

## IMPORTANCE OF IDENTIFICATION OF DEAD FOR THE RELATIVES ORGANIZATION OF IDENTIFICATION ON A NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL AND THE ROLE OF INTERPOL

---

T. Solheim

*Institute of Oral Biology, Dental Faculty of the University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway*

**Summary:** Personal identification is identification of dead persons whose identity is not known. This work is considered important in a modern society both from the civil law and because of personal feelings. In mass disasters the Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) is taken seriously and Interpol has taken steps to facilitate the international co-operation and identification in such cases.

**Keywords:** person identification, Interpol, Ukraine.

The main reason to identify dead people is concern for the family and relatives. The implications by the civil law such as life insurance, pension, settling of the estate including heritages and solution of marriages is of course important both for the state and the individual. However, more important for the relatives may be the psychological aspects. Without being sure of what has happened and that the person is dead, relatives never get peace in their minds and tend to continue to search for the missing person. Also a funeral and a grave to visit is an important part of the grieving process. The dead should be left behind, but not forgotten. We say "rest in peace". It should give the

relatives peace in mind and make them able to continue their lives.

In a modern state it is the responsibility of the state to act as much as possible to find and identify missing persons. The state is of course interested because of civil law aspects. The state should also be responsible for the identifications because of the responsibility for the citizens and their wellbeing. The police as representative of the state must be responsible and act. In most western countries some form of state organized ID- teams have been set up with police as leaders. Identification work is a team work with police, forensic pathologist, inclusive forensic anthropology, forensic

odontologist and DNA experts. Not all countries have acknowledged this in their construction of ID-team. The advantage of an ID-team is that the state is prepared to handle the identification after disasters. This includes plans for who are doing what. The personal know beforehand what they are responsible for. Vaccination may make them ready for going abroad even to exotic countries. Working procedures can be set up. Equipment can be acquired beforehand and stored, ready for immediate action.

Many large disasters today do not only involve the citizens of only one country, but usually many countries. Different standards of identification in different countries have caused a lot of problems and mistrust. In Sweden and Finland they redo the identification of their citizens if they are identified in other countries. Also in the identification of foreign citizen the police need information on the missing person from another country. If information is unsatisfactory it may prevent or at best delay final identification. Sometimes one does not get any ante mortem information at all and identification is impossible.

Interpol is the international police organization dealing mainly with the international exchange of information about

criminal activity and criminals. Interpol has also taken an interest in Disaster Victim Identification (DVI). Interested nation have met every year since 1980 and discussed problem of DVI and how to improve the situation. First forms both ante mortem and post mortem were constructed. Such forms should secure that a minimum of information on missing persons and dead persons is registered if the form is filled properly in. Also Interpol has published a guide for the work to be undertaken. It contains a lot of information for police and for the direction of a DVI operation. It is however rather unsatisfactory for the dental identification work. In addition Interpol has set up recommended guide lines for international cooperation in international disasters.

Where is Ukraine in this picture? At the moment I understand that little is done by the Ukrainian state. May be it is not so important for us what you do when Ukrainians are dead. However, a large airplane may crash may have a number of Scandinavian victims. The responsibility for the identification rests with the Ukrainian authorities/police. How far can we trust you? I know Ukraine is member of Interpol and should adhere to the recommendations by Interpol.