

Announcement: Gino Strada and Sakena Yacoobi awarded Sunhak Peace Prize

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Distinguished leaders from America and throughout the world. Good afternoon.

It is my great pleasure to be here today for this historic International Leadership Conference in Washington, DC.

As Chairman of the Sunhak Peace Prize Committee, allow me to begin by thanking the Universal Peace Federation and the Sunhak Peace Prize Foundation for preparing such a wonderful banquet program in honor of the announcement of the 2017 Sunhak Peace Prize laureates. I am most honored that you have gathered for this most important occasion.

The Sunhak Peace Prize was established by Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, based on their vision for peace, "One Family under God," to help prepare for a peaceful future for all humankind. Indeed, at this time in history, we are crossing a bridge into a momentous new era, and we are being tested on the very essence of our humanity. As we face the largest number of displaced persons on the global level since World War II, we must make a transnational effort for the common benefit of humankind.



It is with this critical situation in mind that the Sunhak Committee has focused on the global refugee crisis. The Committee has selected, as the 2017 Sunhak Peace Prize laureates, Dr. Gino Strada, who provides medical emergency aid to refugees in Africa and the Middle East, and Dr. Sakena Yacoobi, who has presented an innovative solution for the problem of refugee resettlement, through education.

Dr. Gino Strada is an outstanding humanitarian who has provided emergency medical assistance for 25 years to refugees in life-threatening circumstances in the Middle East and in African conflict areas. In 1994, he established an emergency medical organization called "Emergency." Operating more than 60

emergency medical facilities in 16 nations, he has contributed to saving an amazing 7 million lives, many rescued from situations of dire vulnerability.

Dr. Gino Strada sees “the right to be cured” as a basic and inalienable human right, and is raising the bar, striving to provide high-quality medical treatment free-of-charge to the world’s poorest. He received agreements from the governments of at least 12 nations in Africa, who committed themselves to providing free healthcare for all, and took a leadership role in raising awareness of human rights. In addition, he built a world class center for cardiac surgery in the middle of the African desert. With steadfast resolve, he is building a movement to oppose conflict and violence, based on the moral and political point of view that war cannot be justified for any reason.

Meanwhile, Dr. Sakena Yacoobi is an educator known as the “Mother of Afghan Education” and the “innovator of Afghan reconstruction.” She proposed a supplementary solution to the issue of settlement, through providing education for those living in Afghan refugee camps. Convinced that education is the only sustainable solution for the future of refugees, she established the Afghan Institute of Learning (AIL) in 1995, and over 21 years has provided education and vocational training to more than 13 million refugees.

Above all, Dr. Sakena Yacoobi is committed to women’s education, with an innovative conviction that educating girls is educating future generations. In the process she has greatly improved the rights and social status of women in Islamic society. Even under the Taliban regime that strictly prohibited women from receiving education, she operated underground schools at the risk of her own life, making possible the education of more than 3,000 girls.



Due to her pioneering efforts, unlike the first generation of Afghan refugees suffering from despair and poverty, those comprising the second and third generations of refugees are currently able to play an active role as community leaders in the process of rebuilding society. Due to success stories such as these, presently Dr. Yacoobi is actively assisting the international community, including advising the UN as an expert in refugee crisis resolution.

The Sunhak Committee annually presents a “future-peace agenda” that will guide our shared human destiny toward peace. For the 2017 awards, the Sunhak Committee has made the refugee crisis its core theme. While diaspora has been one of the oldest recurring adaptive measures to crises in the history of human civilization, now more than ever, this problem should be addressed as one of the most crucial issues of our time.

Observing the refugee and diaspora crises occurring the world over, I am reminded once again of our Founders’ love for humanity, which has transcended national borders. The great love for humankind with which the 2017 Sunhak Peace Prize laureates have sought to solve these problems has historical significance in our struggle for a sustainable peace. All those living at this time must remember the value of our common humanity, recognizing that we are all interconnected. With international solidarity and cooperation, we must hastily seek the wisdom that will permit refugees to recover and re-establish stable and fruitful lives.

In these troubled times, nations’ willingness to cooperate with each other is being tested. Therefore, for the sake of lasting peace, we are addressing such an issue as the refugee crisis.

Searching for the heroes of today is like searching for a steady ray of light in pitch-darkness. The broad vision and change in our behavior advocated by the Sunhak Peace Prize will serve as a beacon of hope revealing the path to the 21st century civilization of peace.

Thank you.