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Remembrance Day: Standing on Guard for Freedom

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On Nov. 11, Canadians will once again turn their attention to our fallen soldiers on Remembrance Day. Remembrance is one of the most sacred acts of humanity. Not only does it sanctify the dead, it also provides moral nourishment to the living. If the saying that those who forget the past are destined to repeat it is true, remembrance is integral to ensuring a better, more peaceful world for future generations.

In this day and age, when morality is defined by self need; when hypocrisy in the name of human rights has turned the world upside down, when individualism has overtaken community, and when the underpinnings of freedom and democracy have been eroded, Remembrance Day is an annual reminder of who we are and what we ought to stand for.

Forgetting or not fully understanding past action and intervention is horribly dangerous. Thousands of Canadian soldiers gave their lives so that we can live in a society defined by liberty and democracy. In the face of evil and intolerance, they chose not to be bystanders, but to join the fight and defend democratic freedom for the benefit of us all.

The 158 Canadian soldiers who have died in our most recent conflict in Afghanistan sacrificed their own lives to bring freedom and democracy to that land -- but also to prevent further terrorism against the West. After 9/11, most democratic nations realized it's better to fight evil in its own domain rather than have it knock down your front door.

Yes -- 'evil'. It's important to recognize it when it stares you in the face. And to heck with moral relativism. Anyone who executes women by shooting them in the head at a

sporting event in a stadium in front of thousands of cheering fans (e.g. the Taliban) is evil. The bystanders observing from the sidelines are just as complicit in the crime.

Remembrance Day is also about defending freedom and promoting human rights. Canadians should be especially proud of their active role in liberating Europe in the Second World War. Canadian soldiers died on the shores of Dieppe and Normandy in an effort to stop the Nazis. By doing so, they helped bring the Holocaust to an end -- although the effort to stop Hitler's 'Final Solution' should have been done much, much sooner.

A short time ago, a man came into my office carrying a box of photos his uncle, a Canadian soldier, left in the attic. They were horrific pictures of piles of dead bodies splayed in grotesque positions -- photos of Jews slaughtered at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

The soldier's name was Robert Robinson. His family told us he was caring and compassionate and disliked conflict. Thank you Robert -- we remember you and the precious gift you gave all Canadians.

Simon Wiesenthal was right when he said, "Freedom is not a gift from heaven, we must fight for it each and every day of our lives." After all, the concept of freedom and liberal democracy is a social construct that was created by humans as a result of centuries of oppression, slavery, war and conflict. Despite its numerous imperfections, it is still the best social system in history. It is responsible for the advancement of health, science, education and technology, and offers a way of life desired by so many around the world who yearn for, and in many cases are fighting for, the freedom we take for granted.

Let us remember the fallen Canadian soldiers who gave their lives so that we may be free. But freedom is never absolute, nor is it permanent. Let us also remember that we must always "stand on guard for thee."