

PRESS RELEASE

NOBEL PEACE LAUREATE MAIREAD MAGUIRE DETAINED BY USA HOMELAND SECURITY

On Thursday 14th May, 2009, Mairead Maguire, Nobel Peace Laureate, was detained on her entry into Houston Airport, USA, by Homeland Security Immigration.

Maguire was on her way home to Northern Ireland, after attending a 3-day conference in Guatemala, which was hosted by herself and three Sister Nobel Peace Laureates, Rigoberta Menchu, Jody Williams, and Shirin Ebadi. 150 women activists from around the world attended the Nobel Womens' Conference to discuss 'Redefining Democracy, Human Rights and Peace'.

Maguire was held for two hours, during which she was questioned, fingerprinted, photographed and questioned. This resulted in her missing her flight. She was released upon the actions of the Nobel Women's Initiatives representatives, who insisted on her immediate release.

Upon release Maguire said:

'This kind of behaviour and treatment is unacceptable. They questioned me about my nonviolent protests in USA against the Afghanistan invasion and Iraqi war. They insisted I must tick the box in the immigration form admitting to criminal activities. I am not a criminal. My nonviolent acts in USA opposing the war on Afghanistan and Iraq are acts of conscience, and together with millions of USA citizens and world citizens, I refuse to be criminalized for opposing such illegal policies. Every citizen has a right, indeed a moral obligation, to nonviolent civil disobedience in the face of illegal and unjust laws, especially war. If anyone is to be criminalized for these illegal and immoral policies, it is the USA Government who must be held accountable before the international community for these acts of crime against humanity. I am most disappointed at this harassment, which I believe is because I do not remain silent on USA foreign policies, which I believe to be causing a great deal of suffering around the world. I stand in solidarity with many human rights defenders, whose only crime is to stand for the dignity and right of everyone to life, freedom and human and civil liberties. Many people in the USA voted for President Obama (and millions around the world supported him) on the promise that changes would be made, civil and human rights be upheld, and today we await the fulfilment of these promises. We hope that President Obama will not disappoint the millions of people around the world, like me, who believed in him when he said we can change things, YES WE CAN. The world looks to him to give moral and political leadership by upholding human rights and international law, and leading America to live fully by its Constitution and commitments to freedom and democracy for all. I have travelled to USA many times in the past 30 years to share the message of peace and reconciliation, but I have also undertaken my world citizenship responsibility to join with the American peace movement in protesting USA foreign policies which are causing much suffering in the world. I will continue to visit and plan to return to USA in August to join with the American peace movement at Los Alamos, New Mexico in protesting USA nuclear weapons programme. I have always been inspired by the American peace movement and consider an honour to be able to support them in their work for a peaceful humanity, truly in the spirit of the American people and their inspiration Constitution of freedom and justice for all.

Mairead Maguire
Nobel Peace Laureate
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