

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPERS TO BE OBSERVED

AT NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS, 19 MAY

-- Fallen peacekeeper from Namibia to be honoured at ceremony at UN Headquarters --

The United Nations Headquarters will observe the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers on Thursday, 19 May 2016. It will mark the eighth successive year in which the Organization will honour more than 100 “blue helmets” who lost their lives the previous year while serving the cause of peace.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will lay a wreath to honour all fallen peacekeepers and will preside over a ceremony at which the Dag Hammarskjöld Medal will be awarded posthumously to 128 military, police and civilian personnel who lost their lives while serving in peacekeeping operations during 2015.

One peacekeeper from Namibia is among the 128 who will posthumously receive the Dag Hammarskjöld medal -- Police Officer Angula CATHLEEN, who lost her life on 23 November 2015 while assigned to the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

In a message to mark the Day, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said: “On this Day we honour our heroes – the more than one million men and women who have served under the United Nations flag with pride, distinction and courage since the first deployment in 1948. And we pay our highest tribute to the more than 3,400 peacekeepers who have lost their lives while in service during that period.”

Today, more than 105,000 uniformed personnel from 124 troop- and police-contributing countries serve under the blue flag, along with 18,000 international and national civilian staff and United Nations Volunteers.

In addition to maintaining peace and security, peacekeepers are increasingly charged with assisting in political processes; reforming judicial systems; training law enforcement and police forces; disarming and reintegrating former combatants; supporting the return of internally displaced persons and refugees.

In the words of the Secretary-General, “They manifest the best attributes of global solidarity, courageously serving in dangerous environments to provide security to some of the world’s most vulnerable.”

Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, said: “Over 120,000 men and women – military, police and civilians -- today serve in 16 missions world-wide. Our peacekeepers are deployed in some of the world’s most dangerous and austere environments. Too many of them have paid the ultimate price while serving under the blue flag in the name of peace. Today, we pay tribute to their memory by rededicating ourselves to the ideals for which they have sacrificed so much.”

According to Atul Khare, Under-Secretary-General for Field Support “The sacrifices of the brave men and women of peacekeeping inspire us to serve with courage and dignity and to pursue continuous improvement and innovation in our work. We owe this not just to our departed colleagues, but also to the millions of civilians that we have been entrusted to protect. We must continue to work together to enable complex operations to succeed with rapid, effective, efficient and responsible support.”

The International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers was established by the General Assembly in 2002, in tribute to all men and women serving in peacekeeping operations for their high level of professionalism,

dedication and courage, and to honour the memory of those who have lost their lives in the cause of peace. The Assembly designated 29 May as the Day because it was the date in 1948 when the United Nations' first peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), began operations.

Commemorative activities will be held at United Nations Headquarters on the 19th to enable the Heads of the Military Components of UN peacekeeping operations, who will be present in New York this week, to join the Secretary-General in observing the Day. UN peacekeeping operations, UN Information Centres and other UN offices around the world will observe the Day on or around the 29th.

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