

UNITED NATIONS



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MESSAGE ON HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

10 December 2016

As United Nations Secretary-General over the last decade, I have repeatedly stressed the interdependence of the three pillars of the United Nations -- peace, sustainable development and human rights. Together, they form the basis of resilient and cohesive societies rooted in inclusion, justice and the rule of law.

I have also underscored that human rights are at the heart of the work and identity of the United Nations. This understanding is at the core of our Human Rights up Front initiative.

At a time of multiplying conflicts, intensifying humanitarian needs and rising hate speech, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reminds us that recognition of “the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”. Step by step, we can build a future based on our shared values of equality and human dignity.

That is the spirit that underlies our recently launched “Together” campaign to fight the xenophobia faced by so many refugees and migrants. That is also the spirit we will need to combat extremism, halt the erosion of respect for international humanitarian law, and defend civil society groups facing increasingly harsh measures aimed at preventing them from fulfilling their vital role.

Upholding human rights is in the interest of all. Respect for human rights advances well-being for every individual, stability for every society, and harmony for our interconnected world.

And this work can be done by all, at every level of society. States have the primary responsibility for upholding human rights. The United Nations, along with partners around the globe, must continue to strengthen responses to abuses, and work better to prevent human rights crises.

All of us can – and must – act in our daily lives to advance the human rights of the people around us. This is the driving force behind a new global campaign being launched by the UN Human Rights Office -- “Stand Up for Someone’s Rights Today.”

Wherever we are, each of us can make a difference for human rights -- in our neighbourhoods, in school, at work, on social media, at home and even in sporting arenas across the world.

Together, let us stand up for someone’s rights. Today, tomorrow, and every day.