**Kazumi Matsui** has been serving as Mayor of Hiroshima since April 2011 and was re-elected to the post in April 2015. He also serves as the president of the multinational non-governmental organization Mayors for Peace, comprised of mayors from over 6,600 municipalities in 160 countries/regions around the world, with a goal of accomplishing everlasting world peace and nuclear weapons abolition. Mr. Matsui’s father is an atomic bomb survivor.

**Henry Rosovsky** is the former Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University. In 1984 the French government made him a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor and in 1988 he was awarded the Order of the Sacred Treasure (Star) by the Government of Japan.

**Farouk El-Baz** is the Research Professor and Director of the Center for Remote Sensing at Boston University. Previously he worked with NASA to assist in the planning of scientific exploration of the Moon, including the selection of landing sites for the Apollo missions and the training of astronauts in lunar observations and photography.

**Herbert C. Kelman**, is the Richard Clarke Cabot Professor of Social Ethics, Emeritus, at Harvard University. From 1993 to 2003, he was Director of the Program on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Harvard’s Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

“The goals of this project are exactly the same as the desires of the citizens of Hiroshima. I hope that this idea will be cultivated, take root and blossom throughout the world.” - Kazumi Matsui, Mayor of Hiroshima, Japan

“Having spent more than a decade living, studying and researching in Japan, this project combines two of my own personal interests—Peace in the Middle East and the history of modern Japan. With that as a background I can say with confidence that this is a most promising initiative.” - Henry Rosovsky, Dean Emeritus, Faculty of Arts & Sciences, Harvard University
関係各位

レイ・マツミヤ中近東大学プロジェクト事務局長が、今年8月、広島において「中近東オレアンダー・イニシアティブ」を開催するに当たり、このメッセージをお送りします。

1945年8月6日、広島は一発の原子爆弾で焦土と化し、数万という人々が炎に焼かれ、その年の暮れまでに、かけがえのない14万もの命が奪われました。辛うじて生き延びた人々も人生を大きく歪められ、深刻な心身の後遺症や差別・偏見に苦しめられてきました。核兵器は非人道の極みであり、「絶対悪」です。

世界161か国・地域の6,900を超える加盟都市で構成される平和首長会議は、世界中の人々が、被爆者の「こんな思いを他の誰にもさせはなれない」という切なる思いを受け止め、「絶対悪」である核兵器の廃絶と世界永続平和の実現に向け共に行動するように訴えています。そうした意味で、中近東の高校教員を広島に招へいし、核兵器の危害について理解を深めるこのプロジェクトは、誠に意義深く、レイ・マツミヤ氏の御尽力に敬意を表します。このプロジェクトは、被爆の実相を世界に広め、国際社会において核兵器廃絶に向けた気運を盛り上げていく上で非常に重要な取組であり、その趣旨に大いに賛同するものです。

原爆が投下された当時、広島の地に再び草木が生えるまでに75年かかると言われました。そんな中、オレアンダー（桜枝桃）はいち早く花をつけ、広島市民に復興への勇気を与えました。この花の名を冠した「中近東オレアンダー・イニシアティブ」に参加した皆様が、広島の地で学んだことを自国に持ち帰り、次代を担う若者たちに伝えることで、核兵器のない平和の世界の実現を願う広島の思いが各国で根付き、花を咲かせることを期待しています。

平和首長会議会長
広島市長

松井一貫
February 2, 2016

To Whom it May Concern:

Mr. Ray Matsumiya, Executive Director of the University of the Middle East Project, is planning to hold the “Middle East Oleander Initiative” in Hiroshima. In order to support this project, I would like to convey the following message.

On August 6th, 1945, a single atomic bomb turned Hiroshima into a ruined city. Tens of thousands of people were burned by the flame, and a total of 140,000 people died before the end of the year. Some escaped immediate death from the bomb but nevertheless died within a few months from their wounds. The lives of numerous other people who narrowly escaped with their lives were also severely affected. In the aftermath of the bombing, these victims suffered physical and psychological damage from the bomb’s radiation, as well as faced discrimination from other people. Nuclear weapons are inhumane and their use should be recognized as an absolute evil.

**Mayors for Peace** consists of mayors from over 6,900 cities in 161 countries. They share the same motivation of making sure the suffering of the atomic bomb victims never occurs again. These mayors call for the total abolishment of nuclear arsenals and the absolute evil that they represent, as well as the creation of an eternally peaceful world through cooperative activities. Therefore, I, as the president of this movement, pay my deepest respect to Mr. Ray Matsumiya, his associates, and their project that will invite high school teachers from the Middle East to Hiroshima, in order to help them intimately understand the threat of the nuclear weapons. I think that this project is of utmost importance because it can spread awareness throughout the world, and provide momentum for the abolishment of nuclear weapons. I fully support the Oleander Initiative.

It was said that it may take 75 years before any vegetation could grow out of the burnt soil of Hiroshima. However, shortly after the bombing, oleander flowers blossomed and greatly encouraged the surviving citizens of Hiroshima. The “Oleander Initiative” bears the name of this flower.

