

John W. Holmes Memorial Lecture



“We the Peoples” *Reclaiming an Ethic of Solidarity*

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1 Introduction

The John W. Holmes Memorial Lecture Series was inaugurated in 1989 in honor of one of the founding members of the Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS). John Holmes, diplomat and scholar, served on both the 1987–1988 provisional committee and the planning committee for ACUNS’ founding conference. As Kim Nossal points out, one of Holmes’ abiding concerns in his post–public service role teaching Canadian foreign policy at the University of Toronto was the management of global conflict and the role of the United Nations in this task.¹ This is not surprising. Holmes was active as a diplomat in the post–World War II era and as an academic in the Cold War era (indeed he died in 1988 before the Wall came down). Holmes was clearly concerned with states. In contrast, my abiding concern is with peoples, but I consider this to be a challenge equal for our age as post-war conflicts were for Holmes and his age. Nossal also suggests that Holmes “was rarely explicitly theoretical”² in his work, even though there is evidence that he probably leaned toward an English School perspective on international society.³ Yet we are often insufficiently theoretical, or at least insufficiently explicitly normative, in our search for solutions to global challenges of the kind that face a significant proportion of humanity. My purpose in this lecture in memory of John Holmes is

1 Nossal 2004.

2 Nossal 2004, 750.

3 Nossal 2004, 751.

to focus attention on the value of returning to theory in seeking to re-embed solidarity as a core principle of the UN system. This is not simply an exercise in “blue-skies” thinking. As Thomas G. Weiss puts it, “Without having a vision and then imagining how we can achieve it, we risk going nowhere and perhaps even moving backwards.”⁴

We all know how the UN Charter begins—with the words “We the peoples”—a phrase that has become a leitmotif of the UN system despite contestation over just what it means. In its 1995 report *Our Global Neighbourhood*, the Commission on Global Governance suggested that any assertion “that it was the people of the world who were creating a world body was little more than a rhetorical flourish.”⁵ Uriel Abulof, on the other hand, argues that the Preamble does effectively declare peoples, not states, as the founders of the UN.⁶ Former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has suggested that the Charter was, at least, drafted in the name of “We the peoples” even if it is states that are the UN’s formal members.⁷ But “We the peoples” is more than a lexical artifact about agency and ownership, important though that is. As Tim Dunne and Nicholas J. Wheeler point out, it constitutes a “significant advance in the normative vocabulary of international relations,” an internationalist or even cosmopolitan identity based on an implicit promise of solidarity.⁸ It is that joining of solidarity with “We the peoples” that I want to focus on today.

2 Challenges for Solidarity

The Preamble to the UN Charter offers some evidence of what could be taken as a foundational commitment to solidarity with its promises to save all humankind from the untold sorrow brought by the scourge of war and to promote social progress and better standards of life for all. It does so in the context of a commitment to the equal worth and dignity of all human persons based on key principles of tolerance and good neighbourliness. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, takes these principles one step further, calling for all “members of the human family” to act “towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood [*sic*].”⁹ This commitment

4 Weiss 2013, 24.

5 Commission on Global Governance 1995, 226.

6 Abulof 2016, 537.

7 Ban Ki-moon 2015.

8 Dunne and Wheeler 2004, 10.

9 UN General Assembly 1948, Preamble, Art. 1.

to unity and universality that underpins ideas about solidarity is reinforced in the *Millennium Declaration*, which proclaims the UN as the “common house of the entire human family.”¹⁰

