

**LESSON PLAN**

**Cultural Rights v. Human Rights**

MODULE ONE. FOUNDATION: *UNIT I. Why Do We Need Human Rights?*

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**LENGTH**

3 days

**NEBRASKA SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS**

World History: 12.2.10

**McREL NATIONAL STANDARDS**

World History: 44.5, 44.6, 45.3

**OBJECTIVES**

Using the story of Nobel Peace Prize Winner Shirin Ebad, students will be asked to debate whether “cultural rights” should hold sway over “human rights”. The debate needs to focus on whether there is legitimacy to the argument or whether the point is simply used as an excuse to deny various human rights to select elements of a population group.

1. Students will explore the potential conflict between a nation’s cultural beliefs and its responsibility to protect the human rights of all its people.
2. Students will examine key cultural elements of the country of Iran and its contemporary history.
3. Students will examine the role of Shirin Ebad in advocating for human rights in Iran.

**TERMS**

Cultural Rights  
Islam  
Nobel Peace Prize  
Political Activism  
Theocracy

**MATERIALS**

- Guidelines for Debate (attached)
- Information on Ebad and Iran is available at:  
<http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/iran/ebadi.html>

**Day One:**

- I. Divide the class into groups reflecting the following breakdown:
  - Iranian government
  - Iranian university students
  - Panel of human rights investigators
- II. Assign students to read through the website noted above and take notes that will help them prepare information to support their assigned group’s role as it will play out in the class debate/presentation. Direct students to follow the attached guidelines for each group.

**Day Three:**

- III. Have students engage in a controlled debate that is monitored through the questions asked of both the Iranian governmental authorities and the university students.
- IV. Conclude with a general class discussion on whether or not the issue in Iran reflects human rights abuses or cultural differences.

### **Guidelines for Debate**

**Government authorities** should be able to discuss the importance of maintaining the cultural traditions established in Iran since the 1979 Revolution. Your arguments will center on the belief that the government has the legitimate authority to uphold its laws and traditions without outside interpretation or interference, and that a nation has the right to establish its cultural beliefs and practices. Consequently, the term “human rights” is relative to the beliefs of the culture of each nation.

**Iranian university students** should be able to discuss the importance of a people to decide their beliefs without imposition from the government and to exercise those rights in society. Your arguments will center on the belief that the government is abusing its obligation to meet the human needs and to protect the human rights of its citizens in an effort to maintain political power, not as an element of “cultural belief”.

The **international panel** has no bias toward or against the cultural foundation of Iran and will prepare questions to the panelists of both sides to determine if human rights are being violated in Iran. You need a thorough understanding of the basic history of contemporary Iran and its current situation, including the story of Shirin Ebad