

Media Update

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UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL MESSAGE

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

MESSAGE ON INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY 02 December 2021

The International Day for the Abolition of Slavery is a day of remembrance and recognition and an urgent call to action.

We must never forget the immeasurable suffering of millions of African men, women and children under the evil of the transatlantic slave trade.

We honour the resilience of those who endured and pay tribute to those who sacrificed their lives in the universal quest for freedom.

The racist legacy of slavery reverberates to this day.

And while some may believe slavery to be a thing of the past, this evil continues to blight our modern world.

Debt bondage, serfdom and forced labour, trafficking in persons for the purpose of exploitation -- including sexual exploitation, forced marriage, child labour -- and the recruitment of children in armed conflict -- are contemporary manifestations of slavery.

All are crimes and egregious violations of human rights.

Modern slavery often hides in plain sight.

Of the over 40 million victims of slavery today, one in four are children; three in four are women and girls.

Some are forced to produce the clothes we wear, the food we eat, or construct the buildings we live and work in.

Poor and marginalized groups -- in particular racial and ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, refugees and migrants -- are at highest risk.

Women and girls from minority groups are among the most vulnerable of all.

Two decades ago, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action recognized the connection between racism, discrimination, and human trafficking.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the urgency for greater vigilance. We must ensure decent work and prevent human rights violations across global supply chains.

I call on Member States, civil society and the private sector to strengthen collective action to end the heinous practice of slavery.

I urge all countries to intensify their efforts to identify and protect victims and survivors – including by contributing to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery.

Let us join forces to end the degradation and inhumanity of modern slavery once and for all.
