



NIWANO
PEACE FOUNDATION

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PRESS RELEASE

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Prof. Mohammed Abu-Nimer to receive the Niwano Peace Prize

The 41st Niwano Peace Prize will be awarded to Palestinian-American Prof. Mohammed Abu-Nimer, in recognition of his lifelong dedication to peace and interfaith dialogue. As both a scholar and practitioner, he has demonstrated this commitment from his youth to the present day. What is most impressive about his work is his holistic contribution to the cause of peace. This contribution integrates education with conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities, particularly through his profound understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation in Islam and applying it effectively in practice. In light of the ongoing conflict in his homeland, Israel/Palestine, which has escalated into one of the region's most devastating wars, we believe that there could not be more fitting and timely recipient for this year's Niwano Peace Prize.

The presentation ceremony will take place in Tokyo, Japan, on Tuesday, May 14 2024. In addition to an award certificate, Dr. Abu-Nimer 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 hundreds of designated nominators and organizations throughout the world from many religions and academics across the globe are asked to propose candidates. Nominees 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 diverse geographical areas, all of whom are involved in movements for peace and inter-religious cooperation.

Here are some impressions of Dr. Abu-Nimer from members of the committee responsible for selecting this year's recipient:

- Dr. Abu-Nimer is a professor of Peace and conflict resolution at American University and the founder of the Salam Institute in Washington D.C. The institute is a non-profit organization for research, education, and practice on issues related to conflict resolution, nonviolence, human rights, and development with a focus on bridging differences between Muslims and non-Muslim communities. It has extensive experience directing projects focused on interfaith and intercultural dialogue, peacebuilding, conflict resolution, sustainable development, and community development in Muslim countries.
- I was very impressed by his holistic contribution to interreligious dialogue for peace because it combines a great deal of research and teaching at one of the most prestigious American universities in the area of international relations with the practice of peacemaking in the field. ... His thoughts on reconciliation, forgiveness, and justice demonstrate the

depth of his spirituality and his great experience in peacebuilding practice.

- He has worked with [many] representatives of [many] religions to implement the common values that all religions share for peace and mutual understanding in our world. He believes that peace among religions will bring peace [to] the world. His pedagogical methods are outstanding. He is building peace through educating the grassroots to see God in the other.
- Mohammed Abu-Nimer, a Sufi Muslim, witnessed how identity often sparked religious conflict as a Palestinian youth. At age 20 he participated in training on dialogue which has informed his life journey that led to initiating Muslim – Jewish and Israeli-Muslim dialogue. He has been and continues to be a pioneer in the field of interreligious dialogue (IRD) as a practitioner and scholar who is directly grounded in field experience, especially in conflict zones. Since the early 1990s, he worked on Catholic-Protestant relations in [Northern] Ireland, Buddhist-Hindu relations in Sri Lanka, Muslim-Christian relations in Mindanao, Philippines, the Balkans, and in many parts of Africa (Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Sudan, Cameroon, Burkina Faso among others). He worked extensively in the Arab region: Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, as well as Palestine. He was among the first to ever deliver IRD trainings and projects in Saudi Arabia. Among his many books and publications, he authored the first book on nonviolence in Islam (the book was translated into at least five languages).
- Professor Mohammed Abu-Nimer's dedication and commitment to interreligious dialogue, contributing to peacebuilding and dialogue across many countries during difficult crises is worthy of recognition. His peacebuilding, conflict resolution and negotiation efforts have taken him to Sri Lanka during the civil war, to the Gaza Strip where he established a conflict resolution mediation center, to Erbil in Iraq training religious leaders when ISIS was in Northern Iraq, as well as the Central African Republic, Nigeria, Darfur to promote peaceful approaches during conflict.
As a practitioner-scholar, Professor Abu-Nimer has invested in training generations of peace advocates by establishing the Peacebuilding and Development Institute, and he has also co-founded the academic Journal of Peacebuilding and Development which he co-edits to provide a space to support intellectual advancements in peacebuilding and development. His efforts have impacted multiple spaces and fields, and he has an incredibly impressive record of leading, training, facilitating, and building, all deeply rooted in and inspired by the Islamic tradition.

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 of this foundation, Nikkyo Niwano, also the first president of the lay Buddhist organization Risho Kosei-kai. 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)
40. Mr. Rajagopal P. V. (2023)

The Niwano Peace Foundation

The Niwano Peace Foundation was chartered in 1978 with the aim of contributing to the realization of world peace and enhancing 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, totaling approximately 4.6 billion yen, enable the Niwano Peace Prize as well as 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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