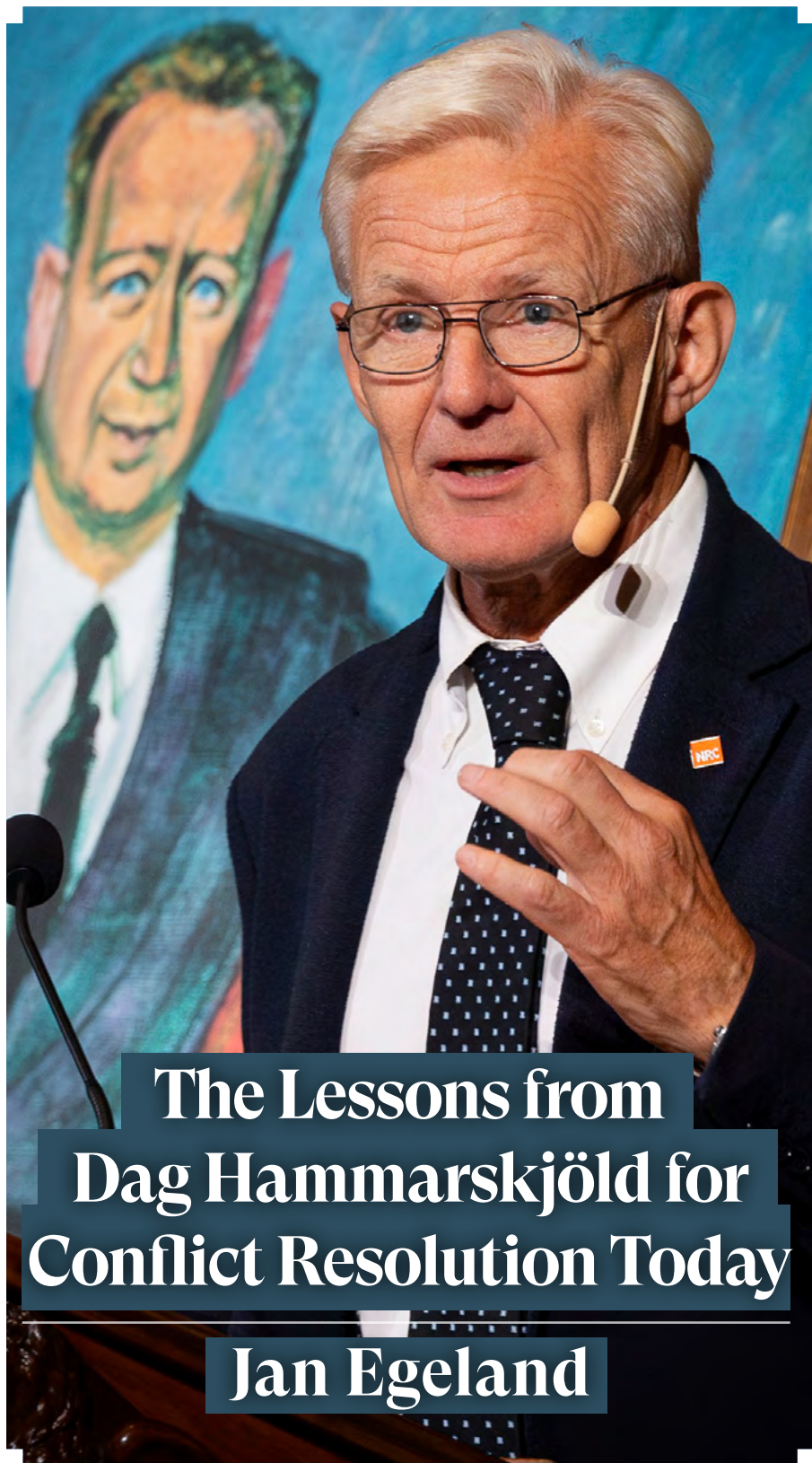


THE 2023 DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD LECTURE



**The Lessons from
Dag Hammarskjöld for
Conflict Resolution Today**

Jan Egeland

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This text was delivered by Jan Egeland for the 2024 Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture. It was held together with the 2023 Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture at Uppsala University Aula on 16 September 2024.

The Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture is organised by Uppsala University and the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation in memory of the second Secretary-General of the United Nations. It is given in recognition of the values that inspired Dag Hammarskjöld personally and as Secretary-General, particularly compassion, humanism and a commitment to international solidarity and cooperation.

