



MR. TOM FLETCHER, UN UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR,

Remarks at World Humanitarian Day 2025 Commemoration Ceremony

19 August 2025, Geneva

Thank you, Director-General [Tatiana Valovaya].

Dear survivors, families – especially the families – Excellencies and colleagues:

We are here to grieve and honour those we have lost. They are the best of us.

Humanitarians carry hope where there is despair.

They are selfless in a selfish world. They seek to mend what others seek to break. They bring humanity where there is inhumanity.

Yet from that day in Baghdad till now, the best of us are under attack.

Last year, more than 380 humanitarians were killed - not dead, killed - the highest ever recorded. Hundreds more wounded, kidnapped, detained.

In Gaza, 520 aid workers - mostly UNRWA staff - killed since October 2023, the deadliest place for humanitarians for the second year running. This number doesn't even touch the hundreds of staff who have lost family members, like my colleague Saed Al Ghamri, whose wife Ola was killed in our guesthouse.

In Sudan, 60 colleagues lost their lives - over double the year before. These include my colleague Sadig [Andosa], killed in El Fasher in November.

Already this year, hundreds more names. Each a family, each with a story.

This is more than a statistical spike. It is a stain - the normalization of violence against this community. Each attack on a colleague is an attack on all of us and we do not accept it. Enough.

Zero accountability, an indictment of international inaction and apathy. The Member States must not accept it. Enough.

As a humanitarian movement, we demand the protection of civilians and aid workers and we demand that perpetrators are held to account.

Humanitarians will not retreat, despite these dangers.

Last year, despite the risks, we reached more than 116 million people. Families fed, children in school, sick people cured, communities protected. We will not let down those we serve. It is our way of honouring those who died in 2003 and who have been killed since. But you, the international community, must also not let us down.

So, we grieve again those we've lost, and those we'll continue to lose. We honour those who defy the dangers. We demand their protection and an end to impunity. And we commit afresh to this mission, whatever the risks.

Thank you.