Yet we know that within this human family of “We the peoples,” too many face a life of precarity, insecurity, harm, and immiseration, the kinds of harms that the Commission on Human Security identified as menaces not just to survival, but also to the “continuation of daily life and the dignity of human beings.”¹¹ Indeed, the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (more about this later) was convened in response to the highest recorded level of human suffering since World War II. While any concern with such suffering should ultimately focus on the lives of individuals, efforts to capture the intensity of insecurity are often related in aggregate terms. In Yemen, to take one example, 22 million people are in desperate need of humanitarian aid. To put that into perspective, that is almost the equivalent of the whole population of Australia, or the combined population of Norway, Finland, and Sweden. Starvation threatens 8 million Yemenis, and another 10 million are food insecure. One child under the age of five dies every ten minutes from preventable causes, and nearly half of all Yemeni children between the ages of six months and five years old are chronically malnourished.¹² Across the world, children are disproportionately affected by armed conflict. The Secretary-General’s most recent report on children and armed conflict, submitted to the Security Council and the General Assembly in April 2018, documented a verified surge in the recruitment and deployment of children in conflict and increased (and increasing) levels of killing, maiming, abduction of, and sexual violence against children.¹³

Conflict is a key factor in what motivates people to undertake often perilous journeys in the search for some form of safety elsewhere. Since 2014, for example, more than 1.8 million people from a range of conflict-affected countries—including Syria, Iraq, and Guinea—have made the perilous Mediterranean crossing to seek refuge and haven in Europe.¹⁴ Almost 17,000 of that number have lost their lives or are deemed missing.¹⁵ While António Guterres, in his capacity at the time as UN High Commissioner for Refugees, joined with

10 UN General Assembly 2000, para. 32.

11 Commission on Human Security 2003, 10.

12 UN Secretary-General 2018.

13 *Children and Armed Conflict* 2018.

14 For up-to-date data, see UNHCR (n.d.) Operational portal: refugee situations; available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>.

15 UNHCR n.d.

other international human rights leaders in calling this a “tragedy of epic proportions,”¹⁶ we cannot forget that globally more than 68.5 million people are forcibly displaced by conflict, violence, and persecution. The UNHCR calculates that one person is so displaced somewhere in the world every two seconds.¹⁷ Another 10 million people are stateless. Almost half of the world’s 25 million refugees are under the age of eighteen.¹⁸ While countries in the European Union fret about their “refugee crisis,” although numbers of arrivals are in decline, 85 percent of the world’s displaced peoples are hosted in developing countries.¹⁹ Many spend years in refugee or internally displaced person (IDP) camps, face various forms of internment, or live their lives in precarious situations as marginalized peoples with little access to education, employment, or health services.

Poverty constitutes a further source of insecurity and precarity for a significant proportion of the world’s population. Despite some advances in meeting poverty reduction targets under the Millennium Development Goals,²⁰ and despite more recent commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) reports that about 1.5 billion people in more than 100 developing countries still live in multidimensional poverty, facing multiple forms of deprivation across health, education, and standard of living metrics that limit their life choices.²¹ Deprivation of this kind is not confined to developing countries. The UN’s Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Philip Alston, reports that in the United States, for example, “contrasts abound between private wealth and public squalor,” with more than 40 million people (about one in every eight Americans) living in poverty in one of the world’s wealthiest economies and about half of those struggling to survive in conditions of extreme poverty.²²

16 UNHCR 2015.

17 UNHCR 2018a. Well over half of the world’s refugees (57 percent) come from just three countries: South Sudan (2.4 million), Afghanistan (2.6 million), and Syria (6.3 million).

18 UNHCR 2018a.

19 UNHCR 2018b, 2. In strict numerical terms, Turkey leads the list with more than 3.5 million refugees in 2017, with Pakistan and Uganda following in second and third place. When calculated relative to population, Lebanon ranks first, followed by Jordan and Turkey (though the figures climb substantially for Jordan if Palestinian refugees are included in the figures).

20 See, for example, Asadullah and Savoia 2018.

21 UNDP 2016, 53. See also UNDP, *Multidimensional Poverty Index* (New York: UNDP, 2018c), at <http://hdr.undp.org/en//2018-MPI>.

22 UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2017b. It is worth noting that Philip Alston’s visit was undertaken at the invitation of the US federal government.

This is not the solidarist world conjured up by the concept of “We the peoples” or the “entire human family” in the UN Charter and the *Millennium Declaration*. Rather, to borrow from Andrew Linklater, this is a world increasingly characterized by an “indifference or hostility to the welfare of others,”²³ a lack of care for or solidarity with those whose lives are most vulnerable and precarious wherever in the world they might be.

