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**FROM THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL**

# **HUMAN RIGHTS DAY**

**10 December 2015**

## **Message of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon**

Amid large-scale atrocities and widespread abuses across the world, Human Rights Day should rally more concerted global action to promote the timeless principles that we have collectively pledged to uphold.

In a year that marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations, we can draw inspiration from the history of the modern human rights movement, which emerged from the Second World War.

At that time, President Franklin D. Roosevelt of the United States identified four basic freedoms as the birthright of all people: freedom of expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear. His wife, Eleanor Roosevelt, joined forces at the United Nations with human rights champions from around the world to enshrine these freedoms in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Today's extraordinary challenges can be seen – and addressed – through the lens of the four freedoms.

First: freedom of expression, which is denied to millions of people and increasingly under threat. We must defend, preserve and expand democratic practices and space for civil society. That is essential to lasting stability.

Second: freedom of worship. Around the world, terrorists have hijacked religion, betraying its spirit by killing in its name. Others are targeting religious minorities and exploiting fears for political gain. In response, we must promote respect for diversity based on the fundamental equality of all people and the right to freedom of religion.

Third: freedom from want still plagues so much of humankind. World leaders in September adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the aim of ending poverty and



enabling all people to live in dignity on a peaceful, healthy planet. Now we must do everything possible to realize this vision.

Fourth: freedom from fear. Millions of refugees and internally displaced persons are a tragic product of the failure to fulfil this freedom. Not since the Second World War have so many people been forced to flee their homes. They run from war, violence and injustice across continents and oceans, often risking their lives. In response, we must not close but open doors and guarantee the right of all to seek asylum, without any discrimination. Migrants seeking an escape from poverty and hopelessness should also enjoy their fundamental human rights.

Today we reaffirm our commitment to protecting human rights as the foundation of our work. This is the spirit of the UN's Human Rights up Front initiative, which aims to prevent and respond to large-scale violations.

On Human Rights Day, let us recommit to guaranteeing the fundamental freedoms and protecting the human rights of all.

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