



29 May 2014 – Blue berets and blue helmets. No matter the location or uniform, nationality or creed, gender or role, a blue beret or blue helmet signals UN troops. The colour announces the purpose: keeping the peace, protecting the innocent.

Their actions began in 1948 in Palestine and have grown to 16 operations today across three continents involving over 116,000 personnel from 120 countries. Since their creation, the blue berets have been present in some of the most unstable regions, and in the middle of the most violent conflicts. In total, more than 3,000 military, police and civilian personnel have lost their lives in the service of peace as a result of acts of violence, accidents and disease.

Hailing from the four corners of the globe to uphold the ideals of peace and cooperation, the UN and its institutions honour these men and women who gave the last full measure of devotion. Today, the [International Day of UN Peacekeepers](#), we remember the [106 blue berets](#) that lost their lives in 2013. Fallen peacekeepers will be awarded posthumously the [Dag Hammarskjöld medal](#), "as a tribute to the sacrifice of those who have lost their life as a result of service in peacekeeping operations under the operational control and authority of the United Nations".

Dag Hjalmar Agne Carl Hammarskjöld was a Swedish diplomat who served as the second Secretary-General of the United Nations. He's the youngest person to ever serve as Secretary-General and he is also the only one to have died in office. His death occurred en

route to cease-fire negotiations as his plane crashed while crossing Zambia. His memory, and his name, serves to honour those who fell in the field.

This year a new medal has been established by the Security Council named the, "Captain Mbaye Diagne Medal", after an unarmed Senegalese peacekeeper who lost his own life after saving as many as a thousand people during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. This medal will honour UN personnel who demonstrate exceptional courage. It will be awarded to those peacekeepers who went above-and-beyond the call of duty.

Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and Ameerah Haq, Under-Secretary-General for the United Nations Department of Field Support [have recognized](#) that, "Over the last year, UN Peacekeeping has been asked to adapt to new threats and new challenges, helping more people than ever through some of the world's most destructive conflicts." From the use of drones, to delivering innovative solutions to asymmetric problems, the blue helmets, "are finding opportunities to innovate and modernise and ensure we have a peacekeeping force that is fit for purpose and ready for the future."

The tradition of the blue berets and helmets is strong. Over 65 years of service, 70 missions on four continents and a total of more than a million peacekeepers involved have saved countless lives by their actions. On this day of commemoration [the Secretary-General calls](#) , "Let us all commit to following the selfless example of Mbaye Diagne and other fallen heroes, as we work together to help our blue helmets be a force for peace, a force for change, and a force for the future."