

Be a Hero for a Better World



"I have defended democracy, human rights,
and brotherhood between peoples.
And I'll keep doing so for as long as I live."

Leyla Zana

(1961-)

Leyla Zana was the first Kurdish woman elected to the Turkish Parliament. She caused a stir as soon as she took her oath of office in 1991, by speaking Kurdish in the Parliament, which was against the law. For the next 3 years she continued to speak out for a peaceful resolution of the Kurdish peoples' struggle for human rights and freedom. For these actions, she was arrested in 1994 and faced the death penalty for treason. Amnesty International declared Leyla Zana a Prisoner of Conscience, and led a worldwide call for her release. International pressure forced the Turkish government not to implement the death penalty, but Leyla Zana was sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Leyla Zana was awarded the Rafto Prize for human rights in 1994, and in 1995, the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize and the German Aachen Prize; but she was unable to collect any of these awards until she was released from prison in 2004. In 2005, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the Turkish government had violated her human rights. After her release from prison, Leyla Zana and others formed a new political party, the Movement for a Democratic Society, which is focused on working for a peaceful and democratic solution to the Kurdish question. In 2005, she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize as part of the 1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize project.

Leyla Zana was born on May 3, 1961 in Silvan, Turkey

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/zana.htm

BetterWorldHeroes.com

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