



## The Queen and I

Director: Nahid Persson Sarvestani, Germany/Sweden/Egypt/France/USA, 2008, 89 minutes

In her award-winning documentary *Prostitution Behind the Veil*, Nahid Persson Sarvestani expressed fierce criticism of the position of women in her native country, Iran. This drove the Islamic regime to accuse the leftist documentary-maker of monarchist sympathies. The reality is, however, that Sarvestani was a revolutionary who helped overthrow the monarchy in the 1979 revolution.

In reaction to the reprimands, she decided to make a film about Farah Pahlavi: the last Iranian queen, widow of the Shah of Iran, her adversary who, like herself, lives in exile abroad.

This leads to a fascinating encounter between two women, with clashing political visions, who develop an improbable friendship over two years of filming. During that period, the two confront each other about their pasts, question their former beliefs, and share their grievances.

However, when the queen finds out that Sarvestani was a communist (and hadn't disclosed that), the filming stopped for six months. After Farah sees the trailer and approves, shooting resumes.

Perhaps out of fear that the 70 year-old former queen will refuse further cooperation, Sarvestani doesn't ask confrontational questions about the Shah's heartless regime. She also feels conflicted about her growing affection for a woman whose husband she so vehemently opposed.

In the end, the unusual relationship grows between the two as they realize they have much in common. They are two strong women who have risen above hardships to continue evolving towards a positive future.

### DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Nahid Persson Sarvestani was born and raised in Iran. In Sweden, she began formalized study of television and film production and in 2003 attended Dramatiska Institutet. She has made films in Iran under dangerous conditions, among them *Prostitution Behind the Veil*, an Emmy-nominated documentary for which the Iranian authorities detained her for more than three months. This and other films have made Sarvestani the most award-winning documentary filmmaker in Swedish history.