



8 May 2014 – On 8 May 1945 the Second World War ended in Europe, after 6 years of horrors, terror and loss of human lives. The world as a whole was affected by this war whose battlefronts raged from Guadalcanal to Bastogne, Arnhem to El Alamein leaving no nation in its path, neutral or not, unscathed.

The Second World War is the war that has cost the most lives, but we will never know the exact numbers. Among the casualties of the war were between 22 and 30 million soldiers, between 5 and 6 million Jews and as many as 19 million who died of hunger or diseases due to the war. In total between 60 to 80 million human beings fell victim between 1939 and 1945, representing 2.5 percent of the global population.

The effects of the conflict resonated through the entire European continent, and indeed throughout the world. Countries such as the US, who fought from half a world away, suffered 418,000 deaths. Even Mexican, Cuban and Brazilian soldiers lost their lives. Of course the parties engaged in open war on the European continent suffered extreme casualties. Countries such as France and the UK suffered 550,000 and 450,900 casualties respectively, and even neutral countries suffered losses. In Denmark 3.000 people were killed during the five years of occupation. In Sweden, around 600 people lost their lives. In Norway, the number of casualties was 9.500, while Finland lost over 97.000 people as the country first fought the Soviets and then against Nazi Germany. Belgium, also neutral, suffered 88,000 casualties in the form of both military troops and civilians.

Even countries who were once colonies of the powers at war, contributed to the war effort. Ethiopia, Burma, Nepal, Rwanda, Burundi and other ex-colonies dedicated soldiers and resources to help fight the rising tide of fascism and suffered thousands of losses. In the fronts of the war outside of Europe, millions upon millions of Soviet, Chinese and Japanese lost their lives fighting on both sides of the conflict. And, lest it be forgotten, the pursuit of the folly of fascism cost the countries of the Third Reich (Germany, Austria and other annexed troops) over 8 and a half million lives. We will never know the exact numbers of deaths on all sides, and though entire cemeteries attest to the war's lethal legacy, many more casualties remain yet unidentified commemorated only in tombs to unknown soldiers.

The 8th and 9th of May are [days of Remembrance and Reconciliation](#) of those who lost their lives during the atrocities of WWII. It ended some 69 years ago, and brought about hope in countries where mothers had lost their sons, towns had been destroyed and blackouts were everyday events. May 1945 was a promise of a brighter future without wars, killing and nuclear threats. When the UN decided to make these two days the international days of remembrance, it stressed that this historic event established the conditions for the creation of the United Nations, which was designed to make every effort to settle all disputes by peaceful means in conformity with the [Charter of the United Nations](#)

As less and less people who actually lived through these years of darkness and devastation remain among us, we risk forgetting the horrors as the war becomes a distant memory, only taught to us in schoolbooks, instead of a lesson imparted through narratives of grandparents.

Most countries have days of remembrance and specific places of commemoration of their own, but it is important to remember, reconcile and pay tribute to those who lost their lives together, since remembering is also a way of promising each other that this shall never happen again. Remembering the names, the places will help us avoid another global conflict [remarked the Secretary-General](#), "The names and places resonate, despite the passing of many years: Stalingrad and Kursk. Auschwitz and Dachau. D-Day and the final battle for Berlin. Today, we mark the anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe — the last, we hope, of the world's total wars."