

<http://www.un.org/en/events/righttotruthday/2011/sgmessage.shtml>

**International Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations
and for the Dignity of Victims
24 March**

Secretary-General's Message for 2011

Thirty-one years ago on this date, Monsignor Óscar Arnulfo Romero, an active promoter and defender of human rights in El Salvador, was murdered while conducting a service at church. The intent was clear: to silence an ardent opponent of repression.

Today, the first International Day for the Right to the Truth of Victims of Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims, we pay tribute to Monsignor Romero's work and to that of all human rights defenders around the world.

Victims of gross human rights violations and their families are entitled to know the truth about the circumstances surrounding these violations, the reasons they were perpetrated and the identity of the perpetrators.

The Right to the Truth is now explicitly provided for in the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which entered into force in December 2010. Several other international instruments, as well as national laws, jurisprudence and resolutions of intergovernmental bodies, also recognize this right.

Knowing the truth offers individual victims and their relatives a way to gain closure, restore their dignity and experience at least some remedy for their losses.

Exposing the truth also helps entire societies to foster accountability for violations.

And since the process of determining the truth often involves fact-finding inquiries and public testimony by victims and perpetrators, it can provide catharsis and help produce a shared history of events that facilitates healing and reconciliation.

As we inaugurate this new international observance, let us recognize the indispensable role of the truth in upholding human rights — and let us pledge to defend the right to the truth as we pursue our global mission of human rights.

Ban Ki-moon