffering leads to **deterioration in the health conditions** of family members. Pain and suffering caused by the disappearance slowly turn into physical diseases.

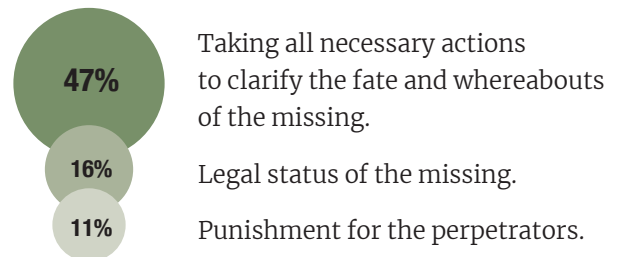
Families still incur **additional expenses connected to the search process**.

Families are concerned about the **lack of a clear status** for their missing relatives.

Families are **unaware** whether they are **entitled to specific rights** or benefits because their loved ones went unaccounted for.

Families still think that authorities show insufficient recognition of their plight. According to the families, authorities should increase their efforts to clarify the fate and whereabouts of their missing loved ones.

MEANING OF JUSTICE



LAW ON THE MISSING

Law n° 2505 “On the Legal Status of Missing Persons of Ukraine” (Law on the Missing) was adopted by the Ukrainian Parliament on 12 July 2018, and came into force on 2 August 2018. The Law introduces the status of missing person *per se* for the first time into Ukrainian legislation and creates Commission on Persons Missing in Special Circumstances and the Unified Register of Missing Persons. Its implementation requires the adoption of governmental institutional measures.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Implementation of the National Commission to coordinate the actions of all authorities working on the file of the Missing.
- Establishment of a multilateral mechanism between the parties to the conflict for coordination of activities and exchange of info.
- Establishment of a financial support system for families of civilians missing.
- Take the necessary measures to address administrative and legal concerns.
- Authorities should ensure that families of missing have easy access to psychosocial and psychological services.
- Express acknowledgement of the situation of the families of the missing persons.