



Betty Williams, Ireland - 1976
Máiread Corrigan 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

6 December 2006

Honorable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Canada

Dear Prime Minister Harper,

We women Peace Laureates of the Nobel Women's Initiative are writing to express our concerns about recent decisions which may jeopardize the historic efforts by Canada to achieve women's full equality, at home and abroad. On December 10th, International Human Rights Day and the 25th anniversary of Canada's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, we will stand in solidarity with women's organizations across Canada in urging you to honour and respect international and domestic human rights commitments.

December 10 also marks the end of the international campaign 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, begun on November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and the anniversary of the Montreal Massacre. United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in his message on November 25, called on Member States to "do more to implement the international legal and policy framework to which they have committed themselves." We encourage you to heed his appeal, and that of women across Canada and the world.

As international advocates for peace and women's rights, for many years we have relied on the Canadian government's leadership on these issues in the international arena. Canada has put in place a number of key domestic safeguards, and has an internationally acclaimed human rights legacy to its name. It is the apparent roll-back of this leadership through recent decisions by your government that we find very disturbing and why we feel it is important to share our preoccupations directly with you.

Despite important progress for some women over the last 50 years, women's inequality is systemic and deeply entrenched in every country in the world. Your government could send a strong signal of the intention of Canada to still be a leader in promoting women's rights by insuring that the newly proposed UN agency for women is fully financed and autonomous of UN bureaucracy -- along the lines of UNICEF, for example. We hope we can continue to count Canada among the world's leaders in defending and promoting women's equality worldwide.

Sincerely,

Betty Williams Mairead Maguire Rigoberta Menchu Tum

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Mairead Corrigan Maguire

Rigoberta Menchu Tum

Jody Williams

Shirin Ebadi

Wangari

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