

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY
IN SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE**

26 June 2008

Torture is a profound abuse of human rights and a horrific aberration of the human conscience. Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the foundation of international human rights law, strictly prohibits it, under any and all circumstances: “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”

And yet, 60 years since the adoption of the Declaration, torture persists, devastating millions of victims and their families. In each case, the psychological and emotional scars are deep and difficult to repair. The International Day in Support of Victims of Torture is an occasion to remember those who have suffered torture and even died. It is also a call to speak out and take action on their behalf and against all those who commit torture and all forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

Despite a comprehensive legal framework against torture, Member States must do more to ensure that the torture-protection framework is applied in a gender-sensitive manner. Certain forms of gender-specific violence amount to torture as it is defined in the Convention against Torture. I call on the international community to strengthen the international legal framework to ensure better protection for women, including access to international assistance.

I strongly urge the remaining Member States who have not yet done so to accede to the Convention against Torture, and to consider joining the 35 Member States who have ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention, which includes checks on torture through international and national visits to places of detention.

I also call on all Governments to continue their support of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. The Fund is one of the largest United Nations humanitarian trust funds and assists many non-governmental organizations in providing victims with medical and psychological care, legal and social aid, and financial support. I thank the donors for their continued support and encourage the entire international community to contribute generously.

On this International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, in a year in which we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, let us reaffirm our commitment to the inalienable rights and inherent dignity of all women and men. Let us build together a more humane world for all people everywhere, free from torture and all forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.