

In annual memorial, UN pays tribute to 140 fallen staff members

Were it not for the sacrifices of United Nations peacekeepers, humanitarian workers and other personnel, the people who needed urgent support in the most difficult and dangerous environments would have experienced greater suffering, the top UN official said Thursday in an annual memorial service for fallen colleagues.

“I wish we never had to mourn [the loss of colleagues](#),” [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) said at the ceremony held at UN Headquarters in New York to remember 140 personnel who lost their lives in the line of duty between 1 July 2016 and 31 December 2017.

“But the sad fact is that people do lose their lives while serving the United Nations, and it is our duty to honour their service and sacrifice,” he said.

Of the 140 killed, 123 were military personnel; three police; and 14 civilians. They came from 42 nations.

During his remarks, he invited the bereaved families and others in attendance to join him in observing a moment of silence.

Mr. Guterres noted that over the past years, respect for those wearing UN symbols has diminished, making them a target of those who oppose peace “despite all our efforts to ensure the safety and security of our personnel.”



UN Photo/Mark Garten

UN Secretary-General António Guterres addresses an annual memorial service for fallen UN staff.

As UN High Commissioner for Refugees between 2005 and 2015, he remembered that symbols like the Red Cross, Red Crescent and UN used to be respected even by militant groups.

He said he saw how this respect was progressively being lost and in the end, he was starting to see situations in which UN staff were targeted exactly because they were UN staff.

Mr. Guterres, however, stressed that all around the world, the blue UN flag represents the hopes of some of the world's most vulnerable people for peace, security and an opportunity for a better future.

Since 2011, the UN Secretariat has held an annual memorial service to honour fallen colleagues.

Mr. Guterres said that the UN faces "a terrible dilemma" about sending staff into the most difficult areas at the most dangerous moments because if they don't go, "the people we care for will suffer even more, facing even more dangerous situations and circumstances."