

Women Redefining Peace conference



Nobel Peace Laureates Jody Williams, Betty Williams, Shirin Ebadi, Mairead Corrigan Maguire and Wangari Maathai. Photo by J. Rand Images, Inc.



Nobel Women's Initiative's First International Conference: *Women Redefining Peace in The Middle East & Beyond*. Galway, Ireland. Photo by J. Rand Images, Inc.

WORKING FOR CONSTRUCTIVE US–IRAN ENGAGEMENT

In 2007, the Nobel Women's Initiative continued its call for a nonviolent solution to the conflict between the US and Iran. In January, NWI partnered with the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation and the National Iranian American Council to hold discussions in Washington, DC, led by NWI Laureates **JODY WILLIAMS** and **SHIRIN EBADI**, on the need for peaceful, strategic dialogue between the presidents, governments and civil societies of both countries. ■

"I strongly believe it's from Galway that I realized women's rights are violated worldwide. My organization is now working hard to bring women together to discuss their issues. Whenever I get the opportunity, I never hesitate to discuss issues of peace."

FLORENCE AKAO
Lira Women
Peace Initiative,
Uganda

SUPPORTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVISTS IN IRAN

The year was marked by increased persecution of women's rights defenders in Iran, with the arrests of dozens of students, activists and journalists involved in the *Million Signatures Campaign Demanding Changes to Discriminatory Laws*, a grassroots petition and education project calling for gender equality in Iran's legal system. In an effort to silence activists and halt the campaign, Iranian authorities have repeatedly blocked from within Iran. Non-governmental organizations have been shut down, and prison sentences for dissenters have been harsh.

The Nobel Women's Initiative website maintains updated information on the situation in Iran, with links to action people can take in support of Iranian women's rights, including specific action in support of all those detained. **EBADI** continues to legally represent many of those facing criminal charges. ■

"I don't think I can actually define the spirit of the gathering — but it is a sense of having been at a place where strength was shared, given and exchanged, in trust and in the knowledge that each of us would use it well — wherever we were headed after the conference. Every conversation at OpenDemocracy about democratizing the global debate for democracy and peace is informed by my experience in Galway."

JANE GABRIEL,
OpenDemocracy, UK