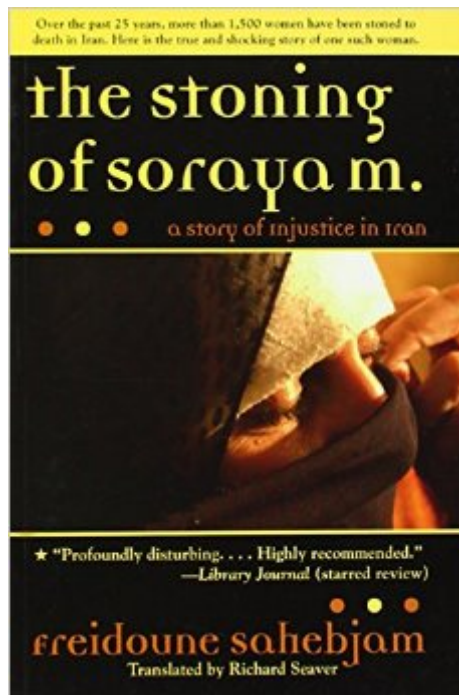


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The Stoning Of Soraya M.: A Story Of Injustice In Iran



Synopsis

Soraya M.'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

I have mixed feelings about this book. I didn't "enjoy" it, but who enjoys reading about stonings and murder and misogyny and injustice? It wasn't perfectly written. And, much of it is the victim's aunt's and the writer's interpretation of thoughts rather than Soraya's actual thoughts. Still, it's a decent book and the stoning description is very graphic. That in itself, is good. For too long westerners have continued to close their eyes to the horrors of sharia law. What I found to be the biggest fault

with the book was the description on the back of the book. It reads, "She was punished to death by stoning-- a punishment officially prohibited by Islam but widely practiced." Nope. This isn't true. At all. It isn't true at all. Stoning is part of sharia law. Sharia law is Islamic law and stoning is specifically permitted. From Muslim Hadith no. 4206: And when he had given command over her and she was put in a hole up to her breast, he ordered the people to stone her. Khalid b. al--Walid came forward with a stone which he threw at her head, and when the blood spurted on his face he cursed her . . . And, from the Koran itself: Sura 24:2: The fornicatress and the fornicator, flog each of them with a hundred stripes. Let not pity withhold you in their case, in a punishment prescribed by Allah, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a party of the believers witness their punishment. [This punishment is for unmarried persons guilty of the above crime (illegal sex), but if married persons commit it (illegal sex), the punishment is to stone them to death, according to Allah's law. So, if Muhammad did it, it's the perfect thing to do, according to Islam. Muhammad was the perfect example for humanity and must be emulated.

How do you give five stars to a book on a small town execution? Freidoune Sahebjam has written an insightful and brave account of an event unimaginable to most of us. I found this book helpful in showing me once again what a deadly infection fundamentalism can become and how this sickness can overtake an entire town in one afternoon. Indeed, to value purity over simple things like life and love and truth will always lead to death and heartache. Even more so if God is mixed in. This is the message of Sahebjam's book. This paperback can be read in one sitting and was penned by a French born and raised son of an Iranian Ambassador. It remains to this day a banned book in Iran, a country and culture not that far removed from a similar but different ethnic cleansing style fundamentalism I saw in Israel, Egypt and Palestine this week where I finished this book and wrote this review while on pilgrimage, amidst a backdrop of guns and soldiers and a chopper overhead. Muslims killing Christians and burning churches in nearby Egypt while we were there. Same old same old. We took in some 7,000 Jewish soldiers pointing assault rifles at Palestinians in the Holy Land, in Jerusalem, near the Western Wall, not far from the site and on the same day one Palestinian youth was shot and killed as I just learned from an airport monitor. We heard the gunfire over the wall. 34 were arrested; 12 killed the day we took off. Same old same old. Sad. But back to our small town in 1979. Soraya was a mother and wife married to an archetypal creep of a man who went so far as to bring to his own house prostitutes in order to insult his wife and offload his marriage; a man unwilling to count the cost of an honorable divorce.

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