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## Kofi Annan uses Wallenberg centenary to stress our shared responsibility to help defend human rights and end conflict

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*Lund, Sweden:* - Kofi Annan is to call for increased effort from the international community, from governments and from individuals to promote peace and human rights.

Addressing a conference marking the centenary of the birth of Raoul Wallenberg, Mr Annan will stress that the example of the Swede who saved the lives of thousands of Jews from the Holocaust remains "compelling and relevant."

It is the global mass movement for human rights which owes most to Wallenberg's legacy and is the best hope of achieving his goal of "a peaceful and just world", Mr Annan will tell the conference co-hosted by the Raoul Wallenberg Institute and Lund University in Sweden.

In his speech, he sets out the urgent need to step up efforts both to prevent and end armed conflict and to protect civilian lives when conflict breaks out.

Emphasising the vital link between human rights and peace, Mr Annan warns: "If we protect human rights, we have a better chance to avoid armed conflict. And if through peaceful means we can end conflicts that do erupt, we protect rights."

Too often, however, governments turn a blind eye to repression beyond their borders or let their economic and security agendas trump support for human rights.

He calls for individuals and civil society to "speak out against these double standards to remind our own political leaders that systematic human rights abuse is a trigger for conflict and sustained, principled and active diplomacy is necessary to end it."

The international community must not wait "for conflict to erupt before envoys are appointed and the UN's political role is engaged.

"Preventive and consistent diplomacy must become the normal, not the exceptional, response to a human rights crisis that threatens to erupt into civil war."

But the response from the Security Council was frequently "weak or non-existent; its actions driven not by principle but by politics and selectivity", he adds.

"When the international community speaks with one voice and moves swiftly to make clear its demands for a peaceful solution and negotiated transfers of power, then much can be achieved."

Mr Annan also urges increased effort to find peaceful solutions and protect civilian life when conflict does break out.

The endorsement of Responsibility to Protect by the international community was a "momentous step", he will say.

States can no longer use sovereignty as "an absolute shield" to do whatever they want to their citizens.

But he will warn that military action under R2P must always be "the last resort. It may be necessary in some situations but the decision must not be taken lightly.

"War, even when waged lawfully and in defence of threatened populations, is destructive and inherently unpredictable. Once engaged, the resort to force has its own logic. Hostilities may escalate quickly beyond a limited objective or outside intended boundaries."

He will call instead for the strengthening and use of measures "short of the use for force" including targeted sanctions against leaders and anti-impunity steps.

Drawing on the example of Raoul Wallenberg, Mr Annan also urges the increased deployment of international human rights monitors and civilian protection staff.

They could provide the "eyes and ears" of the international community, amplify calls for restraint, provide protection by their presence, support civil society and offer a "neutral space" for dialogue.

Mr Annan said it was not always possible or safe to deploy civilian monitors and they needed "skilled staff, strong mandates and clear international support."

But he adds: "I believe in many situations they can be a great force for good and remain an under-used resource."

He concludes by appealing to everyone to speak out against injustice wherever it happens and to stand up for those marginalised within their own communities.

Much more can be accomplished, "knowing that our actions express the convictions of a worldwide human rights movement, and with the obvious force of international law behind us.

This, he adds, "is the best way we can pay tribute to the courage and sacrifice of the man whose memory we celebrate today."

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## Notes to Editors

Kofi Annan served two terms, from 1997 to 2006, as UN Secretary-General. In 2001, Annan and the United Nations were jointly awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. Since leaving the United Nations, Kofi Annan has established a Foundation which aims to promote better global governance and strengthen the capacities of people and countries to achieve a fairer and more secure world. To advance this mission, the Foundation has developed programmes and partnerships in three main focus areas: (i) Peace and Security; (ii) Sustainable Development; and (iii) Human Rights and the Rule of Law.

For more information, please go to [www.kofiannanfoundation.org](http://www.kofiannanfoundation.org)

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