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**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 2012

Today we pay tribute to the memory of Monsignor Oscar Arnulfo Romero, who was murdered in El Salvador on this day in 1980 for refusing to be silent in the face of violence, abuse and injustice.

The International Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims is also a time to laud the brave individuals across the world who have devoted their lives to the protection and realization of human rights despite the many grave risks that their work all too often entails.

The dramatic and transformational events of the past year, marked by widespread popular uprisings against long-entrenched dictators, showed yet again the acute need to preserve and reveal the truth about human rights violations committed during periods of repression and conflict. To deny victims this vital knowledge is to deny them justice, dignity and recognition of — as well as reparations for — their suffering and loss.

The implications reverberate well beyond individuals who have been directly affected by attempts to cover up human rights abuses. The rights to truth and justice are central to ending impunity for gross violations of human rights. In cases of enforced disappearance, families have the right to know the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones. In all instances, honouring this right puts others on notice that violations cannot stay hidden for long.

I am proud that the United Nations supports a range of truth-seeking mechanisms that can play a powerful role in documenting gross human rights violations, including truth and reconciliation commissions, international commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions. These are central to our quest for justice and stability.

I also welcome the recent decision by the United Nations Human Rights Council to appoint a new Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.

On this International Day, let us work to help all victims realize their right to truth and to protect all those who fight to see the truth prevail.

Ban Ki-moon