Shirin Ebadi has commented that, “Any person who pursues human rights in Iran must live with fear from birth to death, but I have learned to overcome my fear.” I understand her message to be a testimony that the human will to live in a just society will prevail in the face of opposition, it is a reminder that the human spirit cannot be confined.

Ebadi is a proud national of Iran, a state in which she has actively sought to advance the reinterpretation of Iranian Islamic Law in order to harmonize it with democratic principles and a wider conception of human rights. Her unwillingness to accept the status quo is counsel to Iranian society that it must not be complaisant; her determination to create discourse on the troubles of Iran is a message that humankind must pay attention not only to Iran but to parts of the world in the same predicament. Her persistence of peaceful resolution to conflict teaches us that in an age where conflict is resolved with further conflict, there truly are alternative solutions.

Shirin Ebadi’s sense of justice has led to her imprisonment; however, it has also contributed to the reformation of Iran’s family laws and created dialogue on the rights of women and children thereby giving them hope and representation on both a national and international scale.

I do not understand how Shirin Ebadi learns to live with the fear of threats to her safety due to her work. However, I have learned that through her activism she is expressing that life is precious. By defending democratic principles and the oppressed Ebadi defends human rights, which are inseparable from life and if we truly value life we will not want a shadow of it but nothing less than its complete expression.