

Wanted: Global partnership to rid the world of violence

VIOLENCE is when someone attacks someone else, often to get them to do something they do not want to do by making them feel pain or fear. Violence can mean anything from one person hitting another to a war between many countries that causes millions of deaths.

The International Day of Non-Violence is observed on 2 October, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi. This day is referred to in India as Gandhi Jayanti.

In January 2004, Iranian Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi had taken a proposal for an International Day of Non-Violence from a Hindi teacher in Paris teaching international students to the World Social Forum in Mumbai. The idea gradually attracted the interest of some leaders of India's Congress Party ("Ahimsa Finds Teen Voice", The Telegraph, Calcutta) until a Satyagraha Conference resolution in New Delhi in January 2007, initiated by Indian National Congress President and Chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance Sonia Gandhi and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, called upon the United Nations to adopt the idea.

On 15 June 2007 the United Nations General Assembly voted to establish 2 October as the International Day of Non-Violence. The resolution by the General Assembly asks all members of the UN system to commemorate 2 October in "an appropriate manner and disseminate the message of non-violence, including through education and public awareness."

The United Nations Postal Administration (UNPA) in New York City prepared a special cachet to commemorate this event, following a request from the Indian Ambassador at the Permanent Mission of India to the UN. The boxed pictorial cachet design was prepared by the UNPA and was limited to cancellation at UNPA's NY location (not Geneva and Vienna).

The UNPA has indicated that all outgoing UNPA mail between October 2 and 31 carried the cachet.

Gandhi Jayanti is a national festival celebrated in India to mark the occasion of the birthday of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who is also known as the "Father of the Nation". It is celebrated on 2nd October. Gandhi Jayanti is one of the three National Holidays in India, other two being the Independence Day (celebrated on 15 August) and Republic Day (celebrated on 26 January).

The United Nations General Assembly announced on 15 June 2007 that it adopted a resolution which declared that 2 October will be celebrated as the International Day of Non-Violence.

Gandhi Jayanti is celebrated yearly on 2 October. It is one of the official declared national holidays of India observed in all of its states and union territories.

Gandhi Jayanti is marked by prayer services and tributes all over India including at Gandhi's memorial in New Delhi where he was cremated. Popular activities include prayer meetings, commemorative ceremonies in different cities by colleges, local government institutions and social political institutions.

Painting and essay competitions are conducted and best awards are granted for projects in schools and the community encouraging a non-violent way of life as well as celebrating Gandhi's effort in the Indian independence movement. Gandhi's favourite bhajan (Hindu devotional song), Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram is usually sung in his memory. Statues of Mahatma Gandhi throughout the country are decorated with flowers and garlands, and some people avoid drinking alcohol or eating meat on the day. Public buildings, banks and post offices are closed.