



25 March 2014 – The transatlantic slave trade marks one of the darkest chapters in human history. Over 15 million men, women and children were stolen from their homes and forcibly displaced, falling victim to the terrible practice of slavery.

On this day, March 25th, we take the opportunity to honour and remember those who suffered at the hands of the brutal slavery system. The theme of this year's [International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade](#) is, "Victory over Slavery: Haiti and Beyond". Haiti, in 1804, became the first nation victim of the slave trade to become independent, and this year marks the 210th year of that freedom. Thus today we remember the struggle of the enslaved men and women of Haiti, and of enslaved peoples around the world, and the great progress they have achieved towards ending one of humanity's most heinous practices.

2014 also marks the 20th anniversary of the UNESCO Slave Route Project, which decided to break the silence surrounding the slave trade and slavery. Today's observance, beyond simply remembering the victims, seeks to raise awareness about the dangers of racism and prejudice in the world today. Furthermore, it aims to inform people, through dialogue and information sharing, about the global effects of slavery in an effort to ensure the abolishment of this crime against humanity.

However, as Secretary General Ban Ki-moon notes that, "Around the world, millions of people

are subject to human trafficking, debt bondage, sexual slavery and domestic servitude while the perpetrators of these violations of human rights operate with impunity.” He calls on all of us to remember the abuses of the past in order to ensure that we “intensify our efforts to end those of the present.”

Today, we also observe the [International Day of Solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff Members](#). UN staff and peacekeepers operate all over the world and in some of the most dangerous areas. This day is marked on the anniversary of the disappearance of Alec Collett. While working for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency ([UNRWA](#)) for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Alec Collett was abducted by armed gunmen in 1985. He remained missing for 24 years until his body was finally found in 2009. Serving the cause of peace in a violent world is a dangerous occupation, and since the founding of the United Nations, hundreds of brave men and women have lost their lives in its service. 2013 has seen an especially marked rise in attacks against UN staff with at least 58 personnel having been targeted by insurgents and terrorists.

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said, “The United Nations flag, which represents hope, safety and a better life for the most vulnerable, has in some places now become a target. United Nations staff are becoming increasingly vulnerable in carrying out their work.” Remembering the fallen and acknowledging the extraordinary actions our colleagues have taken in the name of peace he calls on the international community to, “On this and every day, let us honour the courage and dedication of all United Nations colleagues who risk so much to help those less fortunate. They should never be asked to sacrifice their liberty or lives for these noble ends.”