

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY
IN SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE**26 June 2006

The International Day in Support of Victims of Torture draws attention to the suffering of torture victims, their families, and their communities, and provides an opportunity to reaffirm our collective condemnation of torture, and of all cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

The prohibition against torture is well established. It is absolute and unambiguous. It applies in all circumstances, in times of war as in times of peace. Nor is torture permissible under different names: cruel and unusual punishment is unacceptable and illegal, whatever one may choose to call it.

Yet this evil persists in too many of our societies, and is tolerated, and even practised, by Governments or their agents.

We must all work to erase this ugly stain on humanity's conscience. We must speak out forcefully against all such practices, and renew our efforts to end torture in all its forms.

I very much welcome the recent entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. By creating a system of international and national visits to places of detention, the Protocol can help prevent the mistreatment of detainees. Its provisions can also help the work of the Special Rapporteur on Torture. I call on all States who have not done so to ratify the Convention and its Optional Protocol, and to allow for individual complaints by victims under these instruments.

This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. The Fund is one of the UN's largest humanitarian trust funds, providing critical support to organizations assisting victims and their families. I thank existing donors for their support of the Fund, and encourage the international community to continue to contribute generously to it. I am also grateful for the work being carried out by non-governmental organizations all over the world to support and rehabilitate torture victims and their families.

On this International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, let us reaffirm the inalienable rights and dignity of all men and women, and let us resolve to combat cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment, wherever it may occur.