



United Nations
Association in Canada

Celebrate with UNA-Canada

UN's International Day of Peace

♦♦ 21 September ♦♦

Twenty million people were killed in the Second World War. Out of the chaos, devastation, horror and despair came a global public longing for lasting harmony and peace. These hopes and dreams were instilled in the creation of the United Nations in 1945, and the opening words of the Charter of the UN, “*We the peoples...*”

“Peace is the United Nations’ highest calling. It defines our mission. It drives our discourse. And it draws together all of our world-wide work, from peacekeeping and preventive diplomacy to promoting human rights and development.”

- UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

September 21st is the UN’s International Day of Peace. The Day gives us all a chance to reflect on the toll – moral, physical, material – wrought by war, terrorism and conflict.

For the majority of Canadians, the realities of war can only be imagined. We are privileged to live in a country and time when most of us have never experienced what it’s like to live in the moment of dead space between two explosions. Sadly, millions around the world still live under the threat or reality of war, or they are surrounded by the remnants and aftermath of war.



UN Photo: Iason Founten (Libya)

There are many tools in a peacemaker’s kit – peacekeeping and peace-building; diplomacy and human rights; development and disarmament – and the United Nations uses them every single day.

Peace Facts

- The UN’s first peacekeeping mission, to resolve the 1956 Suez Crisis, came about due to the vision, perseverance and skillful diplomacy of Canadian Lester B. Pearson.
- Over 99,500 brave men and women from 115 countries are currently involved in 15 peacekeeping operations around the world.
- UN peacekeeping, peace-building and conflict prevention are major factors behind a 40% decline in conflicts worldwide since the 1990s.
- Annual UN peacekeeping costs amount to less than 0.5% of total world military expenditures. UN peacekeeping is one of the greatest bargains of all time.
- The UN assists in clearing landmines and explosive remnants of war in 29 countries. In 2010, 1 million explosive remnants were cleared in Afghanistan; over 7,000 kilometers of roads were opened in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Annual casualties have been reduced by more than 75% (from over 26,000 in 1997 to about 4,000 in 2010).
- The UN, its agencies and staff have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 10 times.

- The number of genocides have plummeted by 80% since 1988.
- More than 2,900 UN peacekeepers have lost their lives since 1948 in the cause of peace.
- Major independent studies show that UN peace-building, diplomacy and conflict resolution has reduced, ended or prevented deadly global conflict.
- 🇨🇦 Canada is currently ranked 56th among nations contributing UN peacekeepers, which is a significant drop from previous levels. The top 5 are Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Ethiopia & Nigeria.



- For this year's theme for the UN's International Day of Peace, go to: www.un.org/en/events/peaceday/

The UN mediates between antagonists, providing a safe space and tools to resolve their differences peacefully. The UN works to stem the tide of deadly diseases and to alleviate and eliminate extreme poverty (currently, 1.3 billion souls live with less than \$1.25 a day). It presses for a natural environment that will sustain and contribute natural capital to our children. The UN brings hope and care to billions, and it asks men and women of all nationalities, religions and races to stand shoulder to shoulder to help those in need.

Peace is so much more than just the absence of war. Even in Canada, where fairness and equality is embodied in our rule of law and civic institutions, conflict and strain ripples through our society, from school yard bullying, to violence in homes and on our streets, to subtle discrimination and the enclaving of minority and majority groups... The seeds of conflict and division reside all around us.

Peace doesn't just happen – it must be nurtured, maintained and defended. Everywhere.

Since its inception in 1982, the International Day of Peace has marked our personal and planetary progress towards peace. Anyone, anywhere, can celebrate. It can be as simple as lighting a candle or sitting in silent meditation. It can involve getting your family, your co-workers, your community or government engaged in the issue. Activities can range in scale from private gatherings to public concerts to substantive meetings.



UN Photo: Martine Perret (Timor Leste)

This September 21, take this opportunity to make peace not just a priority, but a passion, in your own relationships as well as in using your voice to affect the larger conflicts of our time. Imagine the impact when millions of people around the world come together for one day of peace.

Peace is a way of being, doing and living in society that can be taught, developed, and best of all, improved upon. Join our movement of *"We the Peoples..."* and help us to transform lives and build hopeful futures. A better world starts with YOU.

Become a member of United Nations Association in Canada at: www.unac.org/supportus or subscribe to our e-newsletter at: www.unac.org/subscribe

Together, we will look beyond what is, to what could be, and take positive action toward a peaceful, prosperous and just future for all.