January, 2020

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From The Field - PCIA Board Newsletter

“Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I will meet you there.” Jalal ad-Din Rumi

January, 2020

Dear D

Ja-ye Jackie (Jackie's Place)

We Must Not Give Up on the Iranian People

As we edge closer to war with Iran, our hearts are breaking, our feelings of
helplessness mixed in with so many other emotions threatening to overwhelm us. Whatever we might think about the Islamic Republic, the Trump administration, or any of the very real concerns that have kept our two countries at odds over the last 40 years, surely we can agree that war is not the answer, cannot make the world a better place. Harming innocent lives is not who we are.

I would like to share some words from my friend, Asiyeh, who lives in a medium-sized city in southern Iran. She is the daughter of my former student, Sekineh, now 54. Here is an excerpt from Asiyeh's most recent message, dated Dec. 25:

I hope this year we all manage to move in line with worldwide peace and happiness. As you know the internet in Iran faced a major problem during the last weeks and there were many difficulties in sending and receiving emails. Iran spent troublesome months lately and many things happened which changed our lives in various ways.

You may not believe how deeply I became excited [as I] came to know about your valuable activities on Iran issues and world peace and human rights. You have been here and attended the Parliament and visited Mr. Zarif. Your effort in creating a peaceful relationship between our countries sounds incredibly admirable to me. And I am wholeheartedly happy to be the daughter of one of your old students.

I am the international relations director of an Iranian NGO, called Algen Foundation, which is actively involved in building peaceful relationships between nature and different cultures. We work to create a mindful generation by establishing a Nature School, by supporting women's handmade products, and by job creation [involving the] planting and conservation of a huge mass of oak seedlings in the Zagros Mountains, among other activities.

[My foundation] longs for presenting its goals and achievements to the world, and especially to Americans who may not have a bright cognition of my country and the young generation who are definitely different from the men of politics here. Among our main objectives, my generation desires to make the world know our people, our culture, our attitudes toward world society, and our efforts not only for our country but for the sake of our wonderful planet. But as you know, this is somehow difficult for us as Iranians to gain American visas except in some specific occasions.

I am really interested in the PCIA and would love to hear more about it and any possibility for me to be part of it as an Iranian woman who cares about her country and its world position and cries for a lasting peace between my country and the western world.
The hope and idealism expressed here are deeply moving. Asiyeh is working hard for her vision of an Iran that is integrated into the world community. In this message, she represents all her fellow countrymen who share that dream. And she understands that we PCIA members also share her dream. As each of us tries to determine our own response to the unfolding events at the governmental level, may we keep in mind that whatever happens, we must not give up on the Iranian people.

Peace,
Jackie (Abadeh, Riz/Zarrinshahr, 1974-76)

PCIA Advocacy Group
ACTION ALERT

Besides our monthly Advocacy Bulletin, PCIA also sends out Action Alerts in response to urgent situations as they arise. The Alert below was sent out this morning.

ACTION ALERT January 4, 2020

The assassination of Iranian Quds leader General Qasem Soleimani by a US military drone has brought the prospect of out-and-out war with Iran all the closer. Our leaders should have learned by now that violence propagates more violence and destruction.

We urge you to write letters to editors and to tell your representatives in the House and Senate:

"NO WAR WITH IRAN". What does this mean?
• SUPPORT for stand-alone legislation modeled on the "Khanna-Gaetz" legislation which specifically declares there is no authorization for war with Iran. It is expected to be introduced into the 2020 Congress this week.
• DENY FUNDS for war with Iran

GIVE DIPLOMACY A CHANCE
Commend President Trump and Secretary Pompeo for their statements that the US does not want to escalate the situation, but rather move towards negotiations. Useful steps that he could take include:

• Commit to relaxing sanctions and rejoining the JCPOA if Iran will also reverse recent nuclear steps and commit to negotiations to extend JCPOA deadlines and address other areas of regional concern.
• Supporting offers for mediation from the UN, or neutral regional partners.
• Establishing direct lines of communication between senior US and Iranian diplomats and between senior US and Iranian military leaders.

To call your Senators and Representative, Dial 202-224-3121 and ask for your senator or representative by name. After you call, send PCIA a quick email at advocacy@peacecorpsiran telling us how it went.

PCIA has “allies” in the “NO WAR” campaign. They include: Ploughshares, Win Without War, the Friends Committee on National Legislation, J-Street, and Code Pink.