I sincerely wish that this project will be fruitful. I hope that this project blossoms and the participants bring back what they learned in Hiroshima to their homelands. By spreading what they learned to the young people who will decide the future course of their countries, I believe that we can take steps towards the realization of a more peaceful world without the threat of nuclear weapons.

The goals of this project are exactly the same as the desires of the citizens of Hiroshima. I hope that this idea will be cultivated, take root and blossom throughout the world.

Kazumi Matsui

President, Mayors for Peace
Mayor, Hiroshima City

*Translation by UME.org*
To Whom It May Concern,

I have closely followed the University of the Middle East Project (UME) since its very beginning. I was part of planning conversations before there was a formal entity, joined the Advisory Board in 1999, and served on the Board of Directors from 2000 to 2007.

UME occupies a very special place among the NGO’s focused on the Middle East. From the outset its programs that involved more than one country were wholly inclusive; all nationalities, all religions and all degrees of observance, and all genders were welcome and encouraged to participate. And all these groups have continued to participate, making the UME programs truly inspiring and unusual events. Over the years, UME has developed a special expertise in the training of secondary school teachers; a group all too frequently ignored by public and private aid organizations.

Most recently, UME has undertaken an ambitious initiative to promote nuclear non-proliferation in the Middle East region. They are in the process of designing an innovative program that includes taking secondary school teachers from throughout the Middle East to Hiroshima, Japan for a weeklong training workshop. The hope is that with top-notch instruction from the UME faculty, visiting sites such as the Genbaku dome, Hiroshima museum and experiencing the powerful testimonials from hibakusha, these teachers will spread what they have learned in Hiroshima to thousands of students in the Middle East. As these students grow into decision makers, UME hopes that they will form a broad foundation that will actively support a strong anti-nuclear weapons sentiment in their countries.

Having spent more than a decade living, studying, and researching in Japan, this project combines two of my own personal interests – Peace in the Middle East and the history of modern Japan. With that as background, I can say with confidence that this is a most promising initiative.

Today, UME has young, energetic, and imaginative leadership. I strongly support its efforts and hope that it will continue to receive support from governments, academic institutions and funding agencies.

Henry Rosovsky
Dean Emeritus of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University

October 30, 2015
December 14, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to endorse the University of the Middle East Project (UME).

I have been a supporter of the organization and served on the UME Board of Directors from 2004-2012. Over the years, I have watched the organization’s activities during a most difficult time in the Middle East region.

The UME has excelled at training high school teachers from throughout the Middle East region. In the Boston area I have seen first-hand the great dedication and enthusiasm of its educators. Through UME’s training, I am sure that they have made a significant impact in their home educational systems.

UME’s latest project is to work with its large network of educators in the Middle East region to promote awareness about the dangers of nuclear weapons. This program, entitled the Oleander Initiative, will take place in Hiroshima, Japan and will include a full itinerary of workshops, site visits and testimonials from survivors of the atomic bomb. The Oleander Initiative is both timely and relevant to the current situation in that region.

I wish UME the best of luck continuing its important mission.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr. Farouk El-Baz, Director
Center for Remote Sensing
Ray Matsumiya  
Executive Director  
University of the Middle East Project  
9 Ellery Street, #5  
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dear Ray,

It was a privilege and a pleasure to have lunch with you the other day and to catch up on the recent activities of the University of the Middle East Project.

As you know, I have been in touch with the Project from its inception. As you may recall, I wondered at the beginning whether the goal of establishing a University of the Middle East was not overly ambitious. But I soon became convinced that you and your colleagues, though highly ambitious, were also very realistic in setting yourselves goals that could be accomplished. What I think was brilliant was the decision to concentrate your efforts on creating a "functional university" and leaving the goal of establishing a physical university to future, long-term development.

From my observations over the years, the summer institutes for teachers that you have organized were creative, highly successful efforts. In and of themselves, they were of great value to the participants. I had the opportunity to observe several of these events, and I could see the atmosphere you created, that made the experience both substantively valuable and effective in building bridges across the political divide. Over the years, you helped to create a community of educators that included Israelis along with citizens of several Arab countries, and you also saw to it that this community continued beyond the experience of a single shared summer.

Your own role in this endeavor became increasingly central over the years. I admire your commitment and persistence in continuing the effort in the face of many obstacles. You became the linchpin of the enterprise and made essential contributions—at the substantive, administrative, and socio-emotional levels—in keeping it functioning and achieving its goals.

I was very interested in learning about the new directions in which you are now taking this project. The concept of the MEOP and the initial plan of bringing the educators from various Middle East countries to Hiroshima is brilliant and exciting. And I think it is not irrelevant that this project has a great deal of personal meaning to you. It is a very timely project, given the increasing threat of the nuclearization of the Middle East. I very much hope that you will find sponsors who appreciate the significance of this project and provide the financial support that is needed. I also hope that this pilot program will initiate a series of initiatives, as indicated in your proposal.

We all owe you much gratitude for your persistence and your imagination. I wish you success in your current project and your continuing efforts.

With cordial regards,

Herbert C. Kelman  
Richard Clarke Cabot Professor of Social Ethics, Emeritus  
Faculty Associate of the Weatherhead Center for International affairs, Emeritus