

Priest gives Muslims sanctuary from Christian militia

'Despite my fears, I gladly agree to help my fellow humans'

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Father Bernard Kinvi. (Photo: Order of St Camillus)

A Togolese priest who saved 1,500 Muslims from slaughter in the Central African Republic has been shortlisted for a new \$1 million peace prize, the Catholic Herald reports.

Father Bernard Kinvi, of the Order of St Camillus, provided shelter for those fleeing the Christian anti-balaka militia at his mission hospital in Bossemptele for several months. He then helped them escape on lorries across the border into Cameroon.

Fr Kinvi is one of four people shortlisted for the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity, given to "individuals who put themselves at risk to enable others to survive."

Three of the four finalists are Catholic, according to the Herald. They are Dr Tom Catena, the sole surgeon for 750,000 people in the Nuba Mountains in Sudan, who said his work is inspired by St Francis of Assisi; Marguerite Barankitse, who saved thousands of lives and cared for orphans and refugees during the civil war in Burundi; and Syeda Ghulam Fatima, who has worked to end bonded labor in Pakistan.

The winner of the prize will be given \$100,000 and will be able to nominate a charity to receive a grant of \$1 million.

Fr Kinvi first arrived in the Central African Republic in 2010. At the time, he knew little of his adopted country except that "it was a place of military crises."

However, he had already witnessed people die in the crossfire of military and political conflict in Togo. His younger sister was killed in front of his eyes, his older sister murdered by her fiancé.

These experiences hammered out his spirit of resilience and selfless service to God and humanity, the Aurora Prize website says.

"I feel the suffering of others in my own soul. My life doesn't mean anything to me anymore. Despite my fears, I gladly agree to help my fellow humans."