

The United Nations Headquarters will observe the International Day of United Nations (UN) Peacekeepers on Thursday, 29 May 2025.

In 1948, the historic decision was made to deploy military observers to the Middle East to supervise the implementation of Israel-Arab Armistice Agreements, in what became the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization.

Since that time, more than two million peacekeepers have served in 71 operations around the world. Today, some 68,000 women and men serve as military, police and civilian personnel in 11 conflict zones across Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. 119 countries currently contribute uniformed personnel.

Rwanda is the 2nd largest contributor of uniformed personnel to UN Peacekeeping. It currently deploys nearly 5,900 military and police personnel, including 660 women, to the UN peacekeeping operations in Abyei, the Central African Republic, and South Sudan.

During ceremonies at United Nations Headquarters, Secretary-General, António Guterres, will lay a wreath to honour the more than 4,400 UN peacekeepers who have lost their lives since 1948. He will also preside over a ceremony in the Trusteeship Council Chamber, at which Dag Hammarskjöld Medals will be awarded posthumously to 57 military, police, and civilian peacekeepers, who lost their lives serving under the UN flag last year.

Among the peacekeepers to be honoured posthumously with the Dag Hammarskjöld medal are 2 from Rwanda: Sergeant Major Fiston Murwanashyaka and Caporal Eliakim Niyitegeka who both served with the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

The Secretary-General will also present awards to the 2024 Military Gender Advocate of the Year, Squadron Leader Sharon Mwinsote Syme from Ghana and the UN Woman Police Officer of the Year award to Superintendent Zainab Gbla of Sierra Leone. Both of them serve with the United Nations Interim Security Force in Abyei (UNISFA).

This year's theme for the Day is "the Future of Peacekeeping". The theme emphasizes that the 'Pact for the Future' – adopted last year at the United Nations – includes a commitment to adapt peacekeeping to our changing world, as expressed Member States' pledges presented to fill capability gaps and help adapt UN

peacekeeping to emerging challenges and new realities at the recent Peacekeeping Ministerial in Berlin.

In his message, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said: “Today, peacekeepers face increasingly complex situations in an increasingly complex world... Now more than ever, the world needs the United Nations — and the United Nations needs peacekeeping that is fully equipped for today’s realities and tomorrow’s challenges.”

“Today, we honour their service,” Mr. Guterres stated. “We draw inspiration from their resilience, dedication and courage. And we remember all the brave women and men who made the ultimate sacrifice for peace. We will never forget them – and we will carry their work forward.”

“Our personnel are our most important capability. The sacrifices made by our peacekeepers call for more than remembrance; they demand action,” said Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations. “Throughout its history, peacekeeping has always adapted to ever-changing contexts to achieve results. The future of peacekeeping hinges on our collective commitment to continue to adapt and invest—so we can continue delivering hope and protection where it’s needed most,” he added.

The International Day of UN Peacekeepers was established by the UN 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. (End