

ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF
PRESIDENT OF LIBERIA / NOBEL LAUREATE

Internationally known as Africa’s “Iron Lady,” President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is a leading promoter of peace, justice, and democratic rule. She grew up in Liberian capital of Monrovia.

President Johnson Sirleaf later earned an accounting degree from the Madison College of Business and a Masters Degree in Public Administration from Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government in the United States.

In her efforts to bring justice to her people in Liberia, she has spent more than a year in jail at the hands of the military dictatorship of General Samuel Doe and had her life threatened by former President Charles Taylor. She campaigned relentlessly for Taylor’s removal from office and played an active and supportive role in the Transitional Government of Liberia as the country prepared for elections in October of 2005.

President Johnson Sirleaf was a presidential candidate in the 1997 Liberia general election where she finished second in the field of 13. Before that, she served for five years as Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Program as Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations and was the first woman to lead the United Nations Development Project for Africa.

In November 2005, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected President of Liberia and became the first woman to lead an African nation. She defeated popular world class soccer star George Weah with an impressive 59.4 percent of the vote.

In October 2007, President Johnson Sirleaf was awarded The Presidential Medal of Freedom, the United States highest Civil Award, for her personal courage and unwavering commitment to expand freedom and improve the lives of people in Liberia and across Africa. In 2011, she was honored with the Nobel Peace Prize for her work in securing women’s rights.

She is also the author of her first book, *This Child Will Be Great: Memoir of a Remarkable Life by Africa’s First Woman President*, published in 2009.

TOPICS:

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- Poverty & Development, Conflict & Peace?
- The Challenges of Lasting Peace (Liberia Case Study)
- Furthering the Rights of Women