

# Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf – Liberia's "Iron Lady"

**1939:** Born to rural Liberian family – mother from Sinoe in Southeast, father from Bomi in West

**1956:** Marries, has four sons. Returns to school to pull her family out of poverty



**1990-94:** Leading member of Liberian Government-in-exile based in America

**1994-97:** Regional Director of UN Development Programme for Africa

**1960s:** Gains Masters degree at Harvard University in America

**1972-73, 1977-79:** Liberian Secretary of State for Finance

**1979-80:** Minister of Finance

**1980-85:** Member of opposition during military rule of **Samuel Doe**

**1985-86:** Imprisoned on two occasions for criticising Doe regime

**1986:** Flees Liberia for United States – works for World Bank

**1989:** Initially backs, but then opposes **Charles Taylor's** invasion to oust Doe. Civil war starts

**1997:** Returns to Liberia at conclusion of civil war. Becomes leader of **Unity Party** – comes distant second to Taylor in presidential election. Is charged with treason by Taylor

**1999:** Second civil war begins

**2003:** Serves as head of **Governance Reform Commission** set up as part of deal to end Liberia's civil war – Taylor exiled to Nigeria

**Nov 23, 2005:** Johnson-Sirleaf declared president-elect of Liberia after winning 59 percent of vote in presidential poll. Becomes Africa's first elected female head of state