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## An Open Letter to The Norwegian Nobel Committee

Posted By [Kathy Kelly](#)

December 9, 2009

On December 10, you will award the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize to President Barack Obama, citing "his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between people." We the undersigned are distressed that President Obama, so close upon his receipt of this honor, has opted to escalate the U.S. war in Afghanistan with the deployment of 30,000 additional troops. We regret that he could not be guided by the example of a previous Nobel Peace Laureate, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who identified his peace prize as "profound recognition that nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral question of our time — the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to violence and oppression."

President Obama has insisted that his troop escalation is a necessary response to dangerous instability in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but we reject the notion that military action will advance the region's stability, or our own national security. In his peace prize acceptance speech, Dr. King observed that "Civilization and violence are antithetical concepts...man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation." As people committed to end the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, we are filled with remorse by this new decision of our president, for it will not bring peace.

Declaring his opposition to the Vietnam War, Dr. King insisted that "no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war...We must continue to raise our voices and our lives if our nation persists in its perverse ways... We are at the moment when our lives must be placed on the line if our nation is to survive its own folly. Every man of humane convictions must decide on the protest that best suits his convictions, but we must all protest."

We pledge ourselves to mobilize our constituencies in the spirit of Dr. King's nonviolent and committed example. His prophetic words will guide us as we assemble in the halls of Congress, in local offices of elected representatives, and in the streets of our cities and towns, protesting every proposal that will continue funding war. We will actively and publicly oppose the war funding which President Obama will soon seek from Congress and re-commit ourselves to the protracted struggle against U.S. war-making in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We assume that the Nobel Committee chose to award President Obama the peace prize in full awareness of the vision offered by Dr. King's acceptance speech. We also understand that the Nobel Committee may now regret that decision in light of recent developments, as we believe that the committee should be reluctant to present an Orwellian message equating peace with war. When introducing the President, the Committee should, at the very least, exhibit a level of compassion and humility by drawing attention to this distressing ambiguity.

We will do all we can to ensure that popular pressure will soon bring President Obama to an acceptance of the duties which this prize, and even more his electoral mandate to be a figure of change, impose upon him. He must end the catastrophic policies of occupation and war that have caused so much destruction, so many deaths and displacements, and so much injury to our own democratic traditions.

This prize is not a meaningless honor. We pledge, ourselves obeying its call to nonviolent action, to make our President worthy of it.

Jack Amoureux — Board of Directors, Military Families Speak Out

Medea Benjamin — Co-Founder, Global Exchange

Frida Berrigan — Witness Against Torture

Elaine Brower — World Can't Wait

Leslie Cagan — Co-Founder, United for Peace and Justice

Bob Cooke — Regional Coordinator, Pax Christi USA, Pax Christi Metro, DC and Baltimore

Tom Cornell — Catholic Peace Fellowship

Matt Daloisio — War Resisters League

Marie Dennis — Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Laurie Dobson — Director, End US Wars

Mike Ferner — President, Veterans for Peace

Joy First — Convener, National Campaign for Non-Violent Resistance

Sara Flounders — International Action Center

Diana Gibson, Christian Peace Witness

Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb — Shomer Shalom Network for Jewish Nonviolence

David Hartsough — Peaceworkers, San Francisco

Mike Hearington — Georgia Peace & Justice Coalition

Kimber J. Heinz — Organizing Coordinator, War Resisters League

Mark Johnson — Director, Fellowship of Reconciliation

Kathy Kelly — Co-coordinator, Voices for Creative Non-Violence

Leslie Kielson — United for Peace and Justice

Malachy Kilbride — National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance

Kevin Martin — Executive Director-Peace Action and Peace Action Education Fund

Linda LeTendre — Saratoga [New York] Peace Alliance

Michael McPhearson — Veterans for Peace

Gael Murphy — Co-Founder, Code Pink

Sheila Musaji — The American Muslim

Michael Nagler — Founder, Metta Center for Nonviolence

Max Obuszewski — Pledge of Resistance Baltimore and Baltimore Nonviolence Center

Pete Perry — Peace of the Action

Dave Robinson — Executive Director, Pax Christi

David Swanson — AfterDowningStreet.org

Terry Rockefeller — Families for Peaceful Tomorrows

Samina Sundas — Founding Executive Director, The American Muslim Voice

Nancy Tsou — Coordinator, Rockland Coalition for Peace and Justice

Diane Turco — Cape Codders for Peace and Justice

Marge Van Cleef — Womens International League for Peace and Freedom

Jose Vasquez — Executive Director, Iraq Veterans Against the War

Craig Wiesner — Multifaith Voices for Peace and Justice

Scott Wright — Pax Christi Metro DC-Baltimore

Kevin Zeese — Executive Director, Voters for Peace