

From Iran

Nobel Prize goes to Iranian Rights Activist

Iranian human rights activist Shirin Ebadi was chosen by the Nobel Prize Committee to receive this year's Peace Prize. Ebadi won the Nobel prize for her efforts in promoting the rights of women and children in Iran and worldwide. She is the first Iranian and Muslim woman to win the award. Ebadi was the first female judge in her country, serving as president of the Tehran city court, from 1975. With the advent of the Islamic republic in 1979, however, she was forced to resign when it was decided that women were not suitable for such posts. Ms. Ebadi was jailed in 2000 for several weeks on charges of publicizing evidence of official involvement in those attacks, and she was barred from practicing law for five years after a closed trial.

(http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3181992.stm)

From Iraq

Aquila Al-Hashimi Dies

Aquila Hashimi, one of the three women on the U.S. – appointed Iraqi Governing Council, died of gunshot wounds five days after her convoy was ambushed by six men in a pickup truck near her home in western Baghdad. Al-Hashimi was supposed to attend the United Nations General Assembly in New York and was expected to become Iraq's new ambassador to the United Nations.

(http://www.4reference.net/encyclopedias/wikipedia/Aquila_al_Hashimi.html)

Afghanistan

Women Still Being Arrested for “Moral” Crimes

The Taliban may have left Afghanistan but women, especially those in rural areas, still live in fear due to restrictions that recall the morality policing of the Taliban.

Women who are arrested for talking to men who are not their husbands, brothers or fathers are still subjected to “chastity tests.” Some women are arrested while talking to a relative or riding in a cab with a male driver.

In the Western province of Herat, women have been arrested for driving cars and threatened for working with foreign organizations. To prevent “un-islamic” behavior, the governor, who was once a warlord, assembled a battalion of 13 to 14 year old boys to spy on women. The boys lurk in parks and other public gathering places watching for indiscretions.

According to a recent report by the European Commission. women are very susceptible to punishment for “family crimes” as a result of the country's very conservative patriarchal society.

When the Taliban were finally chased out of Afghanistan in early 2002, US President George W. Bush declared in his first State of the Nation Address: “Today, women are free.” In some ways the lives of girls and women have clearly improved since the toppling of the Taliban. According to UNICEF, an estimated 1.2 million girls went to school last year. Educated women have returned to work as teachers, doctors and lawyers. These developments however are mostly limited to the capital Kabul. A substantial portion of Afghanistan, now ruled by provincial governors and former warlords, is still being issued restrictive orders that are just a few degrees away from the Taliban's radical Islamic code. (We, Isis International, September 2003 No. 35, p. 2)