

SUNDAY ARTICLE

ST DAVID'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ♦ 14 OCTOBER 2018



A Christian Doctor and a Former ISIS Slave Win the Nobel Peace Prize

Joe Carter

What just happened?

A Christian doctor from the Congo and a human-rights activist from Iraq who was enslaved by Islamic State (ISIS) are co-recipients of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize.

Dr Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad were awarded the prize for “their efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict.”

According to the Nobel Committee, “Denis Mukwege is the helper who has devoted his life to defending these victims. Nadia Murad is the witness who tells of the abuses perpetrated against herself and others. Each of them in their own way has helped to give greater visibility to war-time sexual violence, so that the perpetrators can be held accountable for their actions.”

Mukwege often spends 18-hour days at the hospital performing 10 surgeries a day.

What exactly is the Nobel Peace Prize?

The Nobel Peace Prize is an international prize awarded annually since 1901 by the Norwegian Nobel Committee according to guidelines laid down in Alfred Nobel's will (“...to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between the nations and the abolition or reduction of standing armies and the formation and spreading of peace congresses.”). The prize includes a medal, a personal diploma, and a large sum of prize money (currently, about US\$1.1 million).

What did Mukwege do to deserve the award?

Dr Denis Mukwege, 63, is considered a pioneer in the field of gynaecological surgery. As the BBC notes, he is known as “Doctor Miracle” for his ability to repair through reconstructive surgery the horrific damage inflicted on women who have been raped.

Growing up as the son of a Pentecostal minister, Mukwege travelled with his father around Congo to pray for the sick. His

exposure to the broken convinced him that God had given him the ability to do more to help the people of his country.

After graduating from medical school at the University of Burundi, he worked at a rural hospital when he encountered women who, because they had no access to obstetric services, developed serious complications after childbirth.

This prompted Mukwege to go to France for specialized training in gynaecology.

When he returned, he and his colleagues built Panzi Hospital, which is managed by the Pentecostal Churches in Central Africa (CEPAC). Over the past 20 years Panzi has treated more than 85,000 girls and women with complex gynaecological injuries, the majority of whom are survivors of sexual violence. Mukwege often spends 18-hour days at the hospital performing 10 surgeries a day.

During a keynote speech last year at the Lutheran World Federation Assembly, Mukwege said that “we cannot fulfil the mission entrusted to us by Christ” if our faith is defined by theory and disconnected from practical realities.

“It is up to us, the heirs of Martin Luther, through God’s Word, to exorcise all the macho demons possessing the world so that women who are victims of male barbarity can experience the reign of God in their lives,” Mukwege said.

The aim, he added, is to think about “the credibility of the gospel in the 21st century, to liberate the grace that we have received by making the church a light that still shines in this world of darkness through our struggles for justice, truth, law, freedom, in short, the dignity of man and woman.”

What did Murad do to deserve the award?

Nadia Murad, 25, is a member of the Yazidi minority in northern Iraq, where she lived with her

family in the remote village of Kocho. In August 2014 Murad became one of the thousands of women abducted by the Islamic State (ISIS) and held as sex slaves.

Murad was repeatedly raped, beaten, and tortured by the men of ISIS. She was finally able to escape three months later after one of her captors left his house unlocked. She was transported to a refugee camp and selected for a program that takes refugees to Germany.

In 2015, Murad gave the United Nations Security Council its first-ever briefing on the issue of human trafficking and conflict. A year later she was named the UN’s first goodwill ambassador for the dignity of survivors of human trafficking.

In a statement about receiving the Nobel Prize, Murad said many Yazidis would “look upon this prize and think of family members that were lost, are still unaccounted for, and of the 1,300 women and children, which remain in captivity.”

“For myself, I think of my mother, who was murdered by [ISIS], the children with whom I grew up, and what we must do to honour them,” she added.

“...making the church a light that still shines in this world of darkness...”



Joe Carter is an editor for The Gospel Coalition and an elder at Grace Hill Church in Herndon, Virginia.

Note: Increasingly, the refugees being settled in Toowoomba are Yazidis, like Nadia Murad, and this is the kind of trauma many have experienced or are fleeing from and that we need to bear in mind as we pray for them and seek to reach them with the love and truth of the Lord.

Source: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-faqs-a-christian-doctor-and-a-former-isis-slave-win-the-nobel-peace-prize/>

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