



UNA-UK

**International Day of
United Nations Peacekeepers**

Wreath-laying Ceremony

The Cenotaph, Whitehall, London

21 May 2026

The Ceremony

Address: David Wardrop, Chair, Westminster United Nations Association

Prayer: The Revd Dr Alex Bennett CF, Senior Chaplain London District and Chaplain to the Household Division

The bugler sounds Last Post. The United Nations flag and banners of the Royal British Legion are lowered. The bugler sounds Reveille.

Wreaths will be laid as follows:

In memory of Count Folke Bernadotte:

Astrid Bernadotte

In memory of Commandant René de Labarrière:

Marc Woodcock, Naval Attaché, Embassy of France

On behalf of His Majesty's Government:

Chris Elmore MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

On behalf of His Majesty's Armed Forces:

Air Vice-Marshal Mark Flewin

Assistant Chief of Defence Staff

On behalf of His Majesty's Police Forces:

Assistant Chief Constable Mark Williams,

Vice-Chair, National Police Chiefs' Council

On behalf of the Royal British Legion

Helen Owen, Trustee

Jim Sibbald, Trustee

Followed by Members of the Diplomatic Corps in London

On behalf of former UN servicemen and women:

A member of the Royal British Legion

On behalf of serving UK Contingent Deployments:

Lt Oliver Priestley, 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards

On behalf of widows of UN peacekeepers:

Chris Dziuba, Chair, War Widows Association

On behalf of the British Association of Former UN Civil Servants:

Hannah Shabathai and Carole Harris

On behalf of the United Nations Association of the UK

Tessy Antony de Nassau, Patron

On behalf of UNA Groups:

Mozmil Hussain, UNA Eastbourne

On behalf of the Children of the World:

Pupils from the Grey Coat Hospital School for Girls and the Westminster City School for Boys.

Prayer: Dr S.M Kariyakarawana, Buddhist Chaplain to HM Forces

Closing address: David Wardrop

Students from the Grey Coat Hospital School for Girls and the Westminster City School for Boys will serve as marshals throughout the ceremony.

United Nations Peacekeeping



More than 53,000 UN peacekeepers are currently deployed around the globe in some of the most fraught regions. They stand between civilians and the forces of violence, between crisis and peace. Their bravery and commitment exemplify the UN's mission "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war."

The UN's ten current peacekeeping operations cost around \$6 billion a year, about a half percent of global military spending. UN Peacekeeping has a proven history of preventing conflict and atrocity crimes. Studies show that the presence of peacekeepers significantly reduces the risk of renewed warfare and the number of civilian deaths

International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers

On this day, we remember the 4,496 UN peacekeepers from 134 nations who have lost their lives serving in the cause of peace. Of these, 106 were British. This International Day was first observed in 2003 on 29 May, the date in 1948 when the first peacekeeping mission began operations in Palestine.

The UK in UN Peacekeeping

The 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards join us today having recently returned from Operation TOSCA 43, serving with the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). The UK currently contributes 251 troops, staff officers and experts on mission to UN peacekeeping missions and is the sixth largest financial contributor to peacekeeping deployments.

About those we remember

Count Folke Bernadotte

In 1948, the United Nations appointed Count Bernadotte as its Mediator in Palestine but shortly after he tabled his peace plan that same year, he was assassinated in Jerusalem. He was the first member of United Nations staff to be killed in the line of duty. The wreath in his memory will be laid by his granddaughter, Astrid.

Commandant René de Labarrière

The French officer, Commandant de Labarrière, serving as a Military Observer in Palestine in 1948, was killed by a landmine, becoming the first United Nations peacekeeper to lose his life. The wreath in his memory will be laid by Marc Woodcock, Naval Attaché of the Embassy of France.

The Band of the Welsh Guards

The Band was formed in 1915 in the same year as the Regiment. Their first instruments were presented by the City of Cardiff, enabled the band to conduct its first King's Guard Mounting on St. David's Day in 1916. The band established a reputation for high musical standards and has toured extensively, to Spain, Australia, Belgium, Egypt, the USA and Canada, and the Balkans. The Band performs today through the kind permission of its Director of Music, Major Matt Simons.

Youth Production Network

The YPN (www.ypn.international) set up in 2010, helps young change makers learn event skills to amplify their voices and make a difference in their communities. They are providing our sound system today and have worked on events including the Olympics in Brazil and the World Cup in South Africa. Today, they are working with Attitude is Everything and Britannia Row.

The United Nations Association of the UK

Founded in 1945, UNA-UK is the UK's only charity dedicated to advancing the principles of the UN for the common good. We believe that a strong, credible and effective UN is essential to building a world of peace, equality, human rights and a protected planet.

Through advocacy, research, education and grassroots action across our national network, we mobilise people to support multilateral cooperation - because the UN's mission has never mattered more. Since 2004, we have been proud to coordinate this ceremony, the largest worldwide to mark this UN anniversary.

www.una.org.uk

Believe in peace?
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