

Ugandan faith leaders win Niwano prize: Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative

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The Japan-based Niwano Peace Foundation says it will for the first time award its annual prize to an African group—the Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative, which seeks social justice and the end to a bloody conflict in Uganda.

The peace prize is awarded annually to an individual or organization contributing significantly to world peace by promoting interreligious cooperation. The prize, which brings with it \$185,000, will be presented in Tokyo on May 11.

“The Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative is an organization in northern Uganda in which the members of different religions, including Islam and Christianity (Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican), work together,” said the Niwano Peace Foundation. “Since its establishment in 1998, it has acted nonviolently to end armed conflict, to nurture human resources for the task of creating peace and to provide assistance to war victims through the work of over 400 volunteers, including its core membership of religious leaders, as well as individual staff members, peace committees in various districts and peace supporters.”

The Acholi people in Uganda made headlines in February when soldiers of the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) massacred some 200 civilians, including women and children in the north of the country. Government forces said they would retaliate.

Previous winners of the Niwano prize include ecumenist Philip Potter, former general secretary of the World Council of Churches; the Community of Sant'Egidio, a Catholic lay association based in Rome; the World Muslim Congress; and the Corrymeela Community in Northern Ireland. *-Ecumenical News International*