

Geneva World Humanitarian Day Commemoration 2020

Designated by the General Assembly to be observed on 19 August - the day when 22 colleagues were killed at the United Nations Office in Baghdad in 2003. World Humanitarian Day is an opportunity to pay tribute to colleagues who have lost their lives in humanitarian service and to honour the thousands of aid workers who continue to provide much needed support to people suffering from conflicts or natural disasters across the world. As the world's humanitarian capital, Geneva plays a key role in bringing partners together to ensure an effective humanitarian response.

UN Workers are in more Danger than Ever Before

This ceremony was focused on remembering UN Field Workers who have been killed or wounded in the service of peace and human rights, but also the increased dangers for current humanitarians in the field.

Report on Current Status

Major attacks against humanitarians surpassed all previous years. In 2019, 483 relief workers were attacked (an increase of 18% as compared to 2018), 125 killed, 234 wounded, 124 kidnapped, and 277 separate incidents. The UN is seeing similar statistics develop in 2020 as well. They have already had multiple kidnapping and murders.

The UN is pleading that the governments, where UN Field workers are stationed, need to put more energy and resources into protecting UN workers. On 7/23/20, seven UN Impact Humanitarian colleagues were brutally assassinated in Nigeria.

A special tribute for UN Human Rights Officer - Lisa Mbele-Mbong

Lisa Mbele-Mbong, a national of the United States originally from Cameroon, joined the UN in 2002 as a Human Rights Officer in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Her passion for human rights brought her to Haiti in 2005 where for the past three years she was the Team Leader for the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti's (MINUSTAH) Policy and Planning Unit.

Both of Lisa's parents were in attendance and were asked to speak about her work and her passion for the UN. Lisa was the happiest in her life when she was empowering others. UN Officers including Lisa are committed to defending the rights of others and carrying out the Golden Rule. She is missed and will always be remembered for her bravery, selflessness, and passion for helping others.

Michelle Burgess

UN Representative, New York