3 Revisiting Solidarity Ethics

Before exploring how the UN system has addressed these issues as both empirical and normative challenges, there is value in giving some thought to the ethical underpinnings of a global approach to solidarity. There is an extensive philosophical literature on ethics that draws variously on critical theory, identity politics, and moral philosophy. In the time available, my intention is to draw selectively on some of those debates as they have been translated into the fields of International Relations (including global governance) and International Law. In International Relations theory, claims for a solidarist world are most often associated with a version of English School approaches to world politics, reflecting a “cosmopolitan normative agenda ... strongly associated with world society” and the existence or creation of a “meaningful universal human community.”²⁴

The kinds of ethical apparatus that help to (re)construct a solidarity ethic to make “We the peoples” more meaningful—even in terms of what Audie Klotz calls a “plausibility probe”²⁵—draw here on the insights and language of harm, care, rescue, recognition, and self-realization. An ethic of solidarity of this kind, I argue, enables us to attend to peoples rather than just processes, to focus on refugees for example rather than just on refugee flows, or on migrants rather than just migration, or on the poor rather than just poverty as a category of disadvantage.

Excavating a promise of solidarity in such a world requires clarity on first-order ethics. First-order principles are interactional. They “postulate certain fundamental principles of ethics” about relationships between and among people and (only then) seek to assign responsibility to individual agents.²⁶ The kinds of rules, practices, and institutional responses that allocate those first-

23 Linklater 2006, 334.

24 Williams 2005, 20–21.

25 See Klotz 2008.

26 Pogge 1992, 50.

order commitments and inscribe the means by which those commitments are to be achieved are defined as second-order concerns. Practices of global governance are therefore more than regulatory rules. They are also ethical ones that carry with them implicit value judgments about appropriate practices, about justice, and about the nature of rights and duties, to whom these are owed, and why. Yet this focus on first-order principles makes no assumption about the specific content of such mechanisms and strategies. Rather, it is about identifying the ethical foundations of “making things better without applying an external definition of what would be best.”²⁷

As a starting point, solidarity demands and indeed assumes commitment to a global community of humankind based on two things: structures of mutual recognition (somewhat akin, perhaps, to Immanuel Kant’s ideas about hospitality), and an acceptance of equal moral worth attached to all peoples.²⁸ It requires an “evaluative focus on the lives of *all* persons”²⁹ that rejects moral hierarchies of insiders and outsiders drawn from assumptions about nationality or territory. All people should be protected from harm and suffering, regardless of their citizenship, nationality, gender, race, class, sexuality, and so on.

This “no-harm” principle is a standard convention of liberal natural law theory rooted in John Stuart Mill’s nineteenth-century work on liberty.³⁰ Mills argued that “moral rules which forbid [hu]mankind to hurt one another ... are more vital to human well-being than any other maxims.”³¹ A minimally interactional (first-order) version of solidarity based on the principle of doing no harm expects that agents should act individually and, if required, collectively to prevent harm to others. Further, they should do so even in situations where they are not the specific instigators of such harm and even if they do not know who will benefit—that is, which individuals will be protected from harm—by their actions. In an international sense, a minimalist harm convention can be understood in both Grotian and Kantian terms. The Grotian tradition in International Relations requires states to avoid doing harm to one another.³² The Kantian approach, on the other hand, relies on a “community of all human beings [that] entails a common participation in law and ... in a virtual polity, a cosmopolis that has an implied structure of claims and obligations.”³³ In such

27 Stamnes 2004, 163.

28 For more on Kant’s ideas about hospitality, usually argued to be owed by nations to strangers, see Knowles 2017; Cavallar 2012; Nussbaum 1997a.

