Announcement
2019 Nobel Peace Prize

The Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided to award the Nobel Peace Prize for 2019 to Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali for his efforts to achieve peace and international cooperation, and in particular for his decisive initiative to resolve the border conflict with neighbouring Eritrea. The prize is also meant to recognise all the stakeholders working for peace and reconciliation in Ethiopia and in the East and Northeast African regions.

When Abiy Ahmed became Prime Minister in April 2018, he made it clear that he wished to resume peace talks with Eritrea. In close cooperation with Isaias Afwerki, the President of Eritrea, Abiy Ahmed quickly worked out the principles of a peace agreement to end the long “no peace, no war” stalemate between the two countries. These principles are set out in the declarations that Prime Minister Abiy and President Afwerki signed in Asmara and Jeddah last July and September. An important premise for the breakthrough was Abiy Ahmed’s unconditional willingness to accept the arbitration ruling of an international boundary commission in 2002.

Peace does not arise from the actions of one party alone. When Prime Minister Abiy reached out his hand, President Afwerki grasped it, and helped to formalise the peace process between the two countries. The Norwegian Nobel Committee hopes the peace agreement will help to bring about positive change for the entire populations of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

In Ethiopia, even if much work remains, Abiy Ahmed has initiated important reforms that give many citizens hope for a better life and a brighter future. He spent his first 100 days as Prime Minister lifting the country’s state of emergency, granting amnesty to thousands of political prisoners, discontinuing media censorship, legalising outlawed opposition groups, dismissing military and civilian leaders who were suspected of corruption, and significantly increasing the influence of women in Ethiopian political and community life. He has also pledged to strengthen democracy by holding free and fair elections.

In the wake of the peace process with Eritrea, Prime Minister Abiy has engaged in other peace and reconciliation processes in East and Northeast Africa. In September 2018 he and his government contributed actively to the normalisation of diplomatic relations between Eritrea and Djibouti after many years of political hostility. Additionally, Abiy Ahmed has sought to mediate between Kenya and Somalia in their protracted conflict over rights to a disputed marine area. There is now hope for a resolution to this conflict. In Sudan, the military regime and the opposition have returned to the negotiating table. On the 17th of August, they released a joint draft of a new constitution intended to secure
a peaceful transition to civil rule in the country. Prime Minister Abiy played a key role in the process that led to the agreement.

Ethiopia is a country of many different languages and peoples. Lately, old ethnic rivalries have flared up. According to international observers, up to three million Ethiopians may be internally displaced. That is in addition to the million or so refugees and asylum seekers from neighbouring countries. As Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed has sought to promote reconciliation, solidarity and social justice. However, many challenges remain unresolved. Ethnic strife continues to escalate, and we have seen troubling examples of this in recent weeks and months. No doubt some people will think this year’s prize is being awarded too early. The Norwegian Nobel Committee believes it is now that Abiy Ahmed’s efforts deserve recognition and need encouragement.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee hopes that the Nobel Peace Prize will strengthen Prime Minister Abiy in his important work for peace and reconciliation. Ethiopia is Africa’s second most populous country and has East Africa’s largest economy. A peaceful, stable and successful Ethiopia will have many positive side-effects, and will help to strengthen fraternity among nations and peoples in the region. With the provisions of Alfred Nobel’s will firmly in mind, the Norwegian Nobel Committee sees Abiy Ahmed as the person who in the preceding year has done the most to deserve the Nobel Peace Prize for 2019.

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