

Why HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal was selected for the 25th Niwano Peace Prize

His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan Bin Talal has devoted his life to building peace with justice in the Middle East, especially with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. His view is that peace requires more than the absence of conflict, and that without reconciliation there can be no peace. He has played a significant role in combating prejudice and hatred worldwide. His understanding of human dignity is informed and inspired by his faith. His devotion to peace has made his life a spiritual journey, and he has inspired others to follow in his footsteps. His voice has been one of faith and reason, deeply formed by Islam and his own intellectual gifts. His spiritual and theological world view has been enriched by other faiths. He has been a bridge builder across existing political and religious divides, and he has been fighting all forms of religious extremism and terrorism. He promotes the elevation of the moral authority of Judaism, Christianity and Islam above politics.

The Committee members appreciate his tireless and passionate interfaith advocacy and his readiness to tell the truth and pose difficult questions. The Committee recognizes the Laureate as a world figure who epitomizes the peace-loving voice of Islam. He has worked tirelessly to promote better relations among religions and is a passionate and eloquent advocate for peace and harmony. All his statements and actions reflect his devotion to the sanctity of life, which is informed by his faith and his creative openness to the wisdom of the world's religions and humanist traditions.

HRH Prince Hassan has the gift of leadership, which he has generously applied to a broad spectrum of urgent human challenges. He has provided leadership to a number of institutions and organizations devoted to multi-religious efforts for peace. He served as Moderator of the World Conference of Religions for Peace from 1999 to 2006 and continues, as its President Emeritus, to provide inspiration and leadership.

HRH Prince Hassan was born in Amman, Jordan, on 20 March 1947 to a branch of the Hashemite family directly descended from the Prophet Muhammad. He studied at Christ Church College, Oxford, and graduated with a degree in Oriental studies.

HRH Prince Hassan has founded and is actively involved in a number of Jordanian organizations, which demonstrate his wide-ranging interests. Each is committed to advancing human development and dignity: The Royal Scientific Society (1970), The Arab Thought Forum (1981), the Higher Council for Science and Technology (1987) and the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies, the Islamic Scientific Academy, the Hashemite Aid and Relief Agency, the Institute for Diplomacy, and the Arab Youth Forum.

HRH Prince Hassan is a well known and respected internationally as a man who translates visions into actions. He proposed the establishment of the United Nations New International Humanitarian Order, which led to the creation of the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues; its report was adopted at the 42nd General Assembly of the United Nations. He also founded the International Cultures Foundation and the Parliament of Cultures and Partners in Humanity.

HRH Prince Hassan is a leading member of several international committees and organizations, including: President of the Club of Rome, Commissioner of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, and member of the Board of Directors of the Nuclear Threat Initiative. He was one of five regional experts appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance

Among the many prizes and honors bestowed upon him is his designation as a Champion of the Earth 2007, by the UN Environment Programme, for his belief in transboundary collaboration to protect the environment and for addressing environmental issues in a holistic manner.

Among recent engagements is his chairmanship of a panel of eminent persons to form a Global Democratic Referendum uniting the peace efforts of experts and activists around the world. He has launched an initiative, "Voices from West Asia," which promotes cooperation and security in the West Asia-North Africa region. He is leading the work for a Social Charter that should embody a code of ethics for the region and has stated: "In order to tackle the human dignity deficit and the democracy deficit, we must ensure that pushing political and civil frontiers becomes a key dynamic. Crucially, a social Charter will have very little meaning unless it grants rights on the basis of citizenship rather than ethnicity, nationality or faith."

Recently HRH Prince Hassan has accepted the Presidency of the Foundation for Interreligious and Intercultural Research and Dialogue. The aim for this organization is to convey the most substantial and authentic messages of three Abrahamic monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. One of the projects is the publication of an analytical concordance of the shared values of these religions, thereby working to enhance what is shared among them while respecting their differences.

The Laureate for the Niwano Peace Prize in 2008 is a prolific writer of books and articles and a treasured speaker on major issues, often appearing in the media. His books include: *A Study on Jerusalem* (1979), *Palestine Self-Determination* (1981), *Search for Peace* (1984), *Christianity in the Arab World* (1994), *To be a Muslim* (2001), *Continuity, Innovation and Change* (2001), and *In Memory of Faisal I: The Arabic Question* (2003).

Regarding the Middle East, he is a powerful advocate for the development of civil society and government structures through which the ardent hopes and aspirations of its peoples may be effectively mediated. He speaks of his hopes for an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through bilateral peacemaking and regional cooperation, and argues for a Middle East Marshall Plan to address the poverty issue of the masses as one of the root causes of endemic conflict in the region.

HRH Prince Hassan's voice of reason, informed by faith, is a challenge to those secularists who view religion as an intrinsically regressive or threatening force. Religious fundamentalists, on the other hand, can be deeply challenged by his openness to modernity and advocacy for democracy and human rights for all.

In awarding the 25th Niwano Peace Prize to His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal, the Committee wishes, in the words of the mandate of the Prize, "to make the achievements of such an individual known as widely as possible the world over and to stimulate the emergence of still more people devoting themselves to world peace."

The bestowing of the Niwano Peace Prize to His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan Bin Talal commemorates a rare and genuinely religiously spirited leader engaged in the global struggle for peace with justice.