Each year, the lecture is offered to an outstanding international personality who, in significant and innovative ways, contributes to a more just, peaceful and environmentally sustainable world through their contributions to politics or research.

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Photos by Sandra Jakobsson, Dag Hammarskjöld

Foundation: Page 4, 16.

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Left to right: Per Ström, Uppsala University Academy Steward, Rena Lee, 2023 Dag Hammarskjöld medallist, Jan Egeland and Björn Holmberg, Executive Director at DHF.



Jan Egeland laying flowers at Dag Hammarskjöld's grave in Uppsala.

The Lessons from Dag Hammarskjöld for conflict resolution today

Jan Egeland

*Jan Egeland, Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council,
speaking on the occasion of the 2024 Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture,
Uppsala, 16 September 2024.*

It is wonderful to see this distinguished group of friends and colleagues in Uppsala, all sharing the same admiration for this man, Dag Hammarskjöld, who meant so much in his time, and who continues to inspire us more than 70 years later.

We can learn a lot from him, and let me start by remembering when he became Secretary General of the United Nations in 1953. A very different time. But also, a time with more similarities than we would perhaps think. From Korea to Congo, where he was tragically killed on a mission of peace – It was a time with massive humanitarian needs, with refugee flows, and with a paralysed Security Council. International relations were in the deep freezer.

Is this similar to another period? Yes, it's very similar, in my view, to today: 2024. Today, we also have massive displacement, we have 40-50 conflicts, some of them enormous, and we have a paralysis in international relations, including in the United Nations Security Council that was created to prevent war, and to make peace.

Dag Hammarskjöld wasn't only an idealist. He was proactive in his diplomacy. He was courageous. He went to China and met with the communist leaders in Beijing, when nobody else went. He was also a realist. In the sentence that

many of you will remember, he said at the University of California that: 'The United Nations may not have been created in order to bring us to heaven, it was created to save us from hell'. There is a limit to what you can do in international diplomacy, but you must act when peace is threatened. When civilians are killed. When human rights are trampled on. It's not even that you can, but you have to act. It is a moral obligation to act. It's an obligation of all the Member States of the United Nations, it's there in the UN Charter. This is what Dag Hammarskjöld stood for, and he was able to do much more than many predicted when he, in the middle of the Cold War, took over from the first UN Secretary General, the Norwegian Trygve Lie. Lie had also tried to bring peace to many places but was paralysed by the Cold War.

I believe there is room for more Nordic initiatives in international diplomacy. Remember, that the two first Secretary Generals of the United Nations were from Norway and Sweden. Scandinavia and Scandinavians have a potential in international relations that is enormous, in my view, because we have an impartial image that we can use, we have resources, we have peace, we have possibilities like few others. I believe that we have a moral obligation to fight for human rights, and for the protection of civilians. We have the moral obligation to do our utmost to prevent war and do conflict resolution. Through his life, my friend Jan Eliasson (who is in the room with us today) is an example of this. He was among those who have recently fought for the United Nations to stand up for 'Rights Upfront', believing that there is a collective responsibility to act to defend the civilian population in Sri Lanka, in Southeast Asia, in the Middle East and elsewhere.

What would Dag Hammarskjöld say if he then reappeared here in 2024? Well, he would see more refugees and displacement than even in his time. He would see even more hungry people in a growing world population. And he would see that wars had accumulated. For the past 15-20 years, the number of armed conflicts has risen relentlessly. After the Cold War ended 1989, we had an opening like never before for proactive diplomacy. This was a period when we as Norwegians engaged in peace diplomacy, and we got some of peace and ceasefire agreements through a proactive peace diplomacy that would have been impossible during the Cold War era.

But this was also a period of genocides. More civilians died in the 1990s than in any decade since the Second World War, in the genocides in Rwanda and

Bosnia, Kosovo, and in brutal conflicts elsewhere. Then came the first decade of the new Millennium, when I was myself, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and involved in other UN peace-making. That same period was marked by the so-called War on Terror, which again paralysed the UN, after the US invasion of Iraq. Then the UN had a Secretary-General who followed the path of Dag Hammarskjöld and tried being 'more of a General than a Secretary' – that person was Kofi Annan, a big friend of Sweden. Kofi Annan engaged in proactive diplomacy, he travelled like Dag Hammarskjöld had done to conflict areas, he took warring parties to the negotiating table, he initiated processes, he brought them in front of the Security Council.

