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Mairead Maguire arrived in Israel
on Sept 28

Israel deports Nobel laureate

TEL AVIV: Nobel peace laureate and activist Mairead Maguire was deported to Britain from here yesterday after losing an appeal against a ban on her entering the country, an Israeli official said.

"She left at 4am on a flight to London," interior ministry spokesman Sabine Hadad said.

The deportation of the Northern Irish activist came hours after she lost a high-profile appeal to the Israeli Supreme Court to prevent an earlier legal decision to expel her.

The 66-year-old arrived here on Tuesday last week but was denied entry at Ben Gurion airport because she had been deported in June for trying to reach the Gaza Strip by boat in defiance of a naval blockade.

During Monday's appeal, Maguire said she was not aware of the ban on her entering the country, but prosecutors argued that she had been advised in June that she would be barred from returning for 10 years.

In their ruling, the three justices wrote: "Maguire knew about the expulsion order against her... in which it explicitly states she would be refused entry to Israel."

The decision to deny her appeal was taken because Maguire "chose to take matters into her own hands by coming to Israel despite the ban on her entering, rather than taking other legal steps to have the order overturned", they wrote.

However, they said she could take legal steps to appeal against the validity of the 10-year deportation order issued by the Interior Ministry — a step Maguire will pursue on her return home, the Adalah legal rights group said.

Maguire was one of 19 activists on board the *Rachel Corrie*, which tried and failed to reach Gaza in June, a week after Israeli forces botched a raid on a six-ship flotilla heading for the coastal enclave, killing nine Turkish activists.

Her arrival here came as the Israeli navy intercepted another boat carrying activists trying to reach the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip which has been under naval blockade since 2006.—AFP