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Nobel Peace Prize winner returns to UA

Shirin Ebadi, a judge in Iran, is expected to talk about current events in her country during a lecture tomorrow

MITRA TAJ

Tucson Citizen

For Tucsonans curious about the embattled country of Iran, the timing of a visit from Shirin Ebadi couldn't be better.

Ebadi, who in 2003 became the first Muslim woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize, will return to Tucson to speak tomorrow at 6 p.m. in the University of Arizona Student Union Memorial South Ballroom.

As her home country awaits news of possible sanctions from the U.N. Security Council because it is not cooperating with nuclear inspectors, Ebadi will deliver her lecture, "Islam, Human Rights and Democracy in Iran" to Tucsonans.

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"It's a very timely topic and she's one of the best people we could hear it from," said Anne Betteridge, director of the UA's Center for Middle Eastern Studies. She helped organize Ebadi's 2004 visit to UA.

Tomorrow's lecture is part of Ebadi's two-week visit to Tucson, sponsored by UA's James E. Rogers College of Law.

Ebadi will also deliver a series of lectures to a select group of College of Law and Social and Behavioral Science graduate students, strengthening the College of Law's tradition of teaching international human rights, said Randy Wagner, associate director of academic enrichment and faculty development at the law college.

"She will be teaching law students and graduate students about a part of the world that has become a vortex of international concern," wrote College of Law Dean Toni Massaro in an e-mail. "Her message is a hopeful one - that democratic principles have universal meaning."

Massaro said she decided to invite Ebadi to lecture after listening to her speak in 2004.

"I was impressed by her intelligence and passion," Massaro wrote. "This is a person who has endured a great deal to pursue what she believes is right."

In 1975 Ebadi became the first woman to work as a judge in Iran, but she lost that position following the 1979 revolution. She has been practicing law in Iran since 1993, taking on controversial cases and advocating the rights of women and children, though at times she has

been imprisoned.

Betteridge called Ebadi "a very courageous woman" for continuing to work in Iran.

"To have someone in Iran so active and working with a lot of local organizations is extremely important," Betteridge said. "If she were outside Iran she wouldn't be able to do that."

Wagner said that although Ebadi practices law in Iran, her advocacy of human rights and peace applies the world over.

"She's not just talking about Iran," Wagner said. "If you listen to her, she's talking about the cause for human rights in a much larger context."

The Iranian Association of Arizona and the Center for Middle Eastern Studies co-sponsored Ebadi's lecture in 2004, which drew about 1,500 people.



Ebadi

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