

U.N. Honors the 101 Who Served and Died in Haiti

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UNITED NATIONS — It took nearly 15 minutes to read the full roll call of the dead, as a photograph of each person, with the years of their birth and death, flashed on a screen in the darkened hall. White candles flickered on a dais covered with white hydrangeas, orchids and lilies.



Photographs of the United Nations employees killed in the Haiti earthquake were shown at a memorial service on Tuesday.

Stan Honda/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

In a somber, secular memorial service on Tuesday, the [United Nations](#) honored its 101 employees who were killed eight weeks ago in [the Haiti earthquake](#), the largest one-day toll in the organization's history.

“In the midst of such suffering, the tragedy in [Haiti](#) did not spare those who had volunteered and had come from so many different countries to help the people and government of Haiti,” Ali Abdussalam Treki of Libya, the president of the [General Assembly](#), said during his eulogy.

Scores of relatives, friends and colleagues attended the hourlong ceremony. Among those who were killed was the head of the mission, Hedi Annabi, a 30-year veteran of the United Nations, as well as Luiz Carlos da Costa, his deputy. Brazil suffered the single greatest loss, which included 18 security workers in the [peacekeeping](#) mission.

The employees came from about 30 countries. The majority of them died in the Christopher Hotel, the headquarters of the peacekeeping mission, and they came from all levels of the organization, including drivers, election experts, interpreters and 7 of the mission's 10 political officers.

“At the United Nations we don’t simply share office space, we share a passion for a better world,” said [Ban Ki-moon](#), the secretary general, noting that many of those killed had crisscrossed the globe to work at missions from Congo to East Timor.

“Now we cannot forget the last e-mail, the last conversation, the last meal together,” said Mr. Ban, who paused to take off his glasses and wipe away tears during his eulogy.

The previous largest one-day toll for the organization was more than 40 peacekeepers who were killed in an airplane crash in 1961 in what is now known as Congo.

Marc-Andre Franche lost his fiancée, Alexandra Duguay, 31, in the Christopher Hotel. Ms. Duguay, who like Mr. Franche was Canadian, had worked in the documents center at United Nations headquarters, where she was known for her joie de vivre; she once rented a navy blue gown for the annual correspondents’ ball and because it was a three-day minimal rental, she sashayed around in the gown for the next two nights.

She transferred to Haiti a few months ago to be with Mr. Franche, and she rapidly learned Creole and took on projects like creating colorful street signs for her Port-au-Prince neighborhood. “We felt that we needed to challenge ourselves; we wanted to go someplace where we could more directly make a difference,” Mr. Franche said in an interview. “She did not want to lose a minute.”

United Nations staff members had joked grimly among themselves about the dubious safety features of the Christopher Hotel, like the rope ladder in Ms. Duguay’s office to be used in case of fire. “We knew that the building was inadequate,” said Mr. Franche, a program analyst for the United Nations Development Program. But no one really contemplated an earthquake.

United Nations officials have never fully explained whether the building had been inspected with an earthquake in mind.

Gregory Grene, a founder of a New York Celtic-rock band called the Prodigals, has set up [a foundation to support education in Haiti in memory of his twin brother, Andrew](#), 44, who was an aide to Mr. Annabi, the head of mission.

Andrew had arrived in Haiti in the period after the ouster of President [Jean-Bertrand Aristide](#), a time when continuing violence meant he had to wear a flak jacket and bullets occasionally pinged off the sides of his vehicle. He never spoke of this with his twin, who

found out about the violence only when he read a newspaper interview. The brothers hold joint American and Irish citizenship.

Gregory Grene noted that his brother, after first writing speeches for Secretary General [Boutros Boutros-Ghali](#) in the 1990s, eventually began serving in one peacekeeping mission after another. Andrew Grene recognized both the perils and the pluses of his assignments.

“He was a true idealist, an unshakable idealist, but more effective than idealists usually are, because he was never blind to the realities of a situation,” Gregory Grene said.