

**FOUNDERS:**

Betty Williams, Ireland - 1976  
Máiread 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

## **Declaration of solidarity with the women of Atenco, Mexico**

As Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, we want to recognize and express our solidarity with the struggle of the women of Atenco for the rights and fundamental liberties of its people. We know that for decades they have fought alongside men in their community for the right to land and a life with dignity, to be consulted on proposed plans for development on their lands and that they have been in solidarity with other struggles for rights in Mexico.

We received with concern, reports of repression of the people of Atenco in May 2006, where at least twenty-six women were sexually abused and forty-seven arbitrarily arrested. Currently, twelve people from Atenco are unjustly imprisoned with sentences of up to 112 years. América Del Valle, one of the young organizers of the Peoples' Front in Defense of the Land, and two of her colleagues, have been falsely accused of crimes they did not commit. Despite statements of denunciation put out by human rights bodies such as Amnesty International, the International Civil Human Rights Observation Commission (CCIODH), the United Nations and the National Human Rights Commission, justice has not been achieved in a manner befitting a truly democratic state.

The women of Atenco have remained steadfast in their determination to defend their rights, stop the political persecution of their leaders and secure the release of political prisoners. This work has been carried out in extremely precarious conditions as many of the women have become the sole providers for their families and continue to face harassment and threats. Their integrity and commitment are an example of strength and dignity for women around the world.

The protection of human rights defenders is an obligation of states that is enshrined in national and international legal frameworks. The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, based on binding instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, provides that "Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international level".

We appeal to the Mexican government to: release the twelve political prisoners, rescind the arrest warrants against América Del Valle and her two colleagues and punish those responsible for human rights violations against the people of Atenco. We trust that the state will guarantee the safety of human rights defenders and will stop any policy that criminalizes social movements in Mexico.

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