



The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, on Wednesday said she mourned the passing of "one of the great champions of human rights," Stéphane Hessel, who died the previous night, aged 95.

During an extraordinarily long and productive career, Hessel, a French citizen of German origin who was tortured by the Gestapo and survived the Buchenwald and Dora concentration camps, was perhaps best known for his close involvement with the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

" Stéphane Hessel was a towering figure in the human rights world," Pillay said. "His close involvement with the team who drafted the Universal Declaration is enough by itself to earn him a place of honour in global history. But he went on to do so much more, and kept contributing to the advancement of human rights well into his nineties."

In 2010, Hessel published a 12-page pamphlet entitled "Indignez-vous!" which urged people,

especially young people, to take a stand against discrimination, inequality and indifference. Despite a 70-year age gap between him and much of his audience, "Indignez-vous!" sold several million copies and has even been credited with inspiring many of those who took to the streets to call for their rights in the months following its publication.

"He supported the core human rights principles with a fierce integrity and never allowed politics or personal history to cloud his judgement on major unpopular issues, such as migration and racism," she added. "He was a great thinker and a remarkable man. I shall miss him personally, and wish I'd been able to tap more in to his unparalleled experience. It's very sad to have to say goodbye to someone who played such a monumental role in furthering the cause of human rights."

On Wednesday morning, the Human Rights Council – the 47-member State body which is currently in session in Geneva – observed a minute's silence in Hessel's memory, the first time it has honoured an individual in this way.

Additional links:

- A more complete account of Stéphane Hessel's life and work is posted on www.ohchr.org
- [UNESCO Director-General expresses her deep sadness at the passing of the Ambassador Stephane Hessel \(UNESCO\)](#)

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