



The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL)

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Media Kit

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Bishop Younan Niwano Peace Prize Recipient Younan's Interreligious Bridging Applauded



The Niwano Peace Prize Certificate and Medal/NPF

Jerusalem, 20 February 2017 – The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land is pleased to announce that on Monday, 20 February The Right Rev. Dr. Bishop Munib Younan was named the 34th recipient of the distinguished Niwano Peace Award for his work toward interreligious dialogue among Christians, Muslims, and Jews in Jerusalem and worldwide.

Each year [The Niwano Peace Foundation](#) (NPF) of Japan recognizes an individual or organization that has dedicated their service and scholarship to promoting peaceful cooperation among religions particularly in places of difficulty. NPF focuses on peace within the fields of culture, science and education.

“In a world characterized by leaders who seek to emphasize difference and hatred, Bishop Younan has consistently strived for the opposite. His work emphasizes peace over power and unity over monotheistic domination,” the NPF International Committee wrote.

“The aspiration of the Niwano Peace prize is that it be a spiritual equivalent to the Nobel Peace Prize,” wrote Niwano International Committee member Katherine Marshall in a 2011 Berkley Center for Religion blog about the prize.

The International Center for Data on Awards (ICDA) ranks the Niwano Award in category three out of five as one of the world’s most prestigious awards. The ranking is based on factors such the award’s international influence as practitioners of award giving, the recognition of award recipients, and as models for other awards.

The NPF International Committee is honoring Bishop Younan for his cultural work in the Middle East and globally of fostering and participating in interfaith dialogue with Jerusalem’s three Abrahamic faith leaders and their communities despite historic tensions between the groups. He was instrumental in leading the Evangelical Lutheran Church in support of ELCJHL women in establishing and adopting gender justice policy in 2015.

Last year, as part of The Marrekesh Declaration, Bishop Younan was strongly promoting equal citizenship that embraces diversity in the Arab and Muslim world.

Bishop Younan is a founding member of several Middle East interfaith groups, *Council for Religious Institutions in the Holy Land (CRIHL)*, *The Jonah Group*, *Al-Liqa’ Center for Religious Studies*, and is currently serving two other interfaith groups, *The Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Research Center*, and *The Prize Giving Committee of the Jordanian World Interfaith Harmony Week*.

In 2014 Bishop Younan, who is also the President of the Lutheran World Federation was awarded an honorary doctorate of theology from the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster. In a statement about Bishop Younan’s contributions to peace, the university’s Protestant Theological Faculty said, “Munib Younan acts as an Evangelical theologian and as a reconciling, bridge-builder between both religions and ethnic groups in a very conflict-laden area.”

“He lives and practices his Evangelical perspectives in a very meaningful way, through forgiveness and reconciliation. Though Bishop of a small church, he has high theological power to make his Evangelical voice active in the Middle East, in active reconciliation work, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, and through the educational ministries of his church.”

Bishop Younan’s strong witness for interfaith harmony, for the equal dignity and respect for all people, for non-violence, and for a just peace between Israel and Palestine are qualities that are being recognized.

A ceremony for Bishop Younan will take place in Tokyo, Japan on Thursday, July 27th.

“I come to the table of dialogue with different religious leaders from the three faiths. I come with the suffering of my people under my skin. I come to speak on the future of the people who are living in this land. Religious leaders have a responsibility. Peace and dignity will come with how we educate and how we dialogue and we can reflect this to the politicians,” Bishop Younan said.

Former Niwano Recipients: Center for Peace Building and Reconciliation (CPBR) 2016 Sri Lanka, Ms. Rosalina Tuyuc Velásquez 2012 Guatemala, Bishop Gunnar Stalsett 2013 Norway, Dharma Master Cheng Yen 2007 Republic of China, His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal 2008 Jordan.

INCLUDED IN THIS MEDIA KIT:

1. Background of the Niwano Peace Foundation
2. Statement from Niwano Peace Foundation
3. Bishop Younan CV (link)
4. High-Resolution Photos and Video (links)

#1

BACKGROUND OF THE NIWANO PEACE FOUNDATION

The Niwano Peace Foundation was chartered in 1978 to contribute to the realization of world peace and the enhancement of culture by promoting research and other activities, based on religious spirit and serving the cause of peace, in such fields as thought, culture, science, and education.

Nikkyo Niwano, founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, during his many years of guiding the organization and disseminating its teachings has consistently urged the necessity of peace activities based on a religious spirit but transcending denominational bounds.

