



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)

February 1, 2016

We, the Nobel peace laureates of the Nobel Women's Initiative, stand in solidarity with the brave Q'eqchi' women who are not only breaking the silence, but also holding government authorities accountable for the sexual crimes committed against them during Guatemala's 36-year civil war.

A trial gets underway on February 1st in Guatemala City in which Q'eqchi women of Sepur Zarco—a small community in eastern Guatemala—will seek recognition that the rapes and sexual assaults against women in their community during Guatemala's civil war constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes.

During the war Guatemalan armed forces used sexual violence as a means to humiliate and tear apart Mayan communities, committing an estimated 100,000 rapes against Mayan women. The war started in 1960, following a CIA-sponsored coup d'état in 1954, and lasted until 1996.

In 1982, government armed forces attacked Sepur Zarco, a small Q'eqchi' community in Guatemala. Much of the community was killed, or forcibly disappeared, but military forces captured some of the women and subjected them to sexual and domestic slavery. Testimony of survivors indicates that the women were required to report every third day to the Sepur Zarco military installation for 'shifts' during which they were raped, sexually abused and forced to cook and clean for the soldiers. For some women, the abuse lasted as long as six years.

We want to thank the Q'eqchi' women and their supporters for bravely moving ahead with a case of national and international importance. This trial is breaking new ground, and should serve as an example to those communities around the world seeking justice for sexual crimes committed in conflict and during the fragile post-conflict period that follows.

The Mayan women of Guatemala are working to ensure that the past is not repeated—and justice is served. We call on the national government of Guatemala to demonstrate a clear commitment to a just and fair outcome to this trial, and for Guatemalan society to recognize and protect the rights of the Q'eqchi' women who are seeking justice. As members of the international community, our pledge is to

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support this process and the civil society that is providing direct accompaniment to the women of Sepur Zarco.

We would like to thank the *The Alianza Rompiendo el Silencio y la Impunidad* (Alliance Breaking the Silence and Impunity) for their leadership on the issue of sexual violence; this coalition includes Guatemalan organizations *Mujeres Transformando el Mundo* (Women Changing the World - MTM), the *Equipo de Estudios Comunitarios y de Acción Psicosocial* (Community Studies and Psychosocial Action Team - ECAP) and the *Unión Nacional de Mujeres Guatemaltecas* (National Union of Guatemalan Women -UNAMG).

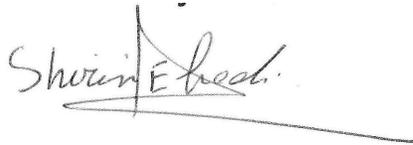
Signed,



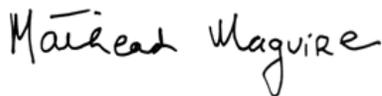
Jody Williams, USA (1997)



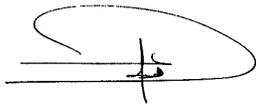
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