



NIWANO
PEACE FOUNDATION

Shamvilla Catherina 5F, 1-16-9 Shinjuku,
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160-0022, Japan
Phone: 81-3-3226-4371 Fax: 81-3-3226-1835
URL: <http://www.npf.or.jp/> E-mail: info@npf.or.jp

PRESS RELEASE

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Mr. Rajagopal P. V.
to receive the Niwano Peace Prize

The 40th Niwano Peace Prize will be awarded to Mr. Rajagopal P. V. of India in recognition of his extraordinary work in the service of Justice and Peace. Mr. Rajagopal's actions in favor of the poorest and most marginalized of his country, carried out through peaceful and nonviolent methods, and his struggle for the recognition of the equal human dignity and equal rights of every man and woman, irrespective of cast or gender, inspires great admiration. His particular accomplishments that garner the highest esteem include negotiating the surrender and facilitating the rehabilitation of gangs, the education of young people in the service of the poor, and, well aware that the primary needs of the poor are water, land, and forests, his commitment to care for the environment.

The presentation ceremony will take place in Tokyo, Japan, on Thursday, May 11, 2023. In addition to an award certificate, Mr. Rajagopal P. V. 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 20th Anniversary of the Niwano Peace Prize. The Committee presently consists of nine 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 Mr. Rajagopal P. V. for this year's award:

- Rajagopal uses the Gandhian technique of foot-marches for promoting world peace... He has trained many young men and women in nonviolent social practices. His organization is also dedicated to improving the livelihoods of poor people and farmers in India. He is also addressing the problems of climate change and its impact on the lives of the people, especially the marginalized people. A Gandhian like Rajagopal is deserving of the Niwano Peace Prize. (Dr. Ranjana Mukhopadhyaya)
- [His] lifelong commitment and work based on Gandhian principles of 'satyagraha' and nonviolent activism. [He] addresses structural violence through multiple types of people's movements which find unique ways to address their most pressing needs and capacities. His approach has global vision, yet began in local Indian communities that spread throughout the country. [He] catalyzed and led many foot marches for land and livelihood rights, tribal rights, some of which have led to land being returned and responsive substantial changes in public policy. (Mr. Somboon Chungprampree)

- With this world characterized by different forms of violence, new approaches are needed to deal with teaching people about non-violence. Also, as the future lies with young people, it is important to actively involve them into promoting world peace and discourage all the wars that are destroying life and the environment. The ideologies such as those based on Gandhi on peace and non-violence could be the pillar or resuscitation of humanity and living together in harmony. People like Mr. Rajagopal, who is the Founder of Ekta Parishad organisation dedicated to Gandhian ideologies of promoting peace and non-violence are key figures that are needed in this world. He believes that peace and non-violence can be addressed successfully through dialogue. His dedication for world peace made him to organize a year - long nonviolent march covering 12,000 kilometres across ten countries. His activism for peace and justice based on spiritual practice and his focus on young people who are the leaders of the future, can change the present violent nature of this world. His extra strength of not only concentration on his country but spreading his teachings to others globally in the promotion of justice and nonviolence can heal the world. His recognition of the problem of climate change which also affects the lives of people, is also very important as people live in this earth but destroying the environment which results in violent climate changes that kill lots of people, something that could be prevented. He believes that through dialogue the world could work towards the eradication of poverty, encourage social inclusion, act on different ways to deal with climate crisis and halt conflict and violence. (Dr. Nokuzola Mndende)

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)
37. Venerable Pomnyun (2020)
38. Venerable Shih Chao-hwei (2021)
39. Father Michael Lapsley, SSM (2022)

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.

For further information please contact Mr. Seiji Hironaka / Ms. Natsuki Kudo / Ms. Aina Hirano at the Niwano Peace Foundation.

Tel: +81-3-3226-4371 Fax: +81-3-3226-1835

E-mail: info@npf.or.jp URL: www.npf.or.jp/english/