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COUNCIL for INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Kaunihera mō te Whakapakari Ao Whānui

NGO DISASTER
RELIEF FORUM



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World Humanitarian Day a time to remember 82 aid workers killed

New Zealand's community of disaster relief workers are marking World Humanitarian Day – and remembering the 82 aid workers who have died so far in 2017.

World Humanitarian Day, which takes place every year on 19 August, recognizes aid workers who risk their lives in humanitarian service, and is a day to advocate for humanitarian action. The day was designated by the United Nations eight years ago to coincide with the anniversary of the 2003 bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, Iraq.

“Every day, New Zealand and other aid workers save lives in conflicts and disasters, braving tremendous dangers and difficulties to deliver assistance to people who need it the most,” says Mark Mitchell, Chair of the NGO Disaster Relief Forum (NDRF) – a network of New Zealand relief agencies. “Saving lives means sharing some of the risk and hardship faced by people living in crisis. World Humanitarian Day is a chance to recognise the dedication and sacrifice of the men and women who have taken up these daunting professional challenges.”

For far too many humanitarians in some of the world's worst conflicts, the business of saving lives is becoming more dangerous - especially for local staff - as armed groups and even armies use attacks on aid workers and relief operations as a weapon of war. In 2016, there were 288 incidents of violence committed against aid workers worldwide. According to the UN, over two thirds of all attacks on humanitarians took place in just four countries – South Sudan, Afghanistan, Syria and Yemen. Just this week, on August 15, unidentified attackers gunned down and killed three local employees of a U.S.-based aid organization in Afghanistan.

“The delivery of relief assistance to civilians in distress is a basic principle of international law,” says Mitchell. “The targeting of aid workers in these countries is a flagrant violation of that law, and an affront to our common humanity.”

Last year, South Sudan overtook Afghanistan as the most dangerous country for humanitarians. There are currently nine New Zealand aid agencies conducting relief operations in South Sudan.

To learn more about New Zealand's humanitarians and ways you can help deliver life-saving assistance to crises around the world, visit the Council for International Development website at www.cid.org.nz.

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**the NGO Disaster Relief Forum (NDRF) cid.org.nz is an open forum for 14 New Zealand-based NGOs that are involved in international humanitarian response. NDRF is a sub-committee of the NZ Council for International Development.*

NDRF members are ADRA, Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand, cbm, ChildFund, Christian World Service, Habitat for Humanity, The Leprosy Mission, Oxfam, Rotary New Zealand World Community Service, The Salvation Army, Save the Children New Zealand, Tearfund, UNICEF NZ, World Vision.

Background Information For editors

The world is facing the worst humanitarian crisis since the Second World War, with 130 million crisis affected people. 65 million have been displaced by war and natural disaster, while 20 million people are facing the threat of starvation and famine in Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and Nigeria.

In the face of such a global crisis, relief assistance – and the humanitarian workers who deliver it – is more important than ever. Every day, humanitarian workers are delivering life-saving relief aid and services to over 90 million people. The New Zealand public plays its part through public and government financial support to these global efforts.

But consider the devastating consequences when humanitarian workers are unable to provide aid to those in need. These workers make it their mission to provide life-saving support, but too often in conflict their activities are impeded. From looting and deliberate obstructions to kidnapping, physical harm and death, violence continues to affect humanitarian efforts, often with dire consequences for those who need help.

Attacks against aid workers are deplorable and represent clear violations of international humanitarian law. In addition to endangering aid workers, these attacks threaten humanitarian operations and the lives of millions of people who rely on humanitarian assistance for their survival.

World Humanitarian Day is held every year on 19 August to pay tribute to aid workers who have risked and lost their lives in humanitarian service. The Day was designated by the General Assembly in 2008 to coincide with the date of the 2003 bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, Iraq.

Each year, World Humanitarian Day focuses on a theme, bringing together stakeholders from across the humanitarian system to advocate for survival, well-being, and dignity of people affected by crises, and for the safety and security of aid workers.

For more information on World Humanitarian Day, visit the UN web portal:

<http://worldhumanitarianday.org/en>

Humanitarian Outcome's Aid Worker Security Database provides detailed information on the risks and challenges faced by humanitarian actors worldwide. An infographic of relevant data can be accessed here: http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/violence_aid_worker_2016.pdf