

Marking International Day, UN honours dedication and service of peacekeepers

24 May 2017 – While the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers is 29 May, the Organization today held ceremonies to pay tribute to the more than 3,500 people who have died on duty since 1948 and acknowledge the dedication and courage of those serving on the ground.

“Every day, peacekeepers help bring peace and stability to war-torn societies around the world,” UN [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said in his message for the Day, also underscoring the sacrifices made by the more than 3,500 peacekeepers who have given their lives in the service of peace since 1948.

“Their sacrifice only strengthens our commitment to ensuring that United Nations peacekeepers continue protecting civilians in harm’s way, promoting human rights and the rule of law, removing landmines, advancing negotiations and securing a better future in the places they are deployed,” he said. “Now, more than ever, it is essential that we continue investing in peace around the world.”

On 29 May in 1948, the first UN peacekeeping mission began operations in Palestine. In 2002, the UN General Assembly designated 29 May as the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers.

At the UN Headquarters in New York, the Secretary-General presided over a wreath-laying ceremony in honour of all peacekeepers who lost their lives while serving under the UN flag.

Mr. Guterres led a moment of silence to remember the fallen peacekeepers, including 117 military, police and civilian peacekeepers from 43 countries who died in service in 2016.

He expressed his “deepest condolences and appreciation” to the family members and friends of those who died, as well as his “deepest sorrow and greatest appreciation” to the countries that contributed the troops and police officers.

The UN chief warned that peacekeepers continue to come under attack from armed groups, spoilers and increasingly by terrorists, including incidents in Mali, the Central African Republic, and South Sudan.

“But the closure of our operations in Cote d’Ivoire and Liberia over the coming months reminds us that the contributions, investments and sacrifices of our United Nations peacekeepers have contributed to the transformation of these countries from battlefields to peaceful states,” he stressed.

“And the greatest tribute we can pay to those who have died is to rededicate ourselves to continuing their work to build and maintain peace,” he said.

The [Dag Hammarskjöld Medal](#) was awarded posthumously to the peacekeepers who

have fallen while serving in the cause of peace, during the preceding year.

UN peacekeeping operations use the Day to strengthen bonds with the local populations that they have been deployed to serve. For example by holding sporting events, school and orphanage visits, art and essay competitions, photo exhibits, neighbourhood clean ups, tree plantings, concerts, and conferences and workshops on peace issues.