



INTERPOL

FACT SHEET

Disaster victim identification

The process of identifying victims of major disasters such as terrorist attacks or earthquakes is rarely possible by visual recognition. Comparison of fingerprints, dental records or DNA samples with ones stored in databases or taken from victims' personal effects are often required to obtain a conclusive identification.

As people are travelling more and more, there is also a high probability that a disaster will result in the deaths of nationals from many different countries.

► INTERPOL'S SUPPORT

When a major disaster occurs, one country alone may not have sufficient resources to deal with mass casualties. In some cases, the incident may have damaged or destroyed the country's existing emergency-response infrastructure, making the task of victim identification even more difficult. A coordinated effort by the international community can significantly speed up the victim recovery and identification process, enabling victims' families to begin the healing process and societies to rebuild, and, in the event of a terrorism incident, assisting investigators to identify possible attackers.

Member countries can call on INTERPOL for assistance in disaster victim identification (DVI) immediately in the aftermath of a disaster. The services offered by INTERPOL include:

- Assistance from the Command and Coordination Centre at the INTERPOL General Secretariat in Lyon, France, to send messages between National Central Bureaus 24 hours a day in Arabic, English, French or Spanish;
- An Incident Response Team to provide further assistance upon request, such as on-site investigative support or connection to INTERPOL's databases;
- Downloadable DVI documents (guide and forms) on the INTERPOL public website.

► DVI EXPERTISE IN THE FIELD

Since 2004, a total of 20 DVI teams have been deployed to disasters across the world. In November 2013, an INTERPOL DVI team supported authorities in the Philippines following Super Typhoon Haiyan which left nearly 7,000 people dead or missing.

Following a high-profile terrorist attack at the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya (September 2013), in which more than 60 people were killed and some 175 others wounded, an INTERPOL DVI Team assisted Kenyan authorities with crime scene processing and the identification of victims.

Disaster victim identification

► **MULTI-DIMENSIONAL APPROACH**

INTERPOL's DVI activities are supported by a Working Group on Disaster Victim Identification, which is made up of forensic and police experts. The overall purpose of the Working Group is to provide direction and focus to the development of international good practice in DVI. The Working Group meets annually to discuss improvements to procedures and standards in DVI matters. Policies and guidelines have been produced in the following areas and are backed up by training programmes:

- Victim care and family support;
- Occupational care for DVI teams;
- Compliance with international standards and forensic quality assurance controls;
- Information-sharing and exchange;
- Operational assistance to countries which lack DVI capacity.

The **Fast and Efficient International Disaster Victim IDentification (FASTID) Project** is under way to create the first ever police database to identify and link missing persons and unidentified bodies on an international level. Led by INTERPOL, the project was launched in 2010 with a budget of almost EUR 3 million, funded partly by the European Commission.

Developed with a consortium of partners from the public, private and academic sectors, FASTID will establish an international system to manage enquiries concerning missing persons and unidentified bodies in the event of disasters as well as day-to-day policing.

The **'INTERPOL Platform for DVI (PDVI)' Project** was initiated following a Resolution adopted during the 79th session of the INTERPOL General Assembly held in Qatar in 2010. Connected to the INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation in Singapore, the PDVI will serve as a centre of excellence offering universal access to DVI assistance for all INTERPOL member countries. The Project will also establish relevant worldwide partnerships, building on the success of INTERPOL's existing relationship with the International Commission on Missing Persons.



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► **CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Contact us via our web site. For matters relating to specific crime cases, please contact your local police or the INTERPOL National Central Bureau in your country.

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