29 Gasper and Sinatti 2016, 21 (emphasis added).

30 Laing 2004.

31 John Stuart Mill, as quoted in Linklater 2006, 331.

32 See Linklater 1999, 478.

33 Nussbaum 1997b, 37.

a cosmopolis, the harm principle requires that individuals—and, by extension for our purposes, governments and other actors—should be required to do no harm to others, but also to act when they can “before harm has been received”³⁴ to prevent harm being done to others. In this context, one also should not hinder efforts that others take to avoid being harmed or efforts that they take to provide a minimum (of security or safety) for themselves.

A more ethically engaged version of solidarity demands that action is not limited only to these kinds of negative duties to do no harm or to act to prevent harm to others. In response to the principle of humaneness, which asserts “the importance of reducing the pain and suffering of human beings,”³⁵ it also includes positive action to remedy harm when it has occurred, a principle that finds a parallel in the insistence across the UN system that people should be free to live their lives in dignity. One version of this ethics of remedy is found in the so-called Good Samaritan model or what Linklater refers to as “friendship towards the rest of the human race.”³⁶ In this approach, responses to the human insecurities and harms of the kind touched on earlier are embedded in the notion of rescue. Solidarity generates at minimum a moral obligation to help those who have suffered harm simply because agents have the ability or capacity to help, so that those who are worse off are not made worse off still.³⁷ At the very least, it can be seen to generate obligations to minimize risk to others and to respond to vulnerabilities of the kind that David Chandler calls “unfreedoms.”³⁸ A more robust version of this cosmopolitan ethic rests on the proposition that humanity is ultimately bound together as a single moral community with shared rights and obligations. The consequence of such a world is that, as Kant avowed, a right violated anywhere is felt everywhere. Moral obligations to those who are not conationals are therefore embedded not just in rescue, but in a position that Richard Falk describes as an “ethos of responsibility and solidarity.”³⁹

34 Mason 2008, 12.

35 Linklater 2016, 340. Linklater is drawing on Macklin's work on moral progress. Ruth Macklin (1977) “Moral Progress,” *Ethics* 87 (4), 370–382.

36 Linklater 2001, 264.

37 It is not clear, however, whether those who are suffering harm of various kinds, who are seeking refuge or haven, who are facing starvation, or violence, or poverty, or immiseration have a concomitant *right* to expect or ask for rescue of the kind that would minimize their insecurities.

38 Chandler 2012, 217.

39 Falk 1996, 499. Charles Beitz characterizes this approach as a form of moral cosmopolitanism; see Beitz 2005.

Solidarity of this kind also rests on and indeed demands a politics of recognition. This extends our concerns to more than external or physical acknowledgment of those who are insecure and vulnerable, though that is obviously a logical starting point. The empirical, social, and political landscape of human suffering can involve various forms of invisibility (in effect, we “do not see”). The concept of “regimes of invisibility” is perhaps most associated with cultural anthropology, the philosophy of science and the work of Bruno Latour. But this concept has also been adapted within International Relations and critical security studies, in the work of Laleh Khalili and Juan Pablo Ferrero for example, to explore various dynamics of order and subordination and strategies of isolation and detention.⁴⁰

While international organizations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) continue to provide protection and support, those who are displaced, or who are facing extreme poverty, or overwhelming disease burdens, or the long-term impacts of disasters, or other forms of isolation—all real people, not statistics—often remain invisible or subsequently become invisible to the international community, to their own governments (often the source of their vulnerability and insecurity), and to the communities of other countries. In the face of such invisibility, so-called exercises in solidarity come to rely on what organizational behaviorists and psychologists refer to as the “identified victim effect.”⁴¹ This refers to “peoples’ tendency to preferentially give [*sic*] to identified versus anonymous victims of misfortune.”⁴² In contrast, those who are in other situations of risk or harm, but who remain unidentified because they are not named or, in a contemporary age, identified through various forms of image or media attention, are constrained to being out of sight, out of mind.

