

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

10 December 2017

This year's commemoration of Human Rights Day marks the beginning of a year-long celebration of seven decades since the adoption of one of the world's most profound and far-reaching international agreements. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights establishes the equality and dignity of every human being and stipulates that every government has a core duty to enable all people to enjoy all their inalienable rights and freedoms.

All of us have a right to speak freely and participate in decisions that affect our lives. We all have a right to live free from all forms of discrimination. We have a right to education, health care, economic opportunities and a decent standard of living. We have rights to privacy and justice. These rights are relevant to all of us, every day. They are the foundation of peaceful societies and sustainable development.

Since the proclamation of the Universal Declaration in 1948, human rights have been one of the three pillars of the United Nations, along with peace and development. While human rights abuses did not end when the Universal Declaration was adopted, the Declaration has helped countless people to gain greater freedom and security. It has helped to prevent violations, obtain justice for wrongs, and strengthen national and international human rights laws and safeguards.

Despite these advances, the fundamental principles of the Universal Declaration are being tested in all regions. We see rising hostility towards human rights and those who defend them by people who want to profit from exploitation and division. We see hatred, intolerance, atrocities and other crimes. These actions imperil us all.

On this Human Rights Day, I want to acknowledge the brave human rights defenders and advocates, including UN staff, who work every day, sometimes in grave peril, to uphold human rights around the world. I urge people and leaders everywhere to stand up for all human rights – civil, political, economic, social and cultural -- and for the values that underpin our hopes for a fairer, safer and better world for all.