

IN SEARCH OF A BETTER WORLD



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"IN SEARCH OF A BETTER WORLD" based on the bestselling 2017 CBC Massey Lectures is the remarkable life story of world-renowned human rights lawyer Payam Akhavan and his struggle for justice on behalf of survivors of genocide. Born in Iran and exiled to Canada in his childhood, Payam watches helplessly after the 1979 Islamic revolution as the Bahá'í religious community to which his family belonged becomes the victim of violent persecution, destroying the innocent world he once knew. His human rights odyssey begins in earnest as an immigrant teenager living in Toronto, when he learns that his sixteen-year old contemporary Mona Mahmudnizhad has been hanged for writing a high-school essay demanding her freedom of religious belief.

In the film Payam says; "How incredibly powerful she was, that they couldn't break her, even after months of torture; 'you can kill me but you cannot take away my humanity' she said. That always stayed with me. That was the turning point, either I'm going to turn my back to this injustice or I am going to rise to the occasion. So I decided to become a fighter. To struggle for justice because it was my only path of redemption."

Payam's vow to Mona remains a thread throughout the film as we follow his remarkable journey in search of a better world, leading variously to his role as a young UN prosecutor in the Srebrenica genocide trial at The Hague against the "Butcher of the Balkans",

his defence of Bolivia's indigenous peoples seeking to be reconnected with the Pacific Ocean across their ancestral lands, his friendship with survivors of the Rwandan genocide in their struggle for healing, his establishment of the Iran People's Tribunal to expose the 1988 mass-execution of political prisoners, and finally, his efforts among the Rohingya Muslims in the refugee camps of Bangladesh building a genocide case against Myanmar's military leaders and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu, leading to a historic case before the International Court of Justice in 2019. The film follows Payam for nearly two years, as he struggles to balance work and life in extreme circumstances, showing how events of global significance are rooted in personal experiences.



Mona Mahmudnizhad was an Iranian Bahá'í who, in 1983, together with nine other Bahá'í women, was sentenced to death and hanged in Shiraz, Iran on the grounds of being a member of the Bahá'í Faith.



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