

Why an International Day of Peace and not a Decade or a Century of Peace?

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The International Day of Peace (IDP) is a special day of inspiration for me. Not because it is my birthday, and not because it is the Independence of the Republic of Armenia. It has been proclaimed by the United Nations for observance on 21 September as “a global day of ceasefire and non-violence” by “all nations and people to honor a cessation of hostilities for the duration of the Day.” This Day has been celebrated since 1982 for 33 years, and remains a single day of peace, not a week, not a month, and not a decade.

The theme of this year’s commemoration was “Partnerships for Peace – Dignity for All” which aims to highlight the importance of all segments of society to work together to strive for peace. IDP Committee was successful in getting the UN Secretary-General to launch a 100-day countdown to prepare for meaningful observance of the IDP 2008. This practice of issuing a countdown has continued since then. The past two years, Meaningfulworld has followed this wonderful practice and we have done our 30 day countdown, sending messages of peace through quotations, poetry, and songs on peace and non-violence.

In 2008, the UN Secretary General had stated in 2008, "Over the next 100 days, let us stand with the millions of people across the world who are suffering the devastating impact of violence and conflict. Let us share ideas and plans for helping and supporting them in their time of dire need."

Seed of peace exists in all of us, but like a diamond we must be able to discover it, clean it, nurture it, and work on it to see its brilliance. Peace cannot be imposed from outside; it must be realized from within. We all must make efforts to inculcate peace in ourselves. We can change the world only within, one heart at a time, one person at a time, and one loving kindness at a time.

This year’s International Day of Peace comes at a time of deadly violence and destabilizing conflicts around the world in over 48 countries. Rather than succumbing to despair, we have a collective responsibility to demand an end to the brutality and impunity that prevail. Today we tell all those who are misguided and holding on to their guns, stop the killings and the destruction, and create space for lasting peace.

Yes, at times it may seem hopeless, but Meaningfulworld does not give up nor give in, we continue our dream of a peaceful world connecting with one heart at a time, one person at a time, one event at a time. When asked about ISIS destruction in Syria, one of our team members asked, “How could you still have hope while your country is being destroyed?” In tears I responded: “Yes, it is very sad, I cry, release my sadness, take a cleansing and empowering shower, chant positive affirmations, such as “I am peace, peace is within me, and all around me.” Then I get up, stand up, and don’t give up the positive struggle to continue our meaningful work around the globe; I recharge my emotional batteries with love and forgiveness and continue our healing workshops. As we believe when you are healed you are less likely to engage in violent thoughts, actions or deeds.

Our youth and our interns could attest to it. They are with us showing their commitment, passion, and hope, they not only took part in our celebrations, but they expressed what peace means to them, as they said: Peace is thoughts of we not me, we must believe and act peacefully, peace is a daily practice, peace is a powerful love vibration, peace is speaking kind words, peace is love, peace is believing in ‘destructions never again,’ peace is connecting in harmonious ways, peace is shifting from ego destructive space to an empathic connection.

This year’s theme was **Partnership for Peace – Dignity for all**, which is in fact so appropriate and intuitive. We celebrate you, our partners and cosponsors; you, and you, individuals with commitment, empathy and passion, as partnering with you made this celebration possible.

In a few days, leaders from across the globe will gather at the United Nations to adopt the 2030 agenda, the Sustainable Goals, a 15-year plan to achieve sustainable development. These 17 Sustainable Development Goals are paramount to actualize a lasting peace.

I call on you and us to disarm ourselves of all the anger, negativity, greed, envy, and resentment. If we could achieve peace for one day, what stops us from achieving peace for 2 days, or a week, or a month? What stops us? Nothing stops us, except ourselves. Let us put a call to the UN to extend the day into a year, and when we have one full year of peace, and then we will be in a better place to continue setting strategies to sustain peace for a century.

Let us choose peace instead of anger, let us choose love instead of hatred, let us choose acceptance instead of rejection, let us choose inclusion instead of exclusion, and let us pull one another up high, and helping one another to discover their inner brilliance and shine.