

INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION (IBA) ANNUAL CONFERENCE, DUBLIN

RULE OF LAW SYMPOSIUM

**PRESENTATION OF THE IBA HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD
TO IRANIAN LAWYER ABDOLFATTAH SOLTANI**

FRIDAY 5 OCTOBER 2012

SPEECH

MAEDE SOLTANI

EXCEPTING THE AWARD ON BEHALF OF HER FATHER

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, let me convey to you, my father's warm greetings from the corner of the Evin Prison, one of the most notorious one among other prisons in my beloved country, Iran.

As a daughter of a man who's dedicated years to realisation of civil demands of the Iranian society. I would like to use this opportunity to tell you about his drive and dedication to realise the civil demands, and the establishment of the rule of law in my country Iran, from all the hardships he had to endure in order to enlighten people's mind in the society; to the long term solitary confinement and repetitive threats which, a short while ago, were extended to his wife, my mother.

After graduation, my father undertook helping ordinary people to become aware of their legal rights, as one of his civil duties, by explaining the legal issues in layman terms and accessible language. He spent countless hours of his life in his small office with his clients. Without any expectation of financial gain, he provided free legal aid to many different groups including people who are financially incapable, labourers, workers, teachers, student activists, women and civil activists all with the goal of elevating the level of legal education in the society. He is one of the few lawyers who is fearless of the repressive establishment and undertook many cases of people being accused on grounds of their political beliefs and as a result of their media activities.

Since 2000, he has worked tirelessly to found the "Defenders of Human Rights Centre" along with Mrs Shirin Ebadi and a few other lawyers and human rights activists, in order to establish a culture of the rule of the law and to prevent widespread violation of the human rights in Iran. Preparing educational booklets on the rights of the accused, and women's' rights. Start of legal education classes for the workers, students, teachers, journalists and political activists. Attending the press conferences. Preparing the quarterly reports in regard to appalling human rights situation in Iran. Involvement in founding of the "Stop the Execution of Children" campaign. Involvement in founding of the national peace council, committee on the investigation of non judiciary arrests, Committee for defending free and fair elections. All the aforementioned are only part of his activities within the "Defenders of Human Rights Centre".

Even with the closure of the centre, which gradually became a focal point for the civil activists of the Iranian society, not only he did not wash his hands from pursuing his clients' civil demands, but more determined than before he stood against the will of the law breakers within the Iranian Judiciary System. More vocal than before, he criticised their conducts and demanded the rule of law, and also confronting the non-responsible elements within the judiciary system. Today these elements and individuals, easily disguised as Judges, prosecutors, interrogators, etc. are implementing the will of their masters.

Up to now, in the Iranian Judiciary System, 13 cases has opened against my father. None of these cases has any relevance to my father's legal activities and profession. Iranian regime has tried in many ways to block his activities. Refusing him as being fit to join the board of the Iran's Bar Council, arrest, threats, putting pressure and variety of the accusation in order to intimidate him. These pressures has also extended to my mother during the past one and half year. During her 6 days long solitary confinement, my mother has been pressurised to confess lies against my father. Up to now, my mother has been summoned to court 3 times with the accusation of "involvement in earning illegitimate money". What they mean by "involvement in earning illegitimate money" is that human rights award which was due to be presented to my father in 2009 by the city of Nuremberg, in recognition of his continuous activities for the realisation of the civil rights. For no reason, Iranian regime banned him from leaving the country at the gate. Instead, my mother had to received that award on his behalf. Today, my mother is in danger of conviction and imprisonment. This is a double injustice to my family.

During my father's arrest, interrogators of the Intelligence Ministry and other security agencies, put him in the solitary confinement for 6 months in the infamous section 209 of the Evin Prison. Under psychological torture, they demanded that my father would confess lies against the "Defenders of Human Rights Centre" and Mrs. Ebadi. Today, it is 13 months that my father has been jailed illegally. During this period, my family only being allowed once to meet him without a glass barrier between them. My father has been sentenced to 13 years in exile and 10 years ban from practice as a lawyer and in odd; even with the current laws in Iran, he has to do his sentence in a town 1200 km away from Tehran, where he primarily lives and work. Prison also brings illness with itself and my father in addition to his previous health conditions has to endure more illnesses arising from malnutrition and the appalling prison condition. Up to now, he has not been facilitated with medical care. Sometimes, in his loneliness, he expresses his feeling by writing poem. I have to say even his hand-writings and poems are not immune from prison guards.

In the end, let me share with you one of my father's poems in prison during the past few months, in describing the freedom:

You've sing the freedom to the world
So freedom, what you do in prison then!?
They won't mention your name with grace
As they don't want to see you free, freedom!