

Speaking up for the Rule of Law – a Lawyer’s Perspective in Modern Iran



Thursday 9 November, 17:30, Middle Temple Hall

The Bar Council is delighted that Dr Shirin Ebadi, the Nobel Peace Prize Winner, will be delivering the 11th International Rule of Law Lecture. Dr Ebadi was one of the first female judges in Iran and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 for her efforts for democracy and human rights. She has had an extraordinary life dedicated to the practical operation of the Rule of Law and will be a truly fascinating speaker. The event is free to attend and will be followed by a drinks reception.



Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar Council’s International Committee, looks at Dr Ebadi’s extraordinary career in the face of adversity and tells us why the Nobel Peace Prize winner will be a fascinating speaker.

About the International Rule of Law lecture

This lecture series aims to stimulate debate, to inspire lawyers to participate in rule of law related work and to promote greater awareness of the importance of the rule of law.

We have been fortunate over the past decade to attract outstanding speakers from across the globe, each with their own perspective on the rule of law and each with their own thoughts on the challenges presented. The first ten lectures have been published by Wildy's and Sons Ltd. You can purchase a copy of the book from the [Wildy's and Sons Ltd website](#)



The Bar Council

Guest blog: Amanda Pinto QC – Dr Shirin Ebadi - Defying death threat in the name of justice

12 October 2017

We are delighted that Dr Shirin Ebadi, the Nobel Peace Prize Winner, will be delivering the 11th International Rule of Law Lecture on 9th November 2017 in Middle Temple Hall. She has had an extraordinary life dedicated to the practical operation of the Rule of Law and will be a truly fascinating speaker.

Dr Ebadi grew up in Tehran in a family that treated her and her sisters the same as her brother - something that informed her view on what was possible for a woman to achieve in life. An Iranian, she studied law and became one of the first female judges in 1969, continuing to study and gaining her doctorate in private law from Tehran University in 1971. She became the President of the Tehran City Court but, after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, she and all female judges were dismissed and demoted to clerical duties. Dr Ebadi was made to serve as the clerk in the very court in which she sat as a judge. Having protested at their demotion, the erstwhile female judges were made "experts" in the Justice Department. However, Dr Ebadi was so disheartened that she took early retirement so that she could practice as a lawyer. It took her over 10 years to be granted her law licence, 4 years after Ayatollah Khomeini's death. During that period, she wrote several books including ones proposing amendments to Iran's succession and divorce laws and numerous articles. She also co-founded the Association for Support of Children's Rights in 1995 and the Human Rights Defence Centre, supporting the families of political prisoners, with four other lawyers in 2001.

Nonetheless, once she obtained her lawyer's licence she took on many cases involving those persecuted by the regime and human rights, particularly those of women and children.

In 2003 she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize "for her efforts for democracy and human rights. She has focused especially on the struggle for the rights of women and children".

She has never shied away from the extraordinary personal risk her work has brought her: for example, in 2000, she was imprisoned for having criticized her country's hierarchy - advocating the withdrawal of political power from the clergy and the separation of religion and state. And, whilst acting for a victim's family killed in the 1990s at the hand of the State, the judge granted her legal team access to the investigation into the killing of intellectuals. Going through the paperwork she read a transcript of a conversation between a government minister and a member of the death squad: "The next person to be killed is Shirin Ebadi."

In 2008 the center was closed down by the security forces who confiscated her properties. Dr. Ebadi left Iran just before the June 2009 presidential election to participate in a conference in Spain. Once overseas, she was prevented from returning home. Her sister and her husband were arrested by the security forces to exert pressure on her, and her daughters targeted too. She knew that if she returned to Iran, she would be arrested, imprisoned and possibly killed. The Iranian government has filed a case against her in the revolutionary court. Although she is not afraid of prison, she remains in exile: "Outside of Iran I knew I'd be more useful. I could speak, I could hear the voices of people."

If you want a taste of her extraordinary life, trying to uphold the Rule of Law in the country she loves but under a regime without access to justice for most of its population, I encourage you to read her books 'Iran Awakening' or 'Until We Are Free'. I cannot think of a worthier or more appropriate person to deliver the 11th International Rule of Law Lecture than Dr Ebadi. Please put the date in your diary so that you don't miss out. **Amanda Pinto QC is Chair of the [Bar Council's International Committee](#)**