



## PRESS RELEASE

February 17, 2020

### Venerable Pomnyun to receive the Niwano Peace Prize

The 37<sup>th</sup> Niwano Peace Prize shall be given to Zen Master, the Venerable Pomnyun of a South Korean Buddhist organization, Jungto Society in recognition of his extraordinary humanitarian work, environmental and social activism, and his inspiring effort to build relationships of trust and good will between those of different faiths and cultures as a central component of his work for peace. Venerable Pomnyun's work serves as a poignant illustration of the Buddhist ideals that inspire it.

The presentation ceremony will take place in Tokyo, Japan, on Wednesday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, at 10:30 a.m. In addition to an award certificate, Venerable Pomnyun will receive a medal and twenty million yen.

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 Committee, which was set up in May of 2003 on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Niwano Peace Prize. The Committee presently consists of seven 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 Venerable Pomnyun for this year's award:

- During the last 30 years Venerable Pomnyun has dedicated to bringing peace to Korea, the region and to the entire world. He is committed to transforming the society into a peaceful place through his Peace Foundation and actively promoting North and South Unification through peaceful means. (H. Navaratne)
- He has demonstrated a long and broad commitment to advancing peace within a Buddhist framework, in partnership with those of other faiths (particularly Christianity). I'm also impressed with his focus on work outside Korea, on behalf of those of other faiths (e.g. Muslims in Mindanao, Hindus and others in India, Rohingya in Myanmar/Bangladesh) (S. Hayward)

- I watched many of his videos online and was struck with how he drew on his traditional Buddhist teachings to provide spiritual teaching to individuals, whilst at the same time organizing for peace at a much larger scale. His work is not confined to his own people and his own tradition– on the contrary he (and his founding organizations) have provided aid and support to a broad range of peoples, most notably for me given the current situation– providing aid to Rohingya Muslims fleeing Myanmar persecution in Myanmar. (S. Joseph)
- Ven. Pomnyun is a very charismatic person. I admire his capacity to combine his deep religious and spiritual teachings, expressed in a clear manner, with peace building concrete initiatives through defending fundamental human rights: right to food, to health, to religious liberty. I also admire his capacity to act in favor of people in need of other faiths collaborating with people of other faiths. Another reason that lead me to choose Ven. Pomnyun as a candidate for the prize is the fact that in creating Junto Society, with such a big number of Dharma Centers and so many members and making use of technological tools, he looks to the future. (F. Giovanelli)

### **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.

#### **Niwano Peace Prize recipients are:**

1. Archbishop Hélder P. Câmara (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 García (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)
34. Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan (2017)
35. Adyan Foundation (2018)
36. Dr. John Paul Lederach (2019)

### **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 the spirit of religious principles and serves the cause of peace in such fields as education, science, religion and philosophy. The Foundation's assets of about 4.4 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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