



PRESS RELEASE

21 May 2019

UN Headquarters Observes International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers on 24 May 2019

*UN Secretary-General to commemorate fallen peacekeepers,
Captain Mbaye Diagne Medal for Exceptional Courage
to be awarded for the first time since inaugural medal*

Two fallen peacekeepers from Burundi to be honoured at UN Headquarters ceremony

UN Headquarters will observe the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers on Friday, 24 May 2019. Secretary-General António Guterres will lay a wreath to honour all UN peacekeepers who have lost their lives since 1948 and will preside over a ceremony at which the Dag Hammarskjöld Medal will be awarded posthumously to 119 military, police and civilian peacekeepers, who lost their lives in 2018 and early 2019.

Two fallen peacekeepers from Burundi are among the 119 who will posthumously receive the Dag Hammarskjöld medal: Caporal-Chef Leonidas Nimubona and 1st Sgt Major Albert Ndikumana, who both served with the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

During a special ceremony, the Secretary-General will award the “Captain Mbaye Diagne Medal for Exceptional Courage” posthumously to Private Chancy Chitete of Malawi. The medal is named for a Senegalese peacekeeper who was killed in Rwanda in 1994 after saving countless civilian lives. This is the first time the medal has been awarded since the inaugural medal was presented to Captain Diagne's family in his honour in 2016.

Private Chitete served with the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and was killed last year while saving the life of a fellow peacekeeper from Tanzania who had been badly wounded during an operation against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), which was aimed to stop attacks on local towns and to prevent the disruption of the Ebola response. His comrade survived, and Private Chitete's heroism and sacrifice helped the peacekeepers achieve their objective of protecting civilians and forcing the ADF to withdraw from the area. It is planned

that Private Chitete's family will receive the medal on his behalf during the Peacekeepers' Day commemorations in New York.

In a video message to mark Peacekeepers Day, the Secretary-General said: "Today we honour the more than one million men and women who have served as UN peacekeepers since our first mission in 1948. We remember the more than 3,800 personnel who paid the ultimate price. And we express our deepest gratitude to the 100,000 civilian, police and military peacekeepers deployed around the world today and to the countries that contribute these brave and dedicated women and men."

Burundi is the 30th largest contributor of uniformed personnel to UN peacekeeping. It currently deploys nearly 800 military and police personnel to the UN peace operations in Abyei, the Central African Republic, Mali and Yemen.

The global theme for this year's commemoration is 'Protecting Civilians, Protecting Peace'. In his message, the Secretary-General's said: "This year, the United Nations marks 20 years since the Security Council first mandated a peacekeeping mission to protect civilians. Peacekeepers protect men, women and children from violence every day, often at great personal risk."

Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, said: "UN Peacekeeping deploys to some of the most complex and difficult places, protecting some of the world's most vulnerable. We are working in partnership with Member States to implement the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative to strengthen peacekeeping, including to improve how we protect civilians, which is at the heart of our work. For hundreds of millions, peacekeeping is the last best hope and it needs all our support."

The International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers was established by the General Assembly in 2002, to pay tribute to all men and women serving in peacekeeping, and to honour the memory of those who have lost their lives in the cause of peace. The General Assembly designated 29 May as the International Day of UN Peacekeepers in commemoration of the day in 1948 when the UN's first peacekeeping mission, the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), began operations in Palestine.

While the Day will be marked at UNHQ on the 24th, UN missions and offices around the world will commemorate the Day on 29 May.

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