

LennonOno Grant for Peace

Harpa

9. okt. 2012 kl. 14.00

Dear Yoko. Dear guests.

It is with a great pleasure that I
welcome you to Reykjavík.

As a mayor of a city emphasizing
peace on earth and human rights,
I am particularly pleased to take
part in this special occasion –
when Yoko Ono hands out the

Lennon-Ono Grant for Peace to five activists who have contributed to peace and equality.

Today is a special day – it's the birthday of John Lennon and his son, Sean.

Tonight, Yoko Ono will relight the IMAGINE PEACE TOWER in Videy Island and the tower will lighten up the sky until the 8th of December – the day of John Lennon's death.

During this period, the tower will shine in the sky with the stars and the Aurora Borealis, reminding us of Yoko and John's hope for world peace.

Iceland is a peaceful nation – without an army – and I have officially declared that I would like the City of Reykjavík to take lead in projects aimed at peace on earth.

It is important for our city to recognize our obligation and contribute to promoting peace.

Reykjavík has participated in various projects to support lasting world peace and human rights.

Reykjavík is a member of an organization called Mayors for Peace, which was founded by the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1982 – in co-operation with the United Nations.

The participating cities work in solidarity towards the total abolition of nuclear weapons by the year 2020.

The program also aims at eliminating starvation and poverty and assisting environmental refugees.

Reykjavík City is also a member of the International Cities of Refuge Network, or ICORN.

It's an association of cities which have agreed to provide persecuted writers a safe haven to work.

As a UNESCO City of Literature, the people of Reykjavík were honored to welcome the first persecuted author to our peaceful city last fall.

I can name a few more projects that promote peace.

Recently, Reykjavík hosted an international peace conference – called the Spirit of Humanity Forum.

This conference is intended to be held annually and we have expectations that in time it will grow to similar size as the Davos conference is in the tech world.

It is important that people who speak for peace talk louder than those who don't.

Peace should not only be the privilege of some countries, but the right of every human being.

I believe that an individual can contribute to create a better world.

It's not enough to stand in silence.

It is important for city authorities, state authorities, individuals – yes, everyone – to be initiative and doers in issues concerning peace and human rights.

People should be active in taking a stand advocating peace and human rights.

When I meet with representatives of foreign countries, I use the opportunity to protest human rights violations, death penalties and nuclear weapons.

I protested formally to the Chinese government to the illegal imprisonment of the Chinese poet Liu Xiaobo – and demanded his immediate release from prison.

And recently, I sent a letter to the mayor of Moscow to describe my opinion of the hundred year's ban of gay pride parades.

In that letter, I encouraged him to lift the ban and support LGBT people in their wish to live a decent life.

The people of Reykjavík are very proud of the Reykjavík Gay Pride Parade. I am also proud of my participation in it – where I always dress up in drag. In last parade, I

was wearing a Pussy Riot mask to show my support to the band's cause.

Humanitarianism, culture, nature and peace.

Those are my favorite words – not only as a Mayor of Reykjavík – but as a human being.

Peace is the strength of our city and our nation. Reykjavik has a unique position as a city of peace.

In the future, it would be great to be able to describe Reykjavík as a completely military-free zone.

Iceland is, however, a member of NATO and as such we sometimes receive warships that enter the Reykjavík harbor and military aircrafts land at Reykjavík airport.

I have put pressure on the government on that matter – I think that all military actions in Reykjavík should be stopped.

I am still waiting for an answer.

Finally, and on a personal note, I would like to add that I believe that empathy is the very core of humanity.

To empathize with others – be a family, a friend – is the heart of every society – that is what links us all together.

Dear Yoko.

You have a special place in the hearts of the people of Reykjavík.

Your collaboration with our city
has established a close friendship.

All of us, who call Reykjavík home,
are proud of your unique work of
art – the IMAGINE PEACE
TOWER.

The tower is a testament to great
faith and conviction that is so
much needed in our world today.

It emanates wisdom, healing and
joy – and it sends message to the

whole world that peace and love is
what connects all lives on earth.

It is indeed a great honor for the
City of Reykjavík to host this
ceremony, when the Lennon-Ono
Grant for Peace is awarded.

Once again. Thank you for your
valuable contribution to world
peace.

Now, please join me on the stage.

Take it away, Yoko!