



Laureates:

Mairead Maguire, Ireland (1976)
Rigoberta Menchu Tum, Guatemala (1992)
Jody Williams, USA (1997)
Shirin Ebadi, Iran (2003)
Leymah Gbowee, Liberia (2011)
Tawakkol Karman, Yemen (2011)

Nobel Women Laureates Call for End to Impunity for Atrocity Crimes in Guatemala and Respect for the Rights of Survivors

(Ottawa, June 5, 2013) – Five women Nobel Peace laureates today called for Guatemala to respect the rights of the survivors of atrocities committed under the rule of former *de facto* head of state Efraim Rios Montt.

The women, convened in Northern Ireland for a conference organized by the Nobel Women's Initiative, issued this statement after a dizzying turn of events in Guatemala in recent weeks. These events included Rios Montt's conviction on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity, a high court's rejection of that conviction, and now the same court considering the former dictator's appeals for amnesty.

"The genocide committed against Guatemala's indigenous populations during the country's past military dictatorships must not be forgotten or denied," said Jody Williams, U.S. activist, and winner of the 1997 Nobel Prize for her work to ban landmines.

Rios Montt ruled Guatemala with an iron fist for 17 months in 1982 and 1983. According to a United Nations truth commission, more than 80% of the victims of violations committed during Guatemala's internal armed conflict were from Maya's indigenous populations. According to the same commission, over 90% of the perpetrators were state security personnel and paramilitaries.

"After the brutality of these egregious violations and the cowardice of decades of denying their significance, Guatemala has an opportunity—and an obligation—to reckon with its painful past," said Leymah Gbowee, the Liberian activist who received the Prize in 2011.

In a historic judgment—the first of its kind in a domestic court—a three-judge trial court convicted Rios Montt of genocide and crimes against humanity on May 10. A trial court issued a 700-page sentence delineating the evidence that supported the conviction.

However, only ten days later, a divided Guatemalan Constitutional Court overturned the conviction on procedural grounds with a decision that created ambiguity about if or how the case would continue. On May 29, the Constitutional Court considered Rios

Advocating for peace, justice and equality

Montt's claim that a 1986 historic amnesty, decreed by the military dictator who succeeded him, should prevent his prosecution.

"Recent events in Guatemala are a slap in the face to the victims of horrific crimes," said Williams.

"This latest turn of events perpetuates impunity for the crime of genocide and leaves the survivors without remedies," said Shirin Ebadi, Iranian lawyer, former judge, and winner of the 2009 Nobel Prize. "The Constitutional Court decision appears to have confused the situation, and undercut rather than clarified or reaffirmed the survivors' rights. Any amnesty for these crimes would be clearly illegal."

"Thirty years after the crimes, indigenous victims of the most terrible crimes recounted their experiences in a court of law," said Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Guatemalan activist and 1992 Nobel Prize winner. "Guatemala must not again victimize these communities." Menchú Tum brought a related case to a Spanish national court in 2000.

The laureates noted that the Guatemalan genocide trial has been an example for the world of what is possible with a courageous and independent judiciary confronting impunity head and what is possible when a country holds its own former leaders liable for egregious violations. They said that this case must not come to represent a failure of justice and a victory for impunity for those who suffered huge loss and suffering during the genocide.

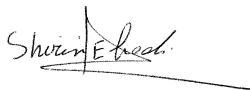
"We are standing in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in Guatemala," said Mairead Maguire, who won the Nobel Peace prize in 1977 for her work to end the conflict in Northern Ireland. "We share with them core values of compassion, tolerance and love—and we admire their unwavering dedication to nonviolence in their quest for lasting peace in Guatemala."

The signatories are Nobel Peace Laureates and members of the Nobel Women's Initiative.

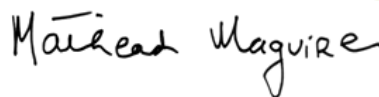
Rigoberta Menchú Tum (1992)



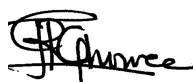
Shirin Ebadi (2009)



Mairead Maguire (1977)



Leymah Gbowee (2011)



Jody Williams (1997)

