

Statement of the Universal Esperanto Association on the occasion of the International Day of Non-Violence 2019

Each year the United Nations observes October 2 as the International Day of Non-Violence – a day on which we celebrate the power of peaceful ideas to move humankind toward the good. On this day in 1869, precisely 150 years ago, the great pioneer of the philosophy and strategy of non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi, was born.

Mahatma Gandhi called non-violence “the greatest force at the disposal of mankind.” His words were echoed by Martin Luther King, who described non-violent resistance as “the courageous confrontation of evil by the power of love.”

The Universal Esperanto Association gives special emphasis to the power of language as an instrument of non-violence. Through speech and writing, humankind can persuade, insist, reason – without recourse to violent confrontation. But this is possible only when both sides speak the same language. All too often, communication collapses because of language difference, or the inability of speakers of different languages to bridge those differences. And, all too often, when people cease to understand they begin to fight.

Mahatma Gandhi understood these truths. He called for the adoption of Esperanto as a means of inter-communication “for all peoples” and made common cause with one of the earliest presidents of the Universal Esperanto Association, the Swiss diplomat and scholar Edmond Privat.

The International Language Esperanto was created to bridge the differences of languages, constituting a foundation for non-violent communication and the furtherance of understanding. The Universal Esperanto Association’s constitution states that “good international relations and respect for human rights, as these are defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other internationally recognized instruments, are essential conditions for the work of UEA.” On the basis of this requirement of our constitution, the Association unequivocally condemns all forms of violence.

“Gandhi constantly highlighted the gap between what we do, and what we are capable of doing,” remarked United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres recently. “I urge each and every one of us to do everything in our power to bridge this divide as we strive to build a better future for all.”

On the occasion of the International Day of Non-Violence the Universal Esperanto Association reaffirms its co-operation with the United Nations in creating a more peaceful and understanding world in the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi and the non-violence that he espoused.

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