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On International Day, Ban pays tribute to all those seeking truth and justice



A wall of photos at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, the site of infamous Security Prison S-21, documents the Khmer Rouge's brutal treatment of detainees.

24 March 2012 –

[Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon today paid tribute to all the brave individuals worldwide who have devoted their lives to protecting human rights and to promoting access to truth and justice.

The General Assembly in December 2010 proclaimed 24 March as the International Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims to

honour the memory of victims of gross and systematic human rights violations and promote the importance of the right to truth and justice.

It is also designed to pay tribute to those who have devoted their lives to, and lost their lives in, the struggle to promote and protect human rights for all, particularly Monsignor Oscar Arnulfo Romero, who was murdered in El Salvador on this day in 1980 for refusing to be silent in the face of violence, abuse and injustice.

In his [message](#) for the Day, Mr. Ban noted that the “dramatic and transformational” events of the past year, marked by widespread popular uprisings against long-entrenched dictators, showed yet again the acute need to preserve and reveal the truth about human rights violations committed during periods of repression and conflict.

“To deny victims this vital knowledge is to deny them justice, dignity and recognition of – as well as reparations for – their suffering and loss,” he stated.

“The implications reverberate well beyond individuals who have been directly affected by attempts to cover up human rights abuses. The rights to truth and justice are central to ending impunity for gross violations of human rights,” he added.

Mr. Ban said that in cases of enforced disappearance, families have the right to know the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones.

“In all instances, honouring this right puts others on notice that violations cannot stay hidden for long,” he stated.

He also highlighted the range of truth-seeking mechanisms supported by the United Nations that can play a powerful role in documenting gross human rights violations and which are central to the quest for justice and stability. These include truth and reconciliation commissions, international commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions.

He also welcomed the recent decision by the UN Human Rights Council to appoint a new Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.

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