This is not simply, or even, about physical invisibility in which, for example, those who are internally displaced or who move across borders to seek refuge and haven end up in locations that are off the map. Those who are displaced or who are stateless or who are marginalized for other reasons remain “outsiders ... in terms of administrative identity, cultural familiarity and political

40 Latour 2010; Khalili 2012; Ferrero 2014.

41 See Symons 2018.

42 Genevsky et al. 2013. Xavier Symons, for example, contrasts international efforts to rescue twelve Thai boys and their coach from flooded caves in northern Thailand in July 2018 with a general lack of similar attention to “countless unidentified Rohingya victims displaced from neighbouring Myanmar due to violence and ethnic cleansing”; Symons 2018. There is also a burgeoning critical literature on the role of empathy in international and transnational politics, though time and space constraints prevent a more detailed analysis here of how this relates to an ethic of solidarity; for more, see Head 2016; Pedwell 2014.

and cultural acceptance.”⁴³ People are made “invisible” if they are undocumented. They are “unvalued.” Their “lived lives” and their agency become invisible when they are subject to subtle and not-so-subtle regimes of classification or naming—as “displaced,” as “refugees,” as a “crisis,” as “asylum seekers,” as “food insecure,” as “diseased,” and so on. Recognition is not only about overcoming such regimes of invisibility. It does so with an emphasis on self-realization and what Chandler refers to as the “practices of resilience ... [and] self-securing agency.”⁴⁴ Or, to put it another way, those who are facing precarious and insecure lives “should not be cast as supplicants in a merciful hierarchy but revealed as having agency, power and rights.”⁴⁵

4 Solidarity in the UN System

Drawing on this admittedly brief overview, we can then engage in the exercise of a “discursive coding” of a solidarity ethic through searching for and identifying first-order terms such as harm, dignity, respect, care, rescue, recognition, self-realization, and empowerment. Across the UN system, we find statements of principle that have the potential to weave a tight ethical foundation for practices of solidarity with and among “We the peoples” and for the human family for which the UN is expected to be a common home. But it is not clear that these constitute the kinds of first-order interactional principles suggested above, as opposed to procedural or declaratory statements that provide little guidance for actual transformative practice on responding to global conditions of insecurity.

As noted earlier, the UN Charter’s Preamble sets the tone with its emphasis on the “dignity and worth of the human person,” justice, respect, and tolerance. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) begins with a “recognition of the inherent dignity of the equal and inalienable rights of the human family” and a rejection of “barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind [*sic*].”⁴⁶ The Genocide Convention (in full, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide), adopted at the same time, also refers to losses for humanity that are condemned by the civilized world, but provides no real ethical rationale or statement of first-order principles to underpin these concerns or to construct a set of solidarist obligations. By con-

43 Gasper and Sinatti 2016, 4.

44 Chandler 2012, 213.

45 Zambelli 2017, 41.

46 UN General Assembly 1948, Preamble.

trast, the Preambles to both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights observe that, because individuals have duties to other individuals and to the (undefined) community to which they belong, they also have responsibilities to strive for the promotion and observance of the rights in those two agreements.

Similar declaratory statements appear in the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the 1969 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The former, based on the “dignity and equality [including before the law] inherent in all human beings,” proclaims racial discrimination as “morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous” and the existence of “racial barriers” anywhere in the world as “repugnant.” However, there is little explicit in the way of statements of solidarity beyond the general need to secure respect for the “dignity of the human person” and to avoid disruptions to the “harmony of persons living side by side”: the rationale for action is equally as much to reduce obstacles to “friendly and peaceful relations among nations” and to “promote understanding between races [sic].”⁴⁷ The second convention—CEDAW—echoes the general principles of equality and dignity, but also recognizes structural conditions that diminish and constrain the lived experiences of women: poverty, racial discrimination, and colonialism, for example. But statements of obligation, responsibility, and duty to those who are made most vulnerable by such conditions, or the interactional principles that might underpin such statements, are generally weak. At best, there is an assumption that individual rights, and the equality and dignity that are assumed to follow, derive from a shared humanity.

