

International Day of UN Peacekeepers

The Cenotaph, Whitehall, London, 20 May 2010

Statements and prayers

Opening statement

David Wardrop, Chairman, United Nations Association Westminster Branch

We gather here to mark the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers. To pay tribute to the men and women from countries across the world who serve **selflessly** and sometimes unrewardingly in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Let us remember those who have laid down their lives in lands far from their own in the service of peace.

They came from one hundred and twenty countries. They are mourned in one hundred and ninety two. **They** chose to serve their country. **Their country** chose **them** to serve the world, to serve us. They died in a country with which their own had no dispute. Each is mourned by a mother, a father, a widow, by family, by friends. And **we are here** because we mourn them too.

And since we last met here a year ago, on one night in January, in Haiti, 96 lost their lives. Besides those from Haiti itself, they came from Argentina, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Burkino Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, France, Germany, Guatemala, Guinea, India, Italy, Jordan, Mexico, Niger, Nigeria, Spain, USA, Kenya, Philippines, Tunisia, Uruguay and from our own country, Ann Barnes and Fred Wooldridge.

We look forward to the day when we in this country have a memorial to them as do other nations. A memorial that recognises the sacrifice of all peacekeepers from wherever they came; **for when each** of these **died**, we might have lost one of our own.

In **this window of calm** in Whitehall, close to where the General Assembly of the United Nations first met in 1946, we reflect on the challenges we set ourselves then.....and the tasks that remain unfinished. Today, here, we comprise the largest gathering worldwide of diplomats; guests from many countries; and of people from this country marking this International Day.

We encourage all nations to hold such gatherings, remembering not only their own sons and daughters but also those of other nations, serving all humankind. When together we can do this and mark this day together, it will be **then** that we may truly call ourselves the United Nations.

Prayer

Reverend Donald Prentice, former Senior United Nations force chaplain

Lord GOD, Father and Creator of us all. Without you, we are as nothing and all our efforts are in vain. We ask for your blessing upon us, as we gather here to remember all the Peacekeepers of the United Nations, who died in the service of Peace.

Today we remember especially those people who have worked so hard to provide newer and better ways of Keeping the Peace, thus saving lives and delivering security in areas of instability and conflict. With thanksgiving, We pray also for those UN Peacekeepers who are today engaged in Protecting the People, remembering our own commitment and care in the Responsibility to Protect other families just as we care for our own families.

And so now, drawing on the Blessed life and example of Jesus, we commend to almighty God our heartfelt prayer for peace and peacemakers, throughout the world.

AMEN.

Prayer

Imam Azim Hafiz, Muslim chaplain to HM Armed Forces

Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Beneficent

In Islam God is known by ninety-nine attributes. One of these is '*as-salaam*'; meaning the source and giver of peace; the one who loves peace and wants peace for His creation. He established peace as the norm in the world and for relations between mankind and for that matter between all forces of nature. However it is utterly unfortunate that there are sections of humanity that breach this normal state of affairs, which betray the priceless divine bounty of peace. Therefore God appoints custodians to this treasure; so that it is not robbed from its rightful recipients and that where it has, they endeavour to restore it wherever they may be called to serve; at all costs including if necessary with their lives. The United Nations Peacekeepers are a clear manifestation of this will of God. It is them that we remember today in our hearts and minds.

Let us pray.

O Lord, We turn to you, as all praises are due to you alone. We beseech you to shower your mercy upon Mankind and bring peace in all the nations and peoples of the world. Protect the people who strive to bring peace in the world. Give them success in their missions. Protect and Bestow success on all the men and women serving in the United Nations peacekeeping operations.

We pray for the security and triumph of the valuable and ever-extensive work of the United Nations Organisation. We pray for freedom, peace, security, reconciliation and most of all humanity.

O Merciful One! Shower your Mercy and Kindness on the courageous men and women who have died serving peace and humanity in UN Peacekeeping operations. Provide solace, comfort and honour to their families, friends and colleagues.

You are the eternal Peace and from You comes Peace for everyone. Great are your Blessings, O Lord of Glory and Honour.

Ameen

Closing statement

David Wardrop, Chairman, United Nations Association Westminster Branch

Now we return to our homes and to our loved ones, to our work and our colleagues. As we remember those who set out to keep the peace, let us remember also those they have set out to protect. That one day too, in lasting peace and in larger freedom, **they** may *also* say as we here can say, "We too are the peoples, the peoples of the United Nations".