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Palestinian nonviolence activist Ali Abu Awwad awarded Gandhi Peace Prize

NEW YORK—[Ali Abu Awwad](#)—a 20-year campaigner for nonviolent action to secure freedom for Palestinians and Israelis alike—will receive the 2023 Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development, the international prize jury announced.

Abu Awwad “is an eminent Palestinian peace activist who has been working tirelessly with the people of Palestine and Israel for a peaceful resolution of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East,” the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust said in a release.

The prize was jointly awarded to Maestro Daniel Barenboim for his work using music to bring together young people in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Abu Awwad was born into a politically-active refugee family. His mother worked with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat. As a teen, he was imprisoned for his participation in the First Intifada. While imprisoned, Abu Awwad waged a successful hunger strike to see his mother, who was also imprisoned.

His experience in prison was one of the things that showed him the power of nonviolent action. Today he campaigns for it as the only strategy to lasting security, peace, and freedom—one that will liberate both Palestinians and Israelis from the cycle of death that has subsumed the region for decades.

“I am grateful to the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust for recognizing the importance of nonviolence in liberating both my people and Israelis,” Abu Awwad, 51, said. “Nonviolence is the art of practicing your humanity, it is the art of being a human being. Peace is a place where we can live accepting our differences and respecting each other’s rights.”

In 2016, Abu Awwad co-founded Taghyeer, or “Change”, an organization leading a nonviolence movement of communities and leaders as a unifying identity for the Palestinian people. Earlier this year he was honored with the Luxembourg Peace Prize for that organization’s work.

Today, as the world watches new horrors unfold in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank, Abu Awwad is pushing for a new path to peace that can overcome Israeli-Palestinian divides,

recognizing the legitimacy of both peoples to the land, and guaranteeing the creation of a new environment where solutions become possible.

Of tragedy after tragedy unfolding since October 7, Abu Awwad says, "When the world is dark, it is OK and necessary to be a visitor to your pain," he said. "But don't be a resident of it. Grieve. Cry. But don't stay there because our purpose in life is much more meaningful than tears and fear.

"The millions of us who live on this land can only survive and thrive when every one of us lives with security, dignity, freedom and recognition. Any sustainable solution must recognize the legitimacy of both peoples here to this land. And we need you, the world that is watching, to become direct partners in a path forward that supports our shared humanity."

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