UNANZ Speech-

William Wood- Runner Up

Each and every one of you here today, whether you know it or not, is a member of the international community. Our countries are members of the UN, our news is global, our knowledge is worldwide. Each and every one of us, as global citizens, have a duty to stand up for our brothers and sisters in this world. So, when the international community claims to be protecting peace, we are duty bound to ask what is it that we are actually protecting? Are we protecting peace between nations? Peace for all people? Or is what we are truly protecting, the fact that we are too afraid to stand up to those who abuse human rights? Are we using peace as an excuse not to intervene for the security of our world's most vulnerable? Thousands are being killed in Syria, Sudan, Venezuela, Myanmar, and more, while we stand by and watch, no one prepared to disturb the diplomatic peace. Well I will no longer accept this status quo. I stand here today for two reasons, firstly, the security of all people. Protecting peace by appeasing dictators and genocidal generals cannot continue. And secondly, to urge the international community to use its immense power and authority to save the lives of thousands, over protecting peace at the cost of security.

What I'm going to talk to you about today may be an unpleasant realisation for many. We like to think that as an international community we have come a long way since the 1930's. We like to think that if we saw the rise of a Hitler today, we would see their atrocities coming and stop them before they could happen. Well, we have seen the rise of many Hitlers, and we have done nothing to stop them. The world has entered a golden age of appeasement where China can imprison millions in "re-education camps", Syria can use chemical weapons against children, and civilians can be murdered in the streets of Sudan, without the international community batting an eye. Too afraid to disturb the diplomatic peace between nations. Who benefits when we take no action? Nations who do no wrong have nothing to fear, and now, by protecting peace at all costs, nations who do wrong also have nothing to fear. When we continuously stand by and watch as thousands of people are slaughtered by oppressive regimes all we do is embolden them. We fan the flames of international instability, as millions of people yearn for freedom. By protecting peace at all costs, we are sending the message that oppression is ok, that tyranny is ok. We claim to stand against evil in this world, yet our fear of confronting it, of fighting it has led to atrocities becoming common place. "Never again" we yelled after the holocaust, "never again" we cried after the Rwandan and Bosnian genocides, "never again" we said after Sudanese forces burnt villages in Darfur to the ground. "Never again" we whispered after reports came out that Bashar Al Assad had bombed hospitals and starved civilians. "Never again" we didn't even bother to say when Myanmar's generals cleansed the Rohingya population. Yet it keeps happening, again, and again, and again. As nations we should be ashamed of ourselves for refusing to take action, refusing to intervene in the genocide and murder of thousands. We may not be diplomatically at war with these nations, but these nations are at war with their people. The peace we are protecting does not serve people. It serves tyrants.

But the notion of taking action is more than just baseless rhetoric. The international community's concern for security is worth compromising peace. We have the responsibility to protect. We made a global commitment in 2005 to "protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity". We pledged to properly use chapter seven of the UN Charter to restore peace and security using air, sea, or land forces if necessary. Yet what have we done? We've continued to support inaction. Our security council values "peace in our time" over "peace for all people", refusing to intervene in Myanmar, in Syria, in Venezuela, vetoing any resolutions which place people's lives over blind peace. Our human rights council as of 2018 condemns Israel for the

78th time while China imprisons millions, North Korea starves its civilians, and Saudi Arabia tortures and murders journalists. To put it bluntly, preserving peace is being used as a way out for the United Nations. This is the true result of the appeasement which our current international system encourages. Yes, we have protected peace, but at what cost? Lives are lost every day while we take no action.

But the UN has the power and duty to change this. To fight for people's fundamental human rights. To protect the security of all people. The international community could abolish the veto, giving every nation a voice. Spurring the Security Council into taking action to protect those who cannot protect themselves. We could shift the UN's focus away from simply peace and security for all nations, to peace and security for all people. We could elect nations with a proven human rights record to the UN human rights council, to restore its credibility. We could even take such a simple step as to speak out as nations against these atrocities. Even our own country didn't stand up to China when it came out that they were unjustly detaining millions. There is still hope that the international community and the UN can build a world where all people are afforded basic dignity and security of person. But we still have a way to go. I will not stand here today and lie to you; we need to value all people's security and freedom. The time for cowardice is over, we must bravely take a stand against the corrupt generals and dictators of this world.

If we can understand, why preserving peace by appeasing human rights abusers can no longer continue, and why action must be taken, then we can build a better world. I'm sure there are those who will disagree with me, who believe that peace should be valued above all else. To them I ask this, what would you say if faced with a Syrian child, deformed from a gas attack? Would you proudly tell them that you preserved diplomatic peace by appeasing Bashar Al Assad? Or would you hang your head in shame, that you valued peace with a dictator over their lives, over their security, over their peace?