

Remember Slavery: UN chief calls for continued struggle to ensure dignity and justice for all

Commemorating the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the United Nations Secretary-General on Monday said that while the abhorrent practice was abolished in the 1800s, it continues to have profound social, cultural and political impacts today.

“This observance was established not only to acknowledge a dreadful chapter in human history, but also [to shine a spotlight on the dangers of racism and prejudice today](#),” said António Guterres, adding:

“This tragic mass human suffering must be recounted to younger generations through education that offers an accurate reflection of historical accounts, including the many acts of bravery and resistance carried out by slaves.”

The UN chief said it is also equally important to highlight the contributions made by people of African descent across the world.

Yet despite the achievements and the recognition of African descendants, gaps exist which prevent them from the full realization of their rights and many encounter racism and hatred on a daily basis.

“We must recognize the work that is still to be done,” stressed Mr. Guterres, calling on everyone to commit themselves to lift all lives and fight against forced labour and other horrendous abuses of human rights.

Speaking alongside Mr. Guterres, Graciela J. Dixon, the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Panama, highlighted that the current generation of people of African descent are the living testimony of the struggles and triumphs of their ancestors.

“We honour the memory of victims and survivors of the transatlantic slave trade by continuing our common struggle to ensure that all people live in dignity and justice,” he urged.



UN Photo/Loey Felipe

Graciela Dixon, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Panama, addresses the commemorative meeting of the General Assembly to mark the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

“It is because of such men and women that we can gather here today to mark our determination to never ever again in human history, repeat the horrendous crime of slavery, neither for our people nor for any other human being on earth,” Ms. Dixon said, in her keynote address at the commemoration.

She underscored that everyone’s right to enjoy and live in a free world where the full and final eradication of racism and discrimination in every is longer a wishful thought.

And, looking back and drawing strength from the past generations – who persevered despite overwhelming discrimination and segregation – will help bring it to reality.

“If they resisted and endured [...] we truly have no excuse,” she said.