

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS AT DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD MEDAL CEREMONY MARKING
THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPERS
New York, 29 May 2014**

[salutations]

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to be here today on this solemn occasion.

Today, we posthumously award the Dag Hammarskjöld medal to 106 peacekeepers who died while serving under the United Nations flag last year.

I regret to say this is the sixth year in a row that more than 100 peacekeepers lost their lives.

This ceremony is a reminder of the many dangers of peacekeeping, the courage of the individuals who serve, and the grave responsibility of the Security Council members, the Secretariat officials and the contributing countries sending personnel into insecure areas to protect the most vulnerable.

At this time of sombre reflection, let us remember that while peacekeeping carries a high cost in terms of lives lost, it also brings an enormous return in lives saved.

Among those honoured today are peacekeepers who died protecting civilians in South Sudan, where I travelled this month.

In Juba, I was proud to see how the United Nations has opened its bases to tens of thousands of people fleeing deadly violence. Our brave peacekeepers on the ground have saved thousands of innocent civilians. The South Sudanese I spoke to thanked me for the protection they received – and I conveyed their gratitude to the individuals who earned it through their selfless dedication.

Earlier this year, I travelled to Rwanda. The genocide there twenty years ago taught the world that peacekeepers must stay when they are most needed.

I was also in the Central African Republic, where the United Nations is now staffing a new mission to prevent another epic tragedy.

In March, I went to Sierra Leone. Once, it hosted the world's biggest peacekeeping mission. Now, Sierra Leone is a stable country that sends its citizens to serve in other United Nations operations around the world.

Peacekeeping is collective security at its finest. Those we honour today came from thirty-eight different countries with the same goal of creating a better future for war-torn communities. This is international solidarity in action.

Today, I offer my highest tribute to those we honour, and my sincerest condolences to their loved ones.

These medals are conferred in the name of Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, who also gave his life for the cause of peace. Like him, all of the recipients leave a proud legacy. We pledge to carry it forward into the future.

Thank you.