

Lynne Stewart - Ireland Speech 9/11/2003

Frontline Convention - Dublin, Ireland

You may think it is an irony for me to testify as an American; For me to raise my voice against my government on 9/11. But how can I not? There is repression and there is resistance. I am the living proof of both. I am not one of thousands of Muslims who were detained after that day. I was not held in Guantanamo nor in a military prison. I am a lawyer from New York City practicing criminal defense for 30 years.

On April 9th 2002 the FBI came to my home in New York, arrested me and charged me for materially aiding a terrorist organization, based solely on my work as the attorney for Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman. They claim that in 2000 I issued a press release on his behalf to Reuters News Agency and for this I was arrested and charged as a terrorist. I faced 40 years in jail. They had used wiretaps carried on for over 13 years. They were listening in on telephone conversations, fax and email. Worse they violated the attorney client privilege by listening to conversations between my client and myself at the jail. They made videos and audiotapes of these conversations all privileged. They searched my law office - off limits to the government. General Ashcroft went to the ruins of the World Trade Center and he went to a late night nationwide TV show, Letterman, and told the people that he had arrested the terrorist grandma. He attached that "T" word to me not because I am a Grandma but because I have been defending human rights defenders when they have been criminalized by my government. I mean the many political prisoners, the Black Panthers, Weather Underground, Mumia Abu Jamal.

And now I have fought back against these charges against me along with a great human rights lawyer and defender, Michael Tigar on the legal end - contrary to what most defendants are advised I went all over the U.S. speaking out,

exposing more of the hypocrisy which now has sent U.S. troops, to Iraq. These young people mostly poor, mostly of color, many who joined the U.S. Army because of the promise of an education, they could obtain no other way.

Tactically, we have also been filling the court room keeping our website full of information. Late in July of this year the Judge due to great lawyering and public outcry, dismissed the major charges. 30 years was gone. 10 years still remain.

Our fight continues.

I am proud to be invited to testify before this group of human rights activists. I have not suffered as many of you have suffered but the world needs to know that there exists such repression grown from fear in the United States - all powerful.

I want to say that I am happy to be in Ireland and I like to think that this land that my grandmother immigrated from has given to me my spirit of resistance.

In closing I want to read a poem by Shamus Heaney:

Human beings suffer,
They torture one another,
They get hurt and get hard.
No poem or play or song
Can fully right a wrong
Inflicted and endured.

The innocent in gaols
Beat on their bars together.
A hunger-striker's father
Stands in the graveyard dumb.
The police widow in veils
Faints at the funeral home.

History says; *Don't hope*
On this side of the grave.
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up,
And hope and history rhyme.

So hope for a great sea-change
On the far side of revenge.
Believe that a further shore
Is reachable from here.
Believe in miracles
And cures and healing wells.

Call miracle self-healing:
Double-take of feeling.
If there's fire on the mountain
Or lightning and storm
And a god speaks from the sky

That means someone is hearing
The outcry and the birth-cry
Of new life at its term.
It means once in a lifetime
That justice can rise up

And hope and history rhyme.

Let us continue to struggle