



Dead at 95 on 27 February, Stéphane Hessel was one of the greatest friends, and relentless advocates, of the United Nations. He had, he would often say, two bibles "the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." He was the last surviving drafter of the latter and always carried a copy of it in his right pocket. "I don't need to open it I know every single one of the 30 precious articles by heart."

Stéphane Hessel never missed an opportunity to speak out in defence of the poor and downtrodden everywhere, indeed there is hardly a universal cause that he did not champion. His only regret, he told us recently, is that he would not live to see the Palestinian state.

At the age of 93, in 2011, Stéphane Hessel achieved yet another milestone, that of an international best selling author with his manifesto "Time for Outrage" which sold more than 4.5 million copies in 35 countries. It inspired the Occupy Wall Street movement which began in New York's financial district and spread worldwide, and the Indignados in Spain.

When asked recently what his next project was, Stéphane Hessel replied "To die". "Death for

me is a friend, I have much respect for death and I am not at all afraid of dying, in fact, when it decides to come I will embrace it with open arms." He added, with his famous smile "but rest assured, I will continue to help the United Nations from wherever I go."

The manifesto argues that the French need to again become outraged like those who participated in the Resistance under General Charles De Gaulle during WWII. His reasons for personal outrage included the growing chasm between the haves and have-nots, France's treatment of its illegal immigrants and the abuse of the environment.

Today we celebrate the life and work of a true friend.

Interview with Stéphane Hessel in the lead up to last year's Human Rights Day celebrations, 10 December 2012.

Stephane Hessel

Born in Berlin in 1917, he was arrested by the Gestapo during the war and later moved to the Buchenwald and Dora concentration camps. Mr. Hessel started his UN career working with his compatriot Henri Laugier, the first assistant secretary-general for social affairs (1946-50). Later, he was UNDP's deputy administrator for policy and evaluation (1970-72). Between these assignments, he worked for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was in charge of human rights and social affairs. From 1976 to 1981 he was French permanent representative in Geneva, the UN's economic and social capital. He was a member of the Independent Working Group on the Future of the UN (1994-95) and the French representative to the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna; and he presided over the French delegation to the Human Rights Commission on other occasions.

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