

Nancy Rubin

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Dear President Obama:

I am writing to you today to express my strong support for your decision to honor Mary Robinson with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Having served as the United States Representative to the United Nations Human Rights Commission while Mary Robinson was UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, I was able to witness first hand Mrs. Robinson's work as a dedicated crusader for human rights for all people. She highlighted the rights of women and children and promoted monitoring and reporting throughout the world.

She embodies the principle that human rights are universal. That standard includes shining a light on violations wherever they may occur, including in the Palestinian territories, in Israel and throughout the Middle East.

As an American citizen, I salute your recognition of the importance of the noble cause pursued by those rare individuals who with courage and conviction will speak truth no matter the challenge and speak out for justice in every venue. Mary Robinson is one of those people who have doggedly married conscience and intellectual activism across the globe. This frequently has made her unpopular.

Critics of Mrs. Robinson fail to mention that she has denounced anti-Semitism as a virulent form of racism; that she declined to accept the NGO forum's mendacious final document at Durban; or her passionate rejection of anti-Semitic cartoons during the lamentable conference. They also make no mention of how she battles anti-Semitism in Europe and calls for anti-Semitic violence to be treated as a criminal act.

As a Jewish American who affirms that defending the human rights of all is a basic tenant of my faith, I wholeheartedly endorse your recognition of Mary Robinson for the narrative of her life. She has worked tirelessly to shape a better world that is secure and just for everyone.

We in the Jewish community know it is critical to recognize and support human rights leaders who will speak out for vulnerable populations— not only because it is right but because our community has counted on them to speak out in the past and may need to do so yet again.

Mary Robinson will continue to be an ally in this struggle.

Sincerely,

Nancy Rubin
Former Ambassador to the United Nations Human Rights Commission