When Kofi Annan ended his term, I remember vividly the Ambassador for the United States at the time, John Bolton, saying that 'The next Secretary-General should be more of a Secretary than a General'. In this period, I was surprised that the Nordic countries did not stand up and say, 'we disagree, we need a Secretary-General of the UN that will be in the spirit of Dag Hammarskjöld, a proactive leader for peace initiatives'. Because a strong Secretary-General is the whole point of the so-called 'good offices' of the UN Secretary-General, in harmony with the UN Charter. After that, we have had what started very promising with the Arab Spring – but soon was crushed with horrific wars in Syria, in Yemen, and elsewhere.

Since 2011, the number of people displaced by violence has gone up from just over 40 million to 120 million today. These are either refugees or internally displaced people. People we, as a world community, as UN Member States, have not been able to protect from violence and conflict. The number of displaced has tripled in 13 years. Today, more than 60 countries are affected by internal displacement, but out of these 60 just 5 countries are home to half of the entire population of people displaced by violence: Sudan, Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Colombia and Yemen. The United Nations has more than 190 members. It should be possible for the world community again, in the spirit of Hammarskjöld, to have stronger global solidarity with the civilian population in these war-torn countries.

Instead, we leave conflicts to accumulate – new ones emerge, like the horrific conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, on top of old ones. The conflict in DR Congo, where Hammarskjöld died on a peace mission, is still ongoing (60 years later). It is even worse than in his time in terms of civilian lives lost

and people displaced. In North Kivu, one of the provinces in Eastern Congo, where I recently visited, there are 120 armed groups. The United Nations peacekeeping mission is forced to leave Congo. This is not a good sign for proactive and global peace diplomacy.

On top of all the wars and the conflicts we now have the climate crisis. This is a new challenge compared to Dag Hammarskjöld's time. Of the 45 countries that have reported conflict and violence displacement last year, 42 have also reported climate induced displacement. It is in many ways summed up in two sentences: Those who are first and hardest hit by climate change did nothing to cause it. We, who did so much to cause climate change, are last and least hit. This is called 'climate injustice'.

Today, we have increased resources to do international solidarity and humanitarian assistance. But of the 50 billion USD needed to help the 180-190 million people that we as humanitarians have assessed as in need of assistance, we have only received 25 percent. There are still some extremely generous countries, like Sweden. But many of the countries that are now middle-income, some of which even sit in the 'G20 Group', do not partake in international solidarity. There are countries which are putting spaceships on the far side of the moon, but are invisible in our appeals to feed children, to put up shelter for them or to help them get into school. As Scandinavians, having the two first Secretary-Generals of the UN, we have long provided international solidarity. Sweden, Norway and Denmark are large international donors, even though they are small countries. But we have not succeeded in making this a global, united effort.

So, what needs to be done? In the spirit of Dag Hammarskjöld, we must steer away from the nationalism and inward-looking sentiments that are spreading across Europe, North America, in Asian economies and in the Gulf countries. We must create a new feeling that, 'yes, it is not hopeless, we can turn this around'. With so many affluent countries, so many peaceful countries, we should be able to collectively work together across the divides to change things. It is still possible to get world powers to work together if we can convince them that it is in their interest to help the world become a better place.

We must also agree that the impunity for violations of international law must end. We are obliged to follow up and act upon decisions made by recognised

bodies such as the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court – this is an obligation in international law. In places ravaged by conflict, it seems now much easier for the warlords to get fuel to bring to the fire, to get arms to massacre civilians than it is to bring pressure to make peace.

I often tell my colleagues that we need to work for three P's: Protection, Proximity and Principles. I believe this is also in the spirit of Hammarskjöld. We cannot just be satisfied by being good in assisting people once they have been hit by violence. We must protect them before they are stricken. We must be equally strong in our diplomacy as Western nations against the occupation in Ukraine, as we should be against the occupation in the West Bank and Gaza.

If we are not acting in the same way everywhere there is hypocrisy. Protection is an area where we are failing. We are still not able to put protection in the proximity to the people in need. We need to be there in their hour of greatest need. One of the ways to achieve this is through 'localisation'. Sweden is helping us here and has a very good policy. We need to support people in having their own organisations to help themselves, as long and as often as possible.

Finally, we must stand by the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence when we meet attacks on civilians and when we meet humanitarian needs.

