Shirin Ebadi
Nobel Peace Laureate

Shirin Ebadi was born in 1947 in Hamadan, Iran. When she was young, her family moved to the capital of Tehran. Growing up, Ebadi and her brothers were treated as equals by their parents.

It was not until she was older that she realised most Iranian girls were treated as inferior and were expected to be quiet and obedient. Ebadi did well in school and went on to study law. In March 1969, when Ebadi was only 22 years old, she became the first female judge in Iranian history. She continued her education and received a doctorate in law from Tehran University in 1971. In the 1970's, Iran was in a state of unrest and the ruler, the Shah, was an unpopular dictator.

In 1979 the Shah was overthrown. Instead of a democracy as many hoped for, a religious government came to power in Iran. The new government was headed by Islamic clerics, led by the chief cleric, the Ayatollah.

They believed in a government in which women and minorities did not have equal rights. One of the first policies they enforced was to take away rights for women. It was no longer legal for women to serve as judges. All female judges were dismissed from their posts and given clerical jobs.

Dr. Ebadi, outraged by the situation, requested an early retirement. For several years she stayed at home taking care of her two daughters, writing books, and working to get her job back.

In 1992, Ebadi acquired her lawyer's license and established her own practice. She prioritised cases that involved the unfair treatment of women and children.

Ebadi became one of the most well-known lawyers in Iran and defended the families of serial murder victims and child abuse victims.

Ebadi has lived in exile in the United Kingdom since June 2009 because of death threats from the Iranian government. She continues to work for human rights around the world. Ebadi has been a member of PeaceJam since 2004.