

UNITED NATIONS



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**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE TO LEO NEVAS HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD LUNCHEON**  
**New York, 6 June 2011**

**(As delivered by the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General)**

I am pleased to send my greetings to all those gathered for the Leo Nevas Human Rights award luncheon. This ceremony is a fitting living tribute to a man who dedicated much of his life to promoting human rights and the values and goals of the United Nations. I congratulate this year's award winners, Kati Marton and Ryan Kaminski.

As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims: "Recognition of the inherent dignity ... and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family ... is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." That is our base line. That is our standard. There are no exceptions.

And yet, around the world, the rights of hundreds of millions of people are still ignored or abused.

We see evidence of backsliding on civil and political rights ... a lack of commitment to the right to development. In many developed countries, there is growing anxiety over migration and economic hard times — anxieties that are used, increasingly, to justify policies of discrimination and exclusion.

Our universal compact on human rights needs to be reinforced.

None of our gains in advancing human rights would be possible without human rights defenders, civil society groups and the media. These dedicated men and women work, often, at tremendous risk to themselves, their families and their friends. Around the world, they stand up ... they speak out ... they tweet ... in the name of justice.

We must continue to defend media workers everywhere.

We celebrate their work and strive to push the human rights agenda forward: for women in conflict living in daily terror; for opposition politicians beaten or imprisoned for speaking their minds or demanding a say in power; for children in need asking why they go hungry while their leaders enrich themselves further.

Human rights for all ... is not an impossible dream. It should not even be spoken of as a "dream." Together, let us work to make it a universal reality.