

**FOUNDERS:**

Betty Williams, Ireland - 1976
Máiread Maguire, Ireland - 1976
Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Guatemala - 1992
Prof. Jody Williams, USA - 1997
Dr. Shirin Ebadi, Iran - 2003
Prof. Wangari Maathai, Kenya - 2004

united for peace with justice and equality

–STATEMENT–

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Nobel Laureate Mairead Maguire appeals to Egyptian government to stop impeding the entrance of humanitarian aid into Gaza

On Thursday December 31st 2009 the people of Gaza remembered the beginning of Operation Cast Lead—the 22 day assault during which 1400 people were killed and some 5000 injured by the Israeli military. The crimes against humanity and war crimes perpetrated by the Israeli Government are remembered not only by the people of Gaza and by Palestine, but by millions around the world who were shocked and disgusted by this act of barbarity.

To show their solidarity with the people of Gaza, 1400 people from 48 different countries gathered in Egypt at the end of December in the hopes of entering Gaza at the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt. This international delegation was joined in spirit by millions of people from around the world to demand that Israel change its policies of collective punishment and lift the illegal and immoral siege of Gaza, which has left 1.5 million people with inadequate food, water, health care, electricity, sanitation and education.

Amongst the international delegation were about one dozen people from Ireland, who brought medical aid, educational materials and toys for the children. After travelling for several weeks, the Irish delegation joined forces with Gaza Freedom March and the 200 vehicle strong Viva Palestina Convoy bound for the Rafah border crossing. Due to obstruction from the Egyptian authorities, only 100 people were allowed to cross into Gaza with humanitarian aid and supplies for 48 hours. Upon leaving Gaza, the group was

attacked by riot police and security forces. Nearly fifty people were injured and others detained or deported.

I appeal to the Egyptian government to open the Rafah crossing and assist humanitarian delegations to enter Gaza to be with the people of Gaza. As the human family we must all do what we can to help each other, particularly the children and civilians, who under International Law must be protected against war and violence.

In the 21st Century when governments and people are challenged to abolish barbaric wars and solve problems through dialogue and negotiations, the continued siege of Gaza is a shame to humanity. I appeal to President Obama and the American Administration to do all in their power to bring this illegal siege to an end.

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