

Dr. Shirin Ebadi

Nobel Peace Prize-Winning Iranian Activist and Lawyer



An Iranian lawyer and human rights activist, Shirin Ebadi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 for her significant and pioneering efforts for democracy and human rights, especially the rights of women and children. She is the first Iranian and the first Muslim woman to receive the prize.

As a researcher and activist, she is known for promoting peaceful and democratic solutions to serious problems in society. She takes an active part in the public debate and is well known and admired by the general public in her country for the legal defense of victims of the conservative faction's attack on freedom of speech and political freedom.

Along with Iranian-American co-author Azadeh Moaveni, Ebadi is the author of the memoirs *Iran Awakening: One Woman's Journey to Reclaim Her Life and Country* and *Iran Awakening: A Memoir of Revolution and Hope*. Her latest, *The Golden Cage: Three Brothers, Three Choices, One Destiny*, was published in 2011.

Ebadi has also written a number of academic books and articles focused on human rights, including *The Rights of the Child: A Study of Legal Aspects of Children's Rights in Iran*, published with support from UNICEF, and *History and Documentation of Human Rights in Iran*. An activist for the rights of refugees, women, and children, she is the founder and leader of the Association for Support of Children's Rights in Iran.

Ebadi argues for a new interpretation of Islamic law that is in harmony with vital human rights such as democracy, equality before the law, religious freedom, and freedom of speech. She also advocates for the rights of the Bahá'í religious community, which has long struggled with a variety of problems and prejudices in Iran.

As a lawyer, Ebadi has been involved in a number of controversial political cases. She was the attorney of the families of the writers and intellectuals who were victims of the serial murders in 1999 and 2000. She has successfully worked to reveal the principals behind the attack on the students at Tehran University in 1999. As a consequence of her activism, Ebadi has been imprisoned on numerous occasions.

Ebadi campaigns for peaceful solutions to social problems and promotes new thinking on Islamic terms. She has displayed great personal courage as a lawyer defending individuals and groups who have fallen victim to a powerful political and legal system that is legitimized through an inhumane interpretation of Islam. Ebadi has shown her willingness and ability to cooperate with representatives of both secular and religious views.

Shirin Ebadi earned a law degree from the University of Tehran. In the years between 1975 and 1979, she served as president of the city court of Tehran—one of the first female judges in Iran. After the revolution in 1979, she was forced to resign.