Post–Cold War UN efforts to embed and mainstream ideas about humanity have been given particular emphasis in the concept of human security. As explained in the UNDP’s 1994 Human Development Report, human security was intended to take account of the ways that people’s lives are made insecure and unsafe even, and perhaps even particularly, in the absence of the kind of violent conflict or social unrest that had a more central place in traditional or orthodox versions of security. The UNDP presented human security as a universal people-centered concern with “human life and dignity,” by which people were to be made safe from the “constant threats of hunger, disease, crime and repression.”⁴⁸ The freedoms that underpin human security—freedom from

47 UN General Assembly 2016.

48 UNDP 1994, 22, 3.

fear, freedom from want, and freedom to live in dignity (or what Ryerson Christie and Amitav Acharya refer to as freedom from humiliation)⁴⁹—could be taken as analogous with an ethic of solidarity and a global commitment to “We the peoples.”

In his Millennium Report, explicitly titled *We the Peoples*, Secretary-General Kofi Annan proposed a clear focus on the “dignity and worth of the human person” in the context of freedom from fear and freedom from want, though the term “human security” is used only once.⁵⁰ The report argued that “the United Nations exists for, and must serve, the needs and hopes of people everywhere,” though at the same time maintaining that the UN exists also to serve its member states.⁵¹ While the report states that “those who suffer, or who benefit least, are entitled to help from those who benefit most,”⁵² much of the discussion of solidarity is explicitly tied to access to markets and benefit sharing under globalization.⁵³

Concerns with people and their insecurity were also central to the Secretary-General’s report *In Larger Freedom* prepared for the 2005 World Summit. There, Kofi Annan called on the international community to “make people everywhere more secure, more prosperous and better able to enjoy their fundamental human rights.”⁵⁴ The World Summit Outcome Document makes only passing reference to human security: member states recognize the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, and they commit themselves, in paragraph 143, to “discussing and defining the notion of human security in the General Assembly.”⁵⁵ The years that followed saw the release of a sequence of Human Security Reports by the UN Secretary-General (the first in 2009, the second in 2012, and the third in 2014). In December 2010, the Secretary-General appointed the UN’s first Special Adviser on Human Security. Various thematic debates, panel discussions, and plenary sessions on human security have also been convened in the General Assembly, with a view to finding agreement on the “notion” of human security as anticipated in the World Summit Outcome Document. Despite this flurry of activity accompanied by efforts to mainstream human

49 Christie and Acharya 2008.

50 UN Secretary-General 2000, 46.

51 UN Secretary-General 2000, 6.

52 UN Secretary-General 2000, 77.

53 These themes are echoed in the 2008 International Labour Organization’s Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization; see ILO 2008. International Labour Organization (2008) ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, adopted by the International Labour Conference at its Ninety-seventh Session, Geneva, 10 June (Geneva: ILO).

54 UN General Assembly 2005a, 3.

55 UN General Assembly 2005b, 31.

security across the UN system, there is a notable absence of ethical promise. Indeed, General Assembly Resolution 66/290, adopted in 2012 as the authoritative statement on how Member States understand human security, is very much grounded in national ownership and the expectations and preferences of sovereign states rather than first-order principles based on humanity, care, and rescue.

If we cannot find these first-order principles in either the human rights or human security lexicon within the UN, there are other places to which we might turn our attention. For example, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs' *Vision for an Inclusive Society*, drafted in 2009, called for a "paradigm shift so as to recognize the dignity, value and importance of each person, not only as an ethical norm and moral imperative, but also as a legal principle, a societal goal, and ultimately, practice."⁵⁶ The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted by the General Assembly in September 2016 as the outcome of a high-level plenary meeting, is explicit that its challenge is "moral and humanitarian." In their determination to save lives, its signatories—heads of state and government and high representatives—declare their "profound solidarity with and support for the millions of people ... who ... are forced to uproot themselves and their families."⁵⁷ As international practice shows, these commitments are rarely translated into actual practice.

