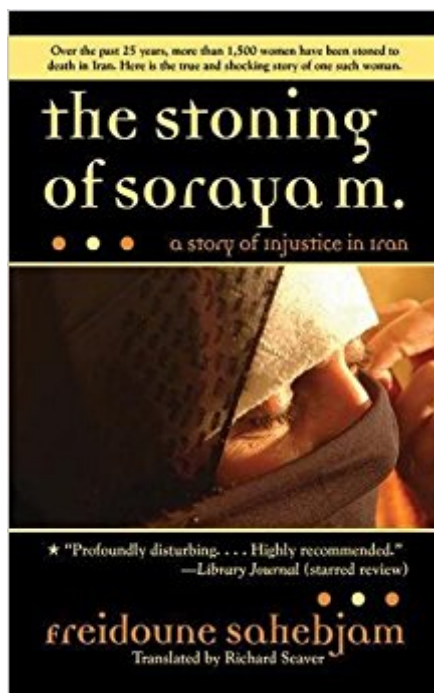


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# The Stoning Of Soraya M.: A Story Of Injustice In Iran



## Synopsis

Soraya M. Ali's husband, Ghorban-Ali, couldn't afford to marry another woman. Rather than returning Soraya's dowry, as custom required before taking a second wife, he plotted with four friends and a counterfeit mullah to dispose of her. Together, they accused Soraya of adultery. Her only crime was cooking for a friend's widowed husband. Exhausted by a lifetime of abuse and hardship, Soraya said nothing, and the makeshift tribunal took her silence as a confession of guilt. They sentenced her to death by stoning: a punishment prohibited by Islam but widely practiced. Day by day; sometimes minute by minute; Sahebjam deftly recounts these horrendous events, tracing Soraya's life with searing immediacy, from her arranged marriage and the births of her children to her husband's increasing cruelty and her horrifying execution, where, by tradition, her father, husband, and sons hurled the first stones. A stark look at the intersection between culture and justice, this is one woman's story, but it stands for the stories of thousands of women who suffered; and continue to suffer; the same fate. It is a story that must be told.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Starred Review. An unforgettable indictment, brilliantly written and translated, of man's inhumanity to woman and of tyranny disguised as righteousness.” (Kirkus Reviews)  
“Starred Review. Profoundly disturbing. . . . highly recommended.” (Library Journal)

Freidoune Sahebjam, the son of a former Iranian ambassador, is a journalist who was sentenced to death in absentia for his undercover reporting criticizing the Iranian government. He lives in hiding in France. Richard Seaver was a publisher, editor, and translator. He passed away in 2009.

Just as Pat Tillman gave a face to the countless and needless military casualties in Afghanistan, Soraya's tragedy personalizes the stoning of over 1,500 women in Iran over the course of the last 25 years. Sahebjam's biography is a compelling account, but it is not, however, an easy read, as the violence is stark, gratuitous with the author leaving no detail unexamined. Written in 1986, in the wake of the Islamic Revolution, this account of the brutal execution of an innocent woman illuminates, once more, the extent to which religious fervor, regardless of sect or creed, can be manipulated for personal gain and emptied of any moral integrity. Although Soraya was stoned, theoretically, in accordance to Islamic dictums, her aunt astutely notes that her fate is the outcome of "the law of men, the law that men make and say it is the law of God." My only problem with this biography lies within the preface, as I would have preferred an update to the 2011 edition, detailing how the political climate and relative position of women in society has changed since the original manuscript.

This author's best book. A must read for men and women interested in the abuse of rights of women in the Middle Eastern setting. Also, excellent book for those who know nothing about atrocities like stoning to death. Riveting story, a clear style, even in translation.

Such a tragic story; it's heartbreaking to know that this is still part of cultures around the world. Told very directly and honestly, I became attached to the story and kept thinking (or hoping) that perhaps the ending won't be so horrific', even though the book's title clearly crushes that hope. I also connected to Soraya because we are both mothers, and my heart ached for her and the children she was raising even at the time she was murdered. Difficult read, but these are the stories that need to be told so that our awareness of them can help create change.

Horrifying tale, but elegantly written in a sparse tone that kept me locked into reading it straight through. I applaud the journalist/writer for bringing this story - and the reality of stonings that have happened to other women, in other locations - to light. The description of the actual stoning was very difficult to read, but don't turn away - it is by people turning away and refusing to understand what a stoning really means, what it really does to a human body - a human being - that these hideous

events are permitted to continue. Hoping desperately that one day, these kinds of horrible tragedies stop forever...

This is a must read book. I saw the movie and knew I wanted to read the story too. If more people are made aware of the difficulties the woman of the muslim nation face perhaps we would rise up to lend a helping hand so that no other women would have to endure what Soraya did. I applaud her aunt who had the courage to tell the story to the news reporter who by the grace of God was careful enough to get out and get this story told. How many more woman may have suffered only not to have their plight told. What they did to her and how even her sons and own father treated her is appalling. Have a box of tissue near by I can't see anyone not shedding a tear for Soraya M.

This story or rather life so quickly taken broke my heart. I feel as though I lost one of my own children. I am forever grateful to live here in the United States and to have freedom as a woman. I can not imagine the amount of fear and horror these woman and children live with day in and day out. I also have a new found deep respect for my husband who not only loves me but takes care of me so well. I pray for Iranian women and for those who stories we haven't heard. May God have mercy on that land.

The book tells an extremely important story about conditions in Iran after the fall of the Shah, and helps to understand how religion can be perverted to serve nefarious ends among people without a strong religious education. However, I found the book hard to follow because of its structure and lack of close editing. It was, for example, not clear why certain people and events were described in detail but then not mentioned again until much later and in a different context.

A very well told story through which I was desperately horrified and ashamed. What vile . . . . I don't know how to describe the evil that men will do . . . .

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