



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)

25 September 2014

Patricia de Lille, Executive Mayor: City of Cape Town
Frederik Willem De Klerk, Nobel Peace Laureate
Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Laureate
Prof. Njabulo S Ndebele, Chair Nelson Mandela Foundation
Mthunzi Albert Luthuli, Chief Albert Luthuli Foundation

Re: Participation in 14th World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates

Dear Members of the Host Committee of the 2014 Nobel Summit,

We are writing in response to your letter of 22 September asking that we reconsider our decision not to attend the Nobel Summit in Cape Town. We are sorry that we will not be able to be with you, but we are all firm in our decisions not to participate.

The decision to stay away is not one that has been easily taken, but it is one of conscience and therefore not one that we could comfortably reverse especially given the sentiments of many that if the entire summit were moved to a county that does not deny access to His Holiness, we would willingly participate.

While our decision has been precipitated by the South African government's denial of a visa to His Holiness, it is not just about that decision in isolation. South Africa has now denied the Dalai Lama a visa three times in five years. This is not just a one-off bad decision and many of us worried from the start that a Nobel Summit in South Africa would be negatively impacted by a visa denial.

Our decision is also about the Chinese government's consistent efforts to restrict the movement of His Holiness. Also we cannot fail to note that China itself holds prisoner our fellow Nobel laureate, Liu Xiaobo, and keeps his wife under house arrest and constant pressure. It is also about the Chinese government's expressed policy of non-interference in the internal policies of other nations – apparently except when it comes to the Dalai Lama. Then China is always willing to pressure countries to deny him a visa. It is also about China's public appreciation of South Africa's "correct position" in denying the visa and upholding Chinese "sovereignty." Isn't South Africa surrendering a bit of its own? Would it on its own deny a visa to the Dalai Lama?

Advocating for peace, justice and equality

We are sorry that things have turned out this way. We would much prefer to all be together, including with His Holiness. We have taken the time to explain the various elements of our decision to make it clear that it is not a simple decision to “abandon” South Africa. It is a conscious decision to not “honor” the collusion between South Africa and China to deny the human rights of His Holiness by participating in a summit held in South Africa.

With much regret,

Jody Williams, USA (1997)

Shirin Ebadi, Iran (2003)

Leymah Gbowee, Liberia (2011)

Mairead Maguire, Ireland (1976)

Tawakkol Karman, Yemen (2011)