One of the most explicit, but quite possibly less well-known, attempts to mainstream *international* solidarity in the UN system has come through the still uncompleted work of the Human Rights Council's Independent Expert on Human Rights and International Solidarity. The mandate dates to 2005 (extended in 2014 and then again in 2017). It focuses on efforts to mainstream the right of peoples and individuals to international solidarity into the activities of all states, UN agencies, other relevant international organizations, and NGOs. The most recent version of what is now called a draft declaration on the right to international solidarity (earlier versions were more explicit in using the title "the rights of peoples and individuals to international solidarity") defines "international solidarity" as the "expression of a spirit of unity among individuals, peoples, States and international organizations" and a "foundational principle underpinning contemporary international law."⁵⁸ The draft declaration gives some thought to both preventive and reactive forms of solidarity, the

56 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2009, 4. The *Vision* goes on to demand that "no human being should be condemned to endure a brief or miserable life as a result of his or her class, country, religious affiliation, ethnic background or gender," 4.

57 UN General Assembly 2016, para. 8.

58 UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2017a, Art. 1 (1), 1 (2).

former defined as collective actions to safeguard and ensure the fulfilment of all human rights and the latter as collective actions to alleviate human suffering. Despite this, the draft remains primarily statist and procedural, explaining international solidarity as crucial to the preservation of the international order and the survival of international society, and offering little purchase on a deep-seated global ethic of care, rescue, humanity, and obligation.

I turn finally to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, which warrants a deeper investigation than can be offered here. Not long before the event, at a meeting on the global challenges of forced displacement held in Washington, DC, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon described the current global refugee and IDP situation as a crisis of solidarity rather than simply a crisis of numbers.⁵⁹ In his report for the summit, he invoked the idea of “We the peoples” to ground his emphasis on one humanity, and he invoked the principle of solidarity in his commitment to shared responsibility.⁶⁰ In his informal chair’s summary of the summit outcomes (though not in his official report submitted to the General Assembly) Ban called the summit “a unique opportunity for the global community to take responsibility to place people first: to secure their safety, to uphold their dignity and to provide opportunities for a better future.”⁶¹ International humanitarian and human rights law are cast as the last protection against barbarity.⁶² The global conscience, he suggested, had been awakened and those who are suffering would know that the world stands “in solidarity with them.”⁶³

5 Conclusion

The purpose of this John W. Holmes Memorial Lecture was interrogative rather than prescriptive. Constraints of time and space mean that the discussion on how “We the peoples” is defined and how an ethic of solidarity might be supported has been inevitably selective. As the discussion here has suggested, in many cases the commitment across the UN system to humanity, human rights, and human security—all of which are peopled concepts and practices—comes with a strongly prudential or other-regarding ethic, driven by fears of disruption to peace and security or to the stability of an international order or society of states. Yet at the same time, there is a language (and, in some instances,

59 UN 2016.

60 UN Secretary-General 2016.

61 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2016, 2.

62 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2016, 3.

63 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2016, 2.

a growing one) that harks to conscience, dignity, and protection against barbarous acts. In searching for first-order solidarist ethics, my intention was not simply to offer an intellectual account of the good political community in which, as Tim Hayward puts it, moral aspirations “are treated as separable from their contingent material conditions of probability.”⁶⁴ Rather, I argue that only once one has a clear statement and understanding of interactional principles on relationships between and among peoples is it possible to identify “political possibilities inherent in the present”⁶⁵ and “seek to put in place the means to translate these into future actualities.”⁶⁶ Solidarity, in this context, constitutes what Ken Booth refers to as an end point, not a state of being but “the condition of becoming.”⁶⁷

In his keynote address titled “Looking Backwards and Forwards,” presented to the first ACUNS conference in June 1988, John Holmes reflected on the lack of vision in UN Charter negotiations about the kinds of problems that, in his words, “came to be called the Third World,” but that we would now refer to as the Global South (which is located anywhere and everywhere). “It is not,” he said, “so much that we were callous as that we were ignorant.”⁶⁸ In our search for an ethic of solidarity that commits to “We the peoples,” the world no longer has ignorance as its excuse.

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64 Hayward 2009, 289.
 65 McGrew 1997, 252.
 66 Cheeseman 2001.
 67 Booth 1999, 41.
 68 Holmes 1988, 10.

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