

“The Nobel Peace Prize Watch” Has Been Launched

By [Jan Oberg](#)

Theme: [History](#)

Global Research, March 10, 2015

[Dissident Voice](#)

On March 3, 2015, The Telegraph and a few other major news sources broke the [quite extraordinary story](#) that the chairman of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee – the body that decides who is awarded the Prize – former Norwegian PM Thorbjørn Jagland had been demoted; it’s the first time it has ever happened.

It was during his chairmanship the will of Alfred Nobel was ignored most systematically; e.g., by awarding the world’s allegedly most prestigious prize to President Obama, the EU and Chinese human rights (but pro-war) Liu Xiaobo.

It’s about seven years ago that a small group of Scandinavian scholars decided to investigate how this prize is managed.

The basic research can be found in a book by Norwegian lawyer and author, [Fredrik S. Heffermehl, *The Nobel Peace Prize: What Nobel Really Wanted*](#) which was the first major result of the group’s work.

It documents how this prize is “prestigious” only for those who either a) have never read Alfred Nobe’s will; b) don’t believe it should be interpreted with respect for his motives and goals and c) have very little knowledge about peace and peace research.

Nobel’s [formulation in his will](#) is short and clear – the Peace Prize shall go “to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses.” He calls such people “champions of peace”. [More here](#).

Thus, the Nobel Peace Prize is *not* a do-good prize, *not* a human rights or environmental prize and *not* a pro-war prize.

But it *is* a reward work for disarmament, anti-militarism and the abolition of warfare and people – be it politicians, scholars, activists – who are pro-peace, champions of peace.

The legal challenges that the Nobel Peace Prize Watch has raised over the years can be found [here](#).

The Nobel Peace Prize Watch

Over the years, the criticism of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee’s work has increased. Seven years ago, I cannot remember that any journalist who interviewed me about the Prize had read the will. Now about 75% of them seem to have before they call.

Fredrik Heffermehl, Oslo, and Tomas Magnusson, Gothenburg, have now established the [Lay Down Your Arms Association](#) which was incorporated and registered in Gothenburg, Sweden in 2014 with a Scandinavian and an International Advisory Board.

The Association's first project has been to set up the [Nobel Peace Prize Watch](#) where you can acquaint yourself with the Prize, its history, background, the criticism over time, etc.

The Nobel Peace Prize Watch has written a detailed [letter](#), dated February 20, 2015, to the Norwegian Parliament, The Nobel Foundation in Stockholm and to the Norwegian Nobel Committee outlining what must be done and why a watch has become necessary.

These initiatives have, with few exceptions, been ignored by the media, media which profess to practise freedom of expression and freedom of the media but seem to hesitate to challenge the political establishment that preserves this prize as an emblem for Norway and its security and foreign policy.

Why? Few seem to be aware that the Nobel Committee, in contrast to other Nobel prize selection bodies, consists of former MPs and not of experts in the broad field of peace.

It is worth also mentioning that Nobel in his will stipulated that the Norwegian Parliament should appoint a qualified committee; he did not say it should consist of its members.

These circumstances place the "prestigious" Prize in danger of being tied to Norwegian political interests.

Whether this danger is big or small can be debated but not the fact that it is peculiar that the Peace Prize is the only one that doesn't require any particular scientific or other competence - as if peace was not an area of knowledge, research and professionalism.

Breaking the secrecy: The candidates

A global research effort has been made to break the secrecy surrounding the selection process for the Prize and publish a list of known candidates for 2015 with documentation.

Transparency makes it possible for everyone to see for themselves which candidates satisfy Alfred Nobel's criteria, which candidates are selected by the Committee and whether or not some were available who do satisfy the criteria.

Allegedly there are around 300 for 2015 and here is the result of the research - [a list of the so far 25 known, documented candidates.*](#)

You can read about each candidate, see who nominated them and with what motivations. And if you know about nominations not mentioned here, please alert the Nobel Peace Prize Watch.

The Prize *must* come back to Alfred Nobel's champions of peace

The work, begun seven years ago, to create debate about the Nobel Peace Prize has gained momentum.

It is unacceptable that the millions of people around the world who work for peace in the sense Alfred Nobel intended have been deprived of what is truly the most prestigious and

noble thing: to be rewarded for their struggle against militarism and for a world with much fewer weapons and wars.

That work will be intensified and continue to develop a critical mass in support of Alfred Nobel's will. I kindly urge you *to spread this message* through traditional media, social media and your various communities.

* TFF is immensely proud to see that four of its Associates are among the Candidates for the 2015 Prize: Richard Falk, David Krieger, Evelin Lindner and Jan Oberg.

Jan Oberg is a peace researcher, art photographer, and Director of [Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research \(TFF\)](#) where this article first appeared. Reach him at: oberg@transnational.org. [Read other articles by Jan](#).

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