I am not a pessimist, even though I have now travelled to virtually all the conflict areas of our generation. The reason I am not a pessimist when things have gone in the wrong direction for years now and in many places, is that I see there is now a generation of better educated people. With more technology. More resources, better organisations, better tools, better knowledge, as is demonstrated by the peace studies and by the students here at Uppsala University. I believe that the generation that will take over now has the chance to undo a lot of the bad things my generation have done. Good luck with that!

After the Lecture, Hans Wallmark, Chair of the Board of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, presented the medal:

Excellencies

Mr. County Governor

Vice-Chancellor

Colleagues and Students

Ladies and Gentlemen

Your Excellencies – Ambassador Rena Lee and Jan Egeland

You are respectively the 23rd and 24th person to have delivered a Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture at Uppsala University.

The University has instituted a special medal, which is bestowed upon the Dag Hammarskjöld Lecturers.

The medal was created by the artist Annette Rydström and is cast in bronze.

Its obverse side shows a portrait of Dag Hammarskjöld and the reverse, a handshake, the symbol of Concordia, representing collaboration and Hammarskjöld's legacy in diplomacy.

In the Latin inscription, Uppsala University dedicates the medal in memory of his outstanding achievements.

It is an honour for the University and the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation to award the Lecturer with the medal and we sincerely thank you both and congratulate you for your achievements.

As Dag Hammarskjöld Lecturers, you are invited to join the International Honorary Committee of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, where leaders in international cooperation and development can gather to reflect and drive debate and progress on global challenges and solutions.

The Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture Committee is comprised of representatives of Uppsala University and the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation.

Please allow me to state the Committee's motivation for the selection of the Lecturers:

Her excellency, Ms. Rena Lee was chosen by the Lecture Committee to deliver the 2023 Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture for her exceptional commitment to ocean conservation, multilateralism and the United Nations.

Your Excellency, Ms. Rena Lee, I now invite you to accept the 23rd medal, with your name engraved on the rim, from the Vice Chancellor.

His excellency, Mr. Jan Egeland was chosen by the Lecture Committee to deliver the 2024 Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture for his exceptional dedication to protecting the rights and welfare of those affected by conflicts and natural disasters and his dedication to shaping humanitarian response globally.

Your Excellency, Mr. Jan Egeland, I now invite you to accept the 24th medal, with your name engraved on the rim, from the Vice Chancellor.



Jan Egeland holding up the Dag Hammarskjöld Medal after receiving it from Anders Hagfeldt, Vice Chancellor of Uppsala University.



Jan Egeland

Jan Egeland is the Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council since 2013, overseeing humanitarian response in 40 countries affected by both new and protracted crises. He also held the role of Eminent Person for The Grand Bargain Initiative, advocating for its commitments to better serve people in need from June 2021 to June 2023.

In 2021, Jan Egeland was appointed by UN Secretary-General António Guterres as chair of the Independent Senior Advisory Panel on Humanitarian Deconfliction in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Jan Egeland's extensive career in international affairs includes serving as Special Advisor to the UN Special Envoy for Syria, European Director at Human Rights Watch, and UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

He played a crucial role in reforming the global humanitarian response system and organising response to crises such as the Asian tsunami and conflicts in Darfur, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Lebanon.

In 2010, Jan Egeland published 'A billion lives: An Eyewitness Report from the Frontline of Humanity', providing insight into his broad experiences in the field of international humanitarian field.

Photo: Beate Simarud, Norwegian Refugee Council.



Dag Hammarskjöld

Dag Hammarskjöld (1905-1961) served as Secretary-General of the UN with the utmost courage and integrity from 1953 till his death in 1961, creating standards against which his successors continue to be measured. He stood firmly by the UN Charter and lost his life in pursuit of dialogue and peace; Dag Hammarskjöld died in a plane crash on a mission to mediate in the 1960's Congo crisis. For his service, he was posthumously awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Dag Hammarskjöld's most notable achievements while serving as the world's top international civil servant include restructuring of the UN to make it more effective, creating the basis for UN peacekeeping operations, and successfully implementing his 'preventive diplomacy' in crises from the Middle East to China. Before he was appointed UN Secretary-General, Hammarskjöld held several senior positions in the Swedish civil service and became a non-partisan member of the Swedish Cabinet.

Dag Hammarskjöld also had many cultural interests and served as a member of the Swedish Academy, the body that awards the Nobel Prize for Literature. Another testament to this literary side is his journal of personal and spiritual reflections which was published posthumously as *Markings* in 1963. Dag Hammarskjöld spent much of his childhood and adolescence in Uppsala, which also became his final resting place.

