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Paris – This year's UNESCO Prize for Peace Education has been awarded to Father Emil Shoufani, principal of St. Joseph's College, Nazareth, for his ongoing efforts for reconciliation between Arabs and Jews. An international jury declared that 'his personal attitude and actions have always been marked by dialogue, peace, and tolerance, and his constant desire to bring Arabs and Jews together.'

Fr. Shoufani has been principal of Saint Joseph's College since 1976, and in 1988 founded a program called "Education for Peace, Democracy, and Co-existence," which includes pupil exchanges with the Jewish school Lyada in Jerusalem. Fr. Shoufani has stated that his work is founded on the belief that cultural and religious diversity, far from being an obstacle, should be considered a way to peace.

Funded by the Nippon Foundation, the \$30,000 Prize for Peace Education has been awarded annually since 1981 to encourage efforts to raise public awareness and convince people of the need for peace. The Prize will be presented on September 8, 2003, in the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

Fr. Shoufani recently led a group of Jewish and Arab youth on a visit to Krakow and the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. In an interview with the Vatican Radio, he stated that the visit was organized in order to break the spiral of death. "We came to hear what the Jewish people says about its history, about the Shoah," he said. "We would like to be an open gate to change and transformation, for both Israelis and Palestinians, without asking who should make the first step."

From news releases and press reports