

Statement of the Universal Esperanto Association on the occasion of International Translation Day, 30 September 2019

September 30 is International Translation Day, when the United Nations honors and expresses its support for translators and interpreters the world over as they go about their important but often invisible work of bridging the languages of the world.

The barriers of language that divide us receive less attention than they should. Linguistic discrimination is common in many parts of the world, and speakers of minority languages often suffer because they cannot make themselves understood, or because speakers of dominant languages refuse to recognize them. Even in international settings, some languages receive priority over other languages and their speakers are afforded preferential treatment. Translators and interpreters work to overcome this imbalance, but discrimination persists.

The Universal Esperanto Association promotes the use of a single, easily learned international language. Esperanto has over 130 years of active and continuous use behind it and is fully expressive and readily understood. We call on everyone to discover its benefits. But we are also aware that there will always be a role for interpretation and translation.

We also recognize that translators and interpreters often put themselves at risk as they seek to create communication in regions of conflict and military action, with little or no legal protection. They are sometimes imprisoned or even murdered because of the vital work that they do. We call on the United Nations and other international bodies to protect language professionals, and also to work to remove discrimination and the loss of rights on grounds of language.

The power of language is one of the greatest of human attributes. It underlies almost all human interactions. It should be used not to exclude but to bring people together in peace and equality.

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