Uppsala University



Photo: Wikipedia Commons

Uppsala University, founded in 1477, is the oldest and best-known university in Scandinavia. Famous scholars such as Rudbeck, Celsius and Linnaeus were professors here, as well as eight Nobel Prize laureates, among them Archbishop Nathan Söderblom, who was also the University's Pro-Chancellor. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1930. Dag Hammarskjöld got his degree 1925 at Uppsala University in different subjects including history, linguistics and literature. Further studies led to degrees in economics, law and a doctoral degree in economics in 1934.

The University's international studies library is named after Dag Hammarskjöld and, in 1981, the Swedish Parliament established the Dag Hammarskjöld Chair of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University.

www.uu.se

The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation



The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation is a non-governmental organisation established in 1962 in memory of the second UN Secretary-General, which aims to advance dialogue and policy for sustainable development and peace. The Swedish parliament took the initiative to set up the Foundation shortly after Hammarskjöld's tragic death and UN General Assembly Resolution 1757 welcomed its establishment.

The Foundation is an autonomous institution and is unaffiliated with any political, religious or ideological groups; its work is guided by respect for and alignment to the principles outlined in the UN Charter.

www.daghammarskjold.se

The Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture

The **Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture** is given in memory of Dag Hammarskjöld, and in recognition of the values that inspired him as Secretary-General and generally in his life – compassion, humanism and commitment to international solidarity and cooperation.

The invited speaker should be an outstanding international personality who in significant and innovative ways contributes to a more just, peaceful and environmentally sustainable world through valuable achievements in politics or research. Further information about the annual Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture including the full list of previous lecturers as well as their published speeches, can be found online at www.daghammarskjold.se.



Kofi Annan (1938-2018), delivering the 2001 Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture.

Previous Dag Hammarskjöld Lectures:

- 2023: Rena Lee, *Reaching shore - Multilateralism and the Value of International Law*
- 2022: Amina J. Mohammed, *Strength in Our Common Humanity*
- 2021: Agnès Callamard, *A Global Compact for a World Beyond COVID*
- 2019: Christina Figueres, *Leadership for the Decisive Decade*
- 2018: António Guterres, *Twenty-first Century Challenges and the Enduring Wisdom of Dag Hammarskjöld*
- 2016: Ban Ki-moon, *Evolving Threats, Timeless Values: The United Nations In A Changing Global Landscape*
- 2015: José Ramos-Horta, *Preventing Conflicts, Building Durable Peace*
- 2014: Helen Clark, *The Future We Want - Can We Make It A Reality?*
- 2013: Margot Wallström, *Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict*
- 2012: Tarja Halonen, *Women's Participation in the Sustainable World*
- 2011: Jan Eliasson, *Peace Development and Human Rights – The Indispensable Connection*
- 2010: Francis Deng, *Idealism and Realism – Negotiating sovereignty in divided nations*
- 2009: Karen Koning AbuZayd, *Rights, Justice and United Nations Values – Reflections through a Palestine Refugee Prism*
- 2008: Martti Ahtisaari, *Can the International Community Meet the Challenges Ahead of Us?*
- 2007: Sture Linnér and Sverker Åström, *UN Secretary-General Hammarskjöld – Reflections and personal experiences*
- 2005: Hans Blix, *UN Reform and World Disarmament – Where do we go?*
- 2004: Noeleen Heyzer, *Woman, War and Peace – Mobilising for Peace and Security in the 21st Century*
- 2002: Lakhdar Brahimi, *Rule of Law at Home and Abroad*
- 2001: Kofi Annan, *Dag Hammarskjöld and the 21st Century*

- 2001: Joseph Rotblat, *The Nuclear Age – A Curse and a Challenge: The Role of Scientists*
- 2000: Brian Urquhart, *Between Sovereignty and Globalisation Where does the United Nations fit in?*
- 1998: Mary Robinson, *Human Rights – Challenges for the 21st Century*



The medal which Uppsala University has produced in memory of Dag Hammarskjöld is awarded to the Dag Hammarskjöld Lecturers. It is designed by Annette Rydström and cast in bronze. The obverse shows a portrait of Dag Hammarskjöld and on the reverse a handshake and a text in Latin which reads: 'Uppsala University to its disciple in memory of his outstanding achievements.'



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