

Be a Hero for a Better World

Irene Khan (1956-)



"No cause can justify
the abuse of human rights."

Irene Zubaida Khan is the 7th Secretary General of Amnesty International. She is the first woman, the first Muslim and the first Asian to head this international human rights organization. Irene Khan grew up while East Bengal was fighting for its independence from Pakistan. The human rights abuses she witnessed during the struggle helped shape her worldview. She studied abroad in Ireland and England as a teen and then got her law degree in the US at Harvard Law School, specializing in international law and human rights. In 1977, she started Concern Universal, an international development and relief organization. In 1980 she began working at the United Nations and spent 20 years with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). She was appointed as UNHCR Chief of the Mission in India in 1995 and led the UNHCR team in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia during the Kosovo crisis in 1999.

In 2001, Irene Khan was chosen to head Amnesty International. She has been a dynamic leader there, instituting many reforms. She launched a global program against violence towards women, and she has broadened Amnesty International's focus beyond torture and unfair trials and detention to also include issues such as discrimination, hunger, illiteracy and corporate accountability.

Irene Khan has received many awards and honors for her dedication to human rights, including the 2002 Pilkington "Woman of the Year" Award, and the 2006 Sydney Peace Prize.

Irene Khan was born on December 24, 1956 in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Be A Hero For A Better World!

1. Find out more about this hero
2. Hold an event to raise awareness about human rights issues
3. Contribute to organizations working to defend human rights

Human Rights Organizations

- Amnesty International (amnesty.org)
- Carter Center (cartercenter.org)
- Human Rights First (humanrightsfirst.org)
- Human Rights Watch (hri.org)
- Rights International (rightsinternational.org)
- UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (ohchr.org)
- Witness (witness.org)
- Women's Human Rights Net (whrnet.org)

For more information: www.betterworldheroes.com/khan-irene.htm

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