



## Fingerprints

Fingerprint evidence plays a crucial role in criminal investigations. Since a person's fingerprints are unique and do not change during the course of their life, they can be used to quickly and efficiently confirm or disprove a person's identity, for example, in checking a suspect at a border crossing.

In addition, finger marks can be collected at a crime scene and have the potential to link a series of crimes together, or to place a suspect at the scene. Fingerprints play an equally important role in identifying victims following a disaster such as a cyclone, earthquake, bombing or other attack.

### *Automated systems*

INTERPOL manages a database of fingerprints, containing more than 100,000 fingerprint records and more than 3,000 crime scene marks. Authorized users in member countries can view, submit and cross-check records using I-24/7, INTERPOL's secure global police communications network, via a user-friendly automatic fingerprint identification system (AFIS).

Law enforcement officers can either take fingerprints using an electronic device or can take them manually using ink and paper then use a special scanner to save the data electronically in the appropriate format. They then submit the data to INTERPOL's General Secretariat to be uploaded to the database. Records are saved and exchanged in the format set by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

INTERPOL actively encourages member countries to use the database as extensively as possible, and increase the number of relevant fingerprints in the system. At the INTERPOL General Assembly held in 2009, heads of the Organization's National Central Bureaus voted unanimously to develop the systematic sharing and updating of fingerprints, including finger marks from unsolved crimes as well as fingerprint profiles taken from offenders who are citizens of other countries.

In 2009, INTERPOL made more than 1,000 identifications as a result of increased data sharing and comparison by member countries.

### *Detecting hidden links*

Fingerprint data has the power to reveal vital connections between crimes. This was highlighted in May 2008 when an individual was arrested in Brazil on the charge of threatening behaviour. The same person is currently being investigated for paedophilia and had previously served a sentence for committing grievous bodily harm. The Brazilian authorities submitted the individual's fingerprints to the INTERPOL General Secretariat and a search conducted in the AFIS returned a positive identification. The fingerprints were identified to a male person using an alternative name to the one known in Brazil. He had been recorded in the INTERPOL database following his arrest in 2007 for attempting to illegally cross the border between Belarus and Poland by train, using a forged identity document.

# INTERPOL



### ***Innovation***

INTERPOL has implemented a mobile AFIS which has been used in crime scene training and in disaster victim identification (DVI). The equipment includes a portable fingerprint scanner and laptop and can be used to upload data in one country for forwarding to the General Secretariat for a more complete search. This equipment is available for National Central Bureaus in member countries to borrow on request.

Other opportunities, currently under development, include palm print processing and mug-shot comparison, which offer potential in terms of the scope and speed of the identification process. Automated ten-print verification is also being introduced, with a high-volume search facility that will allow more than 1,000 comparisons per day against the INTERPOL fingerprint database.

### ***Sharing best practice***

An International Fingerprint Symposium takes place every two years. Attended by the Heads of National Fingerprint Bureaus, INTERPOL representatives and private companies, it provides an opportunity for experts from around the world to share best practice and latest developments.

In addition to the Symposium, INTERPOL organizes an AFIS experts' working group. This takes place twice a year and is a forum for discussing new technology, identification procedures and training needs, and for ensuring that INTERPOL's systems comply with the necessary standards.



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*For matters relating to specific crime cases, please contact your local police or the Interpol National Central Bureau in your country.*