

Dear Nobel Peace Committee,

17 January 2024

In his Will, Dr Alfred Nobel spelled out his wish for the annual prize for peace to go to “the worthiest person” who advances fellowship among nations, ... and the establishment and promotion of peace congresses.”

In today’s world, we witness governments of the nations are so divided, pursuing their conflicting and opposing economic, geopolitical, and military interests – at the very real risk of destabilizing societies, damaging our fragile Environment, fuelling the post-Cold War arms race and actually waging wars, proxy and otherwise.

Against this backdrop, I would like to nominate Dr Maung Zarni, a Burmese scholar and grassroots organizer exiled in UK for his impactful and tireless activism for peace and harmony among human communities over three-decades.

I met him in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA almost a decade ago – in 2015 – when I presented him with the Cultivation of Harmony Award on behalf of the Parliament of the World’s Religions, the world’s oldest organization with a focus on peace and faith, amongst whose members include iconic champions of global peace such as Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Martin Luther King Jr.

As a student and later grassroots organizer, Zarni has effectively combined his scholarship, writing and organizing skills to spread concrete and non-violence ideas as a way of advancing peace, harmony and a deeply shared sense of fellowship among humans, irrespective of racial, ethnic, religious or national identities and geographic boundaries.

Against the backdrop of rising state- and mass media-peddled toxic nationalisms, religious bigotry, racial hatred and militarism, Zarni walks his talk of fellowship of humans.

While the 1991 Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and the overwhelming majority of Myanmar public joined the country’s notorious armed forces in the latter’s violent campaign of mass deportation against a small vulnerable indigenous people called Rohingya, Zarni stood alone, and spoke out against what he rightly called genocide. He risked his own society’s ostracism, resigned from his professorship from Brunei University and lives with death threats, all in order to live and spread his deeply held sense of peace among fellow human communities.

While peace and freedom of Burmese people have naturally been a main and lifelong concern of his, Zarni has volunteered his scholarly and activist skills, labour and energy to other national and religious communities, that are striving for inter-communal peace, harmony and freedom. During the last 30-odd years, with little resources, but boundless energy and determination, Zarni has organized numerous grassroots conferences, bringing people from around the world together. Beyond his native Burma, he has advised, worked in solidarity with and otherwise assisted non-violence campaigners for peace and freedom from Tibet, East Timor (now Timor Leste), Nigeria, India, Thailand, Palestine and the Jewish diaspora.

For him, activism for peace is his vocation and the core of who he is. As a natural educator, he has inspired countless other activists and young people around the world with his principled activism which embodies the universal fellowship of all humans uniting in peace.

I nominate Dr Maung Zarni for this year’s Nobel Prize for Peace.

(signed) Mairead Corrigan Maguire (1976 Nobel Peace Laureate)