The world today is threatened by many difficult problems-nuclear war, hunger, environmental pollution. At such a time the mission of people of religion is more important than ever. It is vital that they cooperate on the basis of mutual understanding in working for the common goals of human happiness and the realization of world peace. On the basis of these principles, Founder Niwano has promoted interreligious cooperation both on the international level, as one of the leaders of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) and the International Association For Religious Freedom (IARF), and on the domestic level, as the force behind the Movement for a Brighter World Community.

It is his firm belief that people of religion the world over, as well as others whose activities are rooted in the spirit of religion, should cooperate in a way transcending sectarian differences to promote such activities from the broad-based viewpoint of social and public well-being. It was with these goals in mind that Rissho Kosei-kai established the Niwano Peace Foundation.

The Foundation established the Niwano Peace Prize to honor and encourage those who are devoting themselves to interreligious cooperation in the cause of peace, and to make their achievements known as it is Foundation's hope that this prize will further promote interreligious cooperation for peace and lead to the emergence of ever more people devoting themselves to this cause.

The prize is awarded annually to a living individual or an organization that is making a significant contribution to world peace through promoting, interreligious cooperation.

Originally published: (<http://www.npf.or.jp/english/about/>)

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STATEMENT FROM NIWANO PEACE FOUNDATION

The 34th Niwano Peace Prize will be awarded to Bishop Munib 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 monotheistic 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.

Bishop Munib Younan was born to Palestinian refugees into a world where nation, religion, and place are intimately connected with identity. The ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has been a prime example of the break down in communication between people whose differences appear to outweigh their similarities. The conflict between people of the three dominant religious identities has consistently been forcing Muslims, Jews, and Christians further apart, to a point where violence appears to be the only mode of retaliation. Despite these complex challenges, Bishop Younan has worked with dedication to foster conversation between Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Jerusalem and beyond.

Bishop Younan is currently President of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and former chairperson of the Lutheran Council in Asia. Over his long career he has held numerous positions in Lutheran and interfaith organizations, and has used his position to establish a wide-ranging network between religious leaders of different faiths in the Middle East. Bishop Younan was one of the fourteen religious leaders who signed the Alexandria Declaration in 2002, a document in which Rabbis, Sheiks, and Bishops pledged their commitment to establishing peace in the Holy Land, which is holy to all three faiths. His ecumenical work emphasizes commonality between religions and religious denominations, which is integral in the struggle towards peace.

Bishop Younan is a renowned public speaker and has travelled both locally and abroad to share lectures and speeches on what makes for a just peace from a Palestinian Christian perspective based on Christian teachings and doctrine. He also has a rich list of publications that have featured his writings on peace, including his own books, *Witnessing for Peace: In Jerusalem and the World*, and *Our Shared Witness: A Voice for Justice and Reconciliation*.

His own gift for sharing valuable lessons has spread into his work towards reconciling Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Israelis and Palestinians through dialogue. Bishop Younan is a strong believer in the healing power of dialogue and has worked since 1991 to create spaces where people of different faiths can meet in peace. In these important spaces, people who have been taught to hate one another are able to come together through joint reflection and dialogue with the aim to reconcile their differences. The Niwano Peace Foundation commends Bishop's Younan's tireless work to foster dialogue and interfaith healing.

Bishop Younan has been an exemplary faith leader for decades and continues to spread his light with kindness and compassion. He has shown that through the work of dialogue, which requires an opening of the self towards another, it is possible to bridge rifts of difference and slowly make the spaces between Muslims, Jews, and Christians smaller. The Niwano Peace Foundation commends his tireless contribution and achievements, and it is with great pride that the 34th Peace Prize is awarded to him as the worthy and deserving recipient.

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[CV OF BISHOP YOUNAN](#)

#4

HIGH RESOLUTION PHOTOS & VIDEO

<https://elcjhl.smugmug.com/Other/Bishop-Munib-Younan/n-ph4Jqz/i-tJnRKnq>

<https://youtu.be/D1uor1s3lbU> Christian-Jewish dialogue

About the ELCJHL

Though Palestinian Christians have been in Jerusalem since the first Pentecost, the roots of the ELCJHL are in the mid-19th century when German and English missionaries came to teach and minister to the local people. Today, we have six congregations in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Amman, Jordan, and Beyond Bethany, Jordan. The churches in Amman and Ramallah are comprised largely of families of refugees who fled their homes at the time of the tragic wars that followed the formation of Israel. We also operate four schools and four education programs.

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