

MIDDLESBROUGH REVIEW



by
Andy MacDonald MP

[Andy MacDonald is a Labour politician and solicitor. He has been MP for Middlesbrough since 2012. He served as Shadow Secretary of State for Transport in the Shadow Cabinet since 2016.]

I attended the UN75 event last night in Middlesbrough Town Hall and what an amazing event it was. Celebrating the UN's 75th anniversary, we heard from amazing primary school choirs including Middlesbrough's Sunnyside Academy, the Tees Women Poets and Jess Maddison: a climate activist and student who spoke inspirationally about the climate crisis.

The whole night was filled with music and presentations about the UN and how the spirit of collective, global action the UN embodies has never been more important. The children from schools in every borough of the Tees Valley sang beautifully. This may have been their first experience of activism and that political education is so critical. They are the future leaders of our country and for them to be learning about climate change, human rights, the need for global peace and the battle to end poverty and oppression gave me hope for our future.

In a world where even our greatest democracies are turning inward and caving into populism and nationalism, the UN and what it stands for has never been more important. The UN Declaration on Human Rights agreed in 1948 defined fundamental human rights to be universally protected- no slavery, torture or degrading treatment; guarantee of the rule of law and the right to a fair trial; freedom of movement and the right to residence within the borders of each state; freedom of expression and religion; freedom of association and assembly. These truths live in our own shared humanity but the UN codified them in a document that belongs to all of us.

Who can say that even in the UK these rights are not in jeopardy today? A night like this reaffirms my faith that we will not stand idly by while poverty and climate change ravage our world. I was proud that Middlesbrough hosted this event. Our town hosted a celebration of how we are all citizens of the world and especially in Middlesbrough- a town built on immigration, with a proud history of welcoming new communities, of collective action and support for the most vulnerable- our young people stood up and raised their voices to say they want to be heard and they want to change the world.