

STAND IN SOLIDARITY FOR PEACE -- TIME TO ACT REPLACING VIOLENCE, ARMED REBELLIONS, MILITARISM AND WAR WITH NONVIOLENCE AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

Address by Mairead Maguire at the 13th World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates in Warsaw, Poland, on October 21-23rd, 2013.

Dear Friends,

I believe the next stage of our evolution as the human family is to embrace nonviolence. This will mean rejecting violence in all its forms and solving our problems together through nonviolence, human rights and international law.

Replacing 'armed' rebellions, militarism and war, with international law, is not an impossible task and will happen when we humans reach the critical mass of people who know that each life is sacred, and say 'no' to killing, force and the threat of force, which is currently used by most governments and extremist groups around the world. We are challenged to stop killing each other, and instead use alternatives to violence in order to solve our problems.

There is nothing good or glorious about violence, armed rebellions, militarism, nuclear weapons and war. Suicide bombings, extrajudicial killings, renditioning, secret trials, and torturing other human beings is always wrong and we as world citizens have the power to stop such inhumanity by raising our voices against the use of such methods, be they used by individuals, armed rebels, or governments. Torture should never be accepted and the current policies of many Governments to ignore civil and human rights in the name of 'war on terrorism' is a denial of every world citizens right to basic freedom, worked for so long and hard by many people. When basic freedoms are denied or removed by governments, or rebel groups, people have a moral and legal responsibility to demand the return of those rights, otherwise all we have is domination and fear, and freedom, democracy and peace are no longer part of the peoples rich identity and inheritance.

There is a great yearning for peace in the human family. We are tired of militarism and war and so much suffering. We know that we live in a

rich world and yet with austerity cuts, and military spending higher than it has ever been, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. We cannot tackle poverty and provide development, and representative democracy, unless we end militarism and war. Poverty and inequality will never change as long as we have policies which reward the rich and punish the poor. Things will never change as long as our government policies put invasion, occupations, and wars above their own citizens' needs of education, health care, and taking care of the poor and marginalized in our societies. So why in the 21st century and one hundred years after First World War, are we still allowing armies to train, kill and torture, other human beings and what can we do to change before it is too late?

I believe we have to change our thinking and our mindsets. Much of our thinking is being distorted as it is based on the emotion of fear of 'otherness'. We see other people and countries, through the lens of fear which leads to hatred and Demon-ization of others whom we see as separate and different, because of religion, race, class, etc., we have allowed fear to be our master. But there is another way to think and live and we are challenged to change both individually and collectively to bring about real change in our world. When we choose to let go of fear, choose forgiveness and to love both ourselves and all others, a transformative energy arises and we are faced with new possibilities. Letting go of our fear, both as individuals and countries, allows us to live fully alive in the moment as joyful, happy people, to reach out to others in fraternity and friendship which in the final analysis is the best form of human security. Spiritual Leaders in all faith traditions can help stop violence by ending all ambiguity and justification of violence, and working together with peoples of all faiths, and none, to end ethnic and religious conflict and war.

Governments need to change their policies which are often based on the threat and use of force. The US government needs to move away from its policy of 'war on terrorism' This flawed foreign policy, and Israel's policy too, aroused the contempt and distrust of many people in the Middle East, and other places, who see these

policies as divide and conquer. The bombing attacks by extremists are a drastic mode of revenge. I would like to appeal for sanity and leadership by a change of USA/Israeli policies from occupation and militarism to disarmament, to dialogue and negotiation, to reconciliation and peace, and working for fraternity amongst the nations, all so close to the heart of Alfred Nobel, and indeed stipulated in his will.

The terror tactics being used by extremists does not advance the struggle against hegemony, foreign intervention, or external aggression, but peaceful, nonviolent means can bring closer the fraternity, equality, and justice all men and women of goodwill seek for our world today. I appeal to all those who are using violence to reject such methods and take up the way of peaceful resistance, as Abdul Gaffer Kahn, Gandhi, King, Dorothy Day, and so many before have shown really does work.

It seems the American people, too, are tired of their young men/women dying in foreign lands and war and militarism equals Poverty for many people living in USA cities. Across Europe too we see people marching against re-armament, austerity cuts and unemployment. Many of us had high hopes when the European Union brought us together as diverse countries to work for peace and against any more wars in Europe. Now we see the militarization of Europe through NATO when countries, facing severe austerity cuts, are being asked to fund the fighting and invasion and destruction of other countries, such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, etc., much against the wishes of the people of the world. A recent study has shown that at a time of austerity EU military spending increased to 194 billion euro, equivalent to the annual deficits of Greece, Italy and Spain combined. The Stockholm International Peace Research states that in 2012 world military expenditure is estimated to have reached \$1,756 billion – the highest ever. It is time to abolish NATO, bring an end to the European battle groups and an end to the missile defence shield, and develop a nuclear weapons free zone, in an effort to end the militarization of the European Union to stop it developing in the wrong direction and contrary to the ideas and inspirations of its European citizens.

I thank you all for your work and encourage you to keep it up, as it is an important piece in this tapestry of love which will bring about an end to militarism and war and bring about peace for the human family.

Mairead Maguire www.peacepeople.com



Mairead Maguire was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1976 for her work for peace and a nonviolent solution to the ethnic/political conflict in Northern Ireland – an award she shares with Betty Williams. The two women, along with journalist Ciaran McKeown organized massive peace demonstrations and founded the Peace People, a movement committed to building a just and peaceful society through nonviolent social action and a rejection of ‘the bomb and the bullet and all the techniques of violence’. Mairead currently serves as Hon. President. Since receiving the Nobel Prize, she has dedicated her life to promoting nonviolence and disarmament, both in Northern Ireland and around the world, having recently returned from Afghanistan where she called for an end to the Afghan war.

Mairead is a member of the International Peace Council, Vice-Chair of the Nobel Womens Initiative, and a member of the Global Nonkilling Movement. Her book ‘The Vision of Peace; faith and hope in Northern Ireland’ has been published in several languages.

She travels regularly to Israel and Palestine to support peace activists working in the region for a nonviolent solution to the conflict. As a Jury Member of Russell Tribunal on Palestine, she supports Palestinians right to self-determination and has sailed a number of times on the Free gaza flotillas to break the siege and bring humanitarian supplies to Gaza.

Mairead is an active pacifist and believes that violence and wars will end when we abolish armies and base our societies, not on violence or the threat of violence, but on Human rights and International laws.