

Israel deports Nobel Peace prize laureate

Claire Schaeffer-Duffy | Oct. 11, 2010 NCR Today

After a week of fighting an Israeli deportation order, Nobel Prize laureate Mairead Maguire was flown back to Ireland Oct 5. Israel claims Mairead, 66, had violated a 10-year ban imposed on her following her participation in the Gaza-bound flotilla last summer. But Mairead, who flew to Israel in late September, expecting to lead a women's peace delegation, said she was "shocked" to learn of the 10-year deportation order pending against her.

Late Friday night, I received a press release from Peace People, an Irish peace group which Maguire co-founded, offering this account of her recent ordeal:

"Mairead had arrived in Israel on Tuesday, Sept. 27, to attend a Nobel Women's Initiative visit, and support those working in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories -- particularly women's groups -- for human rights and justice. On arrival she was detained in Ben Gurion Detention Centre, Tel Aviv.

The Israeli security tried to forcefully deport Maguire the following day but she peacefully resisted sitting quietly on the tarmac beside the plane refusing to be forcefully deported. The pilot of KLM [the Dutch airline] refused to allow her to be forcefully taken on [the plane] by Israeli guards, so she was taken back into detention, where she remained for 7 days [of] solitary confinement and harsh conditions, causing her to be hospitalized at the end of the week.

During the seven days, she had 3 court appearances to appeal her conviction of a 10-year deportation from Israel. At the Supreme Court appeal, Maguire, on speaking to the three judges, said she loved the Israeli and Palestinian people and was saddened by their suffering. However, she insisted peace will not come to Israel until the Israeli government ends apartheid."

Mairead has been an outspoken critic of Israeli policies, including the crippling siege of the Gaza Strip. This summer, she participated in the Freedom Flotilla in which Israeli commandos killed nine activists aboard a ship carrying humanitarian supplies to the Palestinian Territory. Mairead's boat, MV Rachel Corrie, was impounded and taken to the Israeli port of Ashdod. Mairead, along with other activists, was detained and returned to her home country.

Deportation from Israel results in a ten-year ban from the state.

Mairead fought her recent deportation with the help of Adalah, a nongovernmental organization working for the rights of Israeli Palestinians. Adalah attorney Fatmeh El-Ajou told *The Huffington Post* the Irish activist was so concerned her imposed repatriation last summer might prohibit future trips to Israel and the Palestinian Territories that she contacted Israeli authorities after arriving in Ireland. They assured Mairead she wouldn't be barred from entering the country. *The Huffington Post* also reports that a fellow participant in the Freedom Flotilla was permitted entry into Israel in September.

According to the Israeli news agency, Ynet, the Israeli Supreme Court did not believe Mairead was unaware of

the deportation order and called her arrival in Israel 'an act of defiance.'

Maybe it was, albeit an unconscious one. Mairead, whom I have known and admired for many years, is a petite woman of enormous courage and unshakeable faith in a Christ Who asks us to speak up for the oppressed. She is not one to back down. When Israeli soldiers tried to prevent her from speaking at a 2007 conference on nonviolence in the West Bank village of B'itlan, she refused to be silenced. For this 'act of defiance,' she received a rubber bullet in her leg the following day. And still she returns.

Mairead said she plans to continue to fight the deportation order. 'I do not feel I have been treated justly by the Israeli Court,' she said. 'In June 2010, I and my colleagues on the 'Rachel Corrie' boat were illegally hijacked in international waters by the Israeli Navy, whilst trying to break the siege of Gaza and bring humanitarian aid to people, suffering under illegal collective punishment by Israel. I am not a criminal and ask, 'How can I be deported from Israel when I had been taken at gunpoint and forced to come to Israel against my will in June 2010?'. . . In truth I went to Israel in good faith with nothing but love for Israelis and Palestinians and wishing a good future for both people to live in justice and peace. Because I am critical of the Israeli government policies does not make me an enemy of Israel or her people, but an upholder of an ethic of human rights and nonviolence, and a believer that peace is possible between both peoples when justice reigns.'

Also deported from the country within the past week was Edith Lutz, a German Jewish nurse and passenger on the Jewish boat bringing humanitarian aid to Gaza that was intercepted by the Israeli Navy Sept. 28. Lutz had resisted her deportation until the five Israeli activists on the boat were released from detention.

Israel's deportation of its critics is becoming routine, according to Israeli peace activist and writer Gideon Levy. In an opinion piece for the Israeli daily, *Haaretz*, Levy wrote: 'World-renowned intellectuals such as Noam Chomsky and Norman Finkelstein, Spain's most famous clown, Ivan Prado, and now Mairead Corrigan-Maguire are deported from [Israel] shamefacedly only because they dared to visit the country. And all this is backed by pathological indifference.'

'Israel, like North Korea,' Levy wrote, 'is afraid of anyone who tries to protest against it or criticize its regime. No terrorists will enter here but neither will anyone who opposes terror yet dares criticize the occupation.'

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