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HEADLINE: The hope that sustains humankind

BYLINE: Kofi Annan

BODY:

Those who founded the United Nations believed that despite a bloodied history, humanity was ultimately redeemable.

Yet we see that civilians are still forced from their homes, driven to borders which are open one minute and closed the next, forced into hiding, separated from their families, made to act as human shields, stripped of their identities and callously killed.

The plight of civilians is no longer something which can be neglected or made secondary because it complicates political negotiations or interests. It is fundamental to the central mandate of the Organization.

Failure to address these issues will erode respect for the (Security) Council's resolutions and so diminish the authority of the United Nations as a whole. More important, it will take away the one thing that sustains the many millions who have lost all in conflict: the hope that something called the international community is willing to uphold the basic dignity of humankind.

Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General, September 16, 1999

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