

On Migrants Day, UN remembers thousands who lost their lives this year trying to reach safe harbor

By UN News Center



A checkpoint is set up outside Malha, North Darfur, as Sudanese returning from Libya wait to enter the town. UN Photo/Albert González Farran

18 December 2015 – Global candlelight vigils marked the International Day of Migrants today to remember that the more than 5,000 women, men and children who lost their lives in arduous journeys in search of protection and a better life as, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon said 2015 will be remembered as a year of human suffering and migrant tragedies.

“On International Migrants Day, let us commit to coherent, comprehensive and human-rights based responses guided by international law and standards and a shared resolve to leave no one behind,” Mr. Ban said in his [message](#) for the [Day](#), which falls on 18 December, the day that in 1990, the UN General Assembly adopted the [International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families](#).

The Secretary-General urged all countries to sign and ratify the Convention as only one-fourth of UN Member States have done so. He also appealed for the expansion of safe channels for regular migration,

including for family reunification, labour mobility at all skill levels, greater resettlement opportunities, and education opportunities for children and adults.

“Over the past 12 months, more than 5,000 women, men and children lost their lives in search of protection and a better life,” Mr. Ban said. In addition, “tens of thousands more have been exploited and abused by human traffickers. And millions have been made into scapegoats and become the targets of xenophobic policies and alarmist rhetoric,” he underscored.

On a more positive note, Mr. Ban also drew attention to the fact that 2015 was also a year in which the global community underscored the important contribution of migrants to sustainable development.

“With the adoption of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), world leaders vowed to protect the labour rights of migrant workers, combat transnational criminal human trafficking networks, and promote well-regulated migration and mobility,” he said.

“The world urgently needs to build upon these efforts with a new global compact on human mobility based on better cooperation among countries of origin, transit and destination, with enhanced responsibility sharing, and full respect of the human rights of migrants, regardless of their status,” the UN chief stressed.

In his remarks, UN General Assembly President Mogens Lykketoft [said](#) migration is not a new phenomenon and for centuries, migrants have made critical contributions to social and economic development in countries of origin, transit and destination.

“Yet regrettably, today, we witness unprecedented levels of human suffering associated with migration, particularly due to forced displacement. Furthermore, many migrants are subject to discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance,” he said.

Echoing the Secretary-General, he urged the international community, national governments and leaders from all parts of society to give effect to the commitments made in the 2030 Agenda. “They must address the root causes of forced displacement including by ending conflict. And they must speak out in support of the rights of migrants and against all forms of discrimination,” he added.

“On this important day, I encourage all leaders to embrace migration as a key enabler of sustainable development and to renew their commitment to open and diverse societies,” said Mr. Lykketoft.

To mark this year’s International Migrants Day, candlelight vigils were held around the world in response to a call from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to remember the refugees and migrants who have tragically lost their lives this year.

“Each person has a name, a story and left their homelands seeking better opportunities and safety for themselves and in many cases for their families – aspirations that all of us strive for,” said IOM Director General William Lacy Swing in his message.

“The candlelight vigil is a renewed opportunity to increase awareness on drivers of migration, and most importantly, shift the narrative of migration towards a positive recognition of the many ways migrants contribute to host societies,” Mr. Swing said.

Ahead of the Day, a group of UN experts on the rights of migrants [A HREF="http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16886&LangID=E">cal](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16886&LangID=E) led on governments across the world to guarantee access to services for all migrants, regardless of their migratory status.

The Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, François Crépeau, and the Chair of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, Francisco Carrión Mena, urged States to separate immigration enforcement from access to public services through the implementation of ‘firewalls,’ while stressing that large-scale migration is unavoidable and that human rights are for all.

