

PRESS RELEASE

February 20, 2017

Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan,
Bishop of The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land
President of The Lutheran World Federation
to receive the Niwano Peace Prize

The 34th Niwano Peace Prize will be awarded to Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan of Palestine who has shown perseverance and compassion in his work to encourage dialogue between interreligious groups in the Holy Land. In a world characterized by leaders who seek to emphasise difference and hatred, Bishop Younan has consistently strived for the opposite. His work emphasises peace over power and unity over domination. Bishop Younan embodies the qualities that the Niwano Peace Foundation value in religious leaders, and through this award, the Niwano Peace Prize Committee wholeheartedly pay homage to his work.

The presentation ceremony will take place in Tokyo, Japan, on Thursday, July 27th, at 10:30 a.m. In addition to an award certificate, Bishop Younan will receive a medal and prize money.

To avoid undue emphasis on any particular religion or region, every year the Peace Foundation solicits nominations from people of recognized intellectual and religious stature around the world. In the nomination process, some 600 people and organizations, representing 125 countries and many religions, are asked to propose candidates. Nominations are rigorously screened by the Niwano Peace Prize International Selection Committee, which was set up in May of 2003 on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Niwano Peace Prize. The Committee presently consists of ten religious leaders from various parts of the world, all of whom are involved in movements for peace and inter-religious cooperation.

Here are some comments by members of the Committee on the selection of Bishop Younan for this year's award:

- Bishop Munib Younan has devoted his life to building peace with justice in the Middle East and globally. He continues tirelessly in a self-sacrificing manner promoting dialogue and joint action between religions and over ethnic and national divisions. He condemns strongly all kind of religious extremism and terrorism. He is an internationally respected leader, an eloquent speaker and inspiring writer. (by B. Rantakari)

- Bishop's long standing commitment for peace and reconciliation in war-tore Middle East is a huge achievement to follow by other faith-based peace practitioners. He has proven that with sheer commitment to his work, others will support and join in promoting inter-religious work.(by H. Navaratne)
- The value of Bishop Younan's longstanding efforts for peace in the troubled Middle East, his passionate and persistent work in promoting non-violent solutions and reconciliation, make him a candidate of my choice. He is also particularly sensitive to the current refugee crisis and has called on political leaders of the world to assume responsibility. (by J. Povilus)
- Leading ecumenical leader in the trouble areas of Middle East for promoting peace and justice is remarkable one. Bishop Younan has been closely working together with Jewish, Muslim and Christian clerics to establish a council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land in 2005. (by J. Ahn)
- For his dedication and prophetic voice. A critical voice but one that remains hopeful, despite the challenges the Palestinian people face.(by S. Hayward)

The Niwano Peace Prize

The Niwano Peace Foundation established the Niwano Peace Prize to honor and encourage individuals and organizations that have contributed significantly to inter-religious cooperation, thereby furthering the cause of world peace, and to make their achievements known as widely as possible. The Foundation hopes in this way both to enhance inter-religious understanding and cooperation and to encourage the emergence of still more persons devoted to working for world peace.

The Prize is named in honor of the founder and first president of the lay Buddhist organization Rissho Kosei-kai, Nikkyo Niwano. For Niwano, peace was not merely an absence of conflict among nations, but a dynamic harmony in the inner lives of people as well as in our communities, nations and the world. Seeing peace as the goal of Buddhism, Niwano devoted much of the latter half of his life to promoting world peace, especially through inter-religious discussion and cooperation.

Past Niwano Peace Prize recipients are:

1. Archbishop Helder P. Camara (1983)
2. Dr. Homer A. Jack (1984)
3. Mr. Zhao Puchu (1985)
4. Dr. Philip A. Potter (1986)
5. The World Muslim Congress (1987)

6. Rev. Etai Yamada (1989)
7. Mr. Norman Cousins (1990)
8. Dr. Hildegard Goss-Mayr (1991)
9. Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne (1992)
10. Neve Shalom/ Wahat al-Salam (1993)
11. Paulo Evaristo Cardinal Arns (1994)
12. Dr. M. Aram (1995)
13. Ms. Marii K. Hasegawa (1996)
14. The Corrymeela Community (1997)
15. Ven. Maha Ghosananda (1998)
16. The Community of Sant'Egidio (1999)
17. Dr. Kang Won Yong (2000)
18. Rev. Abuna Elias Chacour (2001)
19. Rev. Samuel Ruiz Garcia (2002)
20. Dr. Priscilla Elworthy (2003)
21. The Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative (2004)
22. Dr. Hans Küng (2005)
23. Rabbis for Human Rights (2006)
24. Dharma Master Cheng Yen (2007)
25. His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal (2008)
26. Rev. Canon Gideon Baguma Byamugisha (2009)
27. Ms. Ela Ramesh Bhatt (2010)
28. Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa (2011)
29. Ms. Rosalina Tuyuc Velásquez (2012)
30. The Rt. Rev. Dr. Gunnar Stålsett (2013)
31. Ms. Dena Merriam (2014)
32. Pastor Esther Abimiku Ibanga (2015)
33. Centre for Peace Building and Reconciliation (2016)

The Niwano Peace Foundation

The Niwano Peace Foundation was chartered in 1978 to contribute to the realization of world peace and the enhancement of a culture of peace. The Foundation promotes research and other activities based on a religious spirit and serves the cause of peace in such fields as education, science, religion and philosophy. The Foundation's endowment of about 4.0 billion yen makes possible the Niwano Peace Prize and other activities such as grants, research projects, lectures, symposia, and international exchanges. The Niwano Peace Foundation is a government-recognized charitable organization.

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