

United Nations  Nations Unies

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

10 December 2008

On this Human Rights Day, we also celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Drafted amid utter destruction and destitution following the Second World War, the Declaration reflects humanity's aspirations for a future of prosperity, dignity and peaceful coexistence.

Its adoption was a landmark. Today, the Declaration remains a core part of the UN's very identity.

The challenges we face today are as daunting as those that confronted the Declaration's drafters.

We face a food emergency and a global financial crisis.

Humankind's assault on the natural environment continues.

There is political repression in too many countries.

And as ever, the most vulnerable continue to be on the frontlines of hardship and abuse.

The luckiest among us, those who are spared the most negative effects of disaster, poverty or instability, cannot turn a blind eye. The cascading effects of abuse and indifference can eventually engulf the entire planet.

Rights, and especially their violation, must hold the whole world in solidarity.

On this Human Rights Day, it is my hope that we will all act on our collective responsibility to uphold the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration.

We can only honour the towering vision of that inspiring document when its principles are fully applied everywhere, for everyone.