



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Honorary Degree Citations The degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, conferred on Dr. Shirin Ebadi Tuesday, April 20, 2004

Mr. Chancellor, Shirin Ebadi has been a voice of conscience in Iran for more than twenty-five years. She has consistently questioned dogma and challenged authority in her struggle to win basic human rights for women, children, refugees and victims of government oppression. To many, she is a heroic figure who embodies an Islam in which every individual can live in peace and equality.

Her own words reveal the severity of her struggle: "Any person who pursues human rights in Iran must live with fear from birth to death, but I have learned to overcome my fear."

Indeed, Shirin Ebadi's life is distinguished by a brave refusal to be silenced. From the very beginning of her career, she has engaged herself with a fierce will in public debate. As a lawyer, activist, writer, and lecturer, she represents a reformed Islam and advocates a new interpretation of Islamic law, one that is in harmony with democracy, equality before the law, and freedom of speech and religion.

Her writing sheds light on the injustices of Iranian domestic law, and discloses alleged human rights violations by Iranian authorities. She is the driving force behind Iran's reform of family laws, advocating significant changes in divorce and inheritance legislation. She has taken on sensitive legal cases others dared not touch, fearlessly defending public intellectuals and women's rights activists at great personal risk. Despite seemingly insurmountable challenges, Shirin Ebadi created a truly independent human rights organization in Iran: the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child. And recently, she was a founding member of the Centre for the Defense of Human Rights.

For many years, despite detention, suspension from legal practice, and threats to her safety, she has remained true to her vision of an Islam in which all are equal. For her singularly courageous efforts, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003.

Mr. Chancellor, in her struggle for justice and equality, Shirin Ebadi has never faltered. Deeply imbued with the belief that change must come about peacefully, she is a fearless champion of human rights, and has left an indelible mark on the conscience not only of Iranians but of people everywhere. It is my privilege to ask on behalf of the Senate of this university that you confer upon Shirin Ebadi the degree Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.