Useful articles to support these advocacy messages:
• William Hartung: Stop Trump’s Reckless Surge Towards War With Iran
• Barbara Slavin: The consequences of the death of Suleimani
• Trita Parsi: We may already be at war with Iran
• Ryan Costello: Trump and his Team are Lying Their Way to War With Iran
• Colin Kahl: Trump Is Playing With Fire in the Middle East
• Dexter Filkins: The dangers posed by the killing of Qassem Suleimani
• Robin Wright: The Killing of Qassem Suleimani Is Tantamount to an Act of War
• Daniel Larison: The Dangerous Delusions of Iran Hawks

If you did not receive this Action Alert in your email today and would like to be added to our Action Alert mailing list, please send email to alerts@peacecorpsiran.org, and include your name.

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**Dooreh-ye Ketaab, PCIA’s Book Discussion Group**

By Jackie Spurlock (Abadeh, Riz, 1974-76) & Jim Goode (Tuyserkan, 1968-71)

**Reminder.** The Dooreh meets this week - Wednesday, Jan 8 - at 5 pm Pacific time (8 pm Eastern) on Zoom. We are discussing Jason Rezaian’s book, *Prisoner*. Many of you met Jason when he was our guest in San Diego. The conference recording of his featured conversation with John Limbert (Sanandaj, 1964-66) is available only to PCIA members by emailing Doug Schermer (Semnan, 1966-67). He will send you the link. If you are not a PCIA member, you may submit this application form to join (it’s free).

Meanwhile, we hope you will join us this Wednesday. Jason says: "I would like to join the conversation, but may have to be a last minute addition. With all the news that’s happening I am getting a lot of television news requests. Can we tell others I might join and hope that I can?" So fingers crossed, Jason Rezaian will join us to talk about his book.

If you have not attended a Dooreh before, please email Carolyn Yale (Shiraz, 1974-75) and ask her to add you to the Zoom list (Zoom is the easy to use online platform we meet on). If you have been a member of previous Dooreh discussions,
we have you in the list, you're good!

Here are the remaining books and authors selected by members of Dooreh-ye Ketaab for 2020:

March 11—Jasmin Darznik, Song of a Captive Bird*
May 13—Sattareh Farmanfarmaian, with Dona Munker, Daughter of Persia (Professor Nasrin Rahimieh, UC Irvine, will lead the discussion)
July 8—David Devine, Persian Mosaic*
September 9—Jay Crook, Ambling Through Life*
November 11, Carole Jerome, The Man in the Mirror (discussion leader TBD) Note: This book is out of print and may be hard to find. We suggest you start looking for your copy now! And if you are in touch with Carole Jerome, could you please let us know?

*indicates author will participate in book discussion

All dates are Wednesdays, time is 5:00 pm Pacific time (8:00 Eastern).

We look forward to another interesting year of Dooreh discussions. Hope you will join us as often as you can. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Happy holidays,
Jim Goode (Tuyserkan, 1968-1971) and Jackie Spurlock (Abadeh, Riz, 1974-76)

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**Board News**

**PCIA Business**

**Advocacy Ramps Up**

At its December meeting, the board discussed how best the organization should respond in view of recent events, which already looked ominous. At that time, two
weeks ago, the board decided that lobbying for "diplomacy not war" continued to be the best way forward. We will continue to use the Advocacy Bulletin and Action Alerts to keep members apprised.

**Advocacy Bulletin**

As tensions remain high between Iran and much of the rest of the world, PCIA’s Advocacy Bulletin, edited by Paul Barker (Bidokht, Shiraz, Tehran, 1971-76) maintains a laser focus on Iran issues, helping us stay informed and hone our opinions. It is one of the most important and valuable benefits you receive as a member of PCIA. Last month we asked your help to **increase the readership of the Advocacy Bulletin** beyond our members. When you receive your emailed copy in the middle of the month, we ask that you forward it to your friends and family. You might even consider sending it to the staff of your U.S. Senators and Representative. Nonmembers wishing to subscribe may do so [here](#). Last month, the number of subscribers went from 865 to 914 subscribers. Let’s see if we can increase that to 1,200!

**Archiving**

At its December meeting, the board decided to pursue archiving our internal documents with American University's Peace Corps Community Archive. Watch for more information as we get into the project. If you have experience with archiving of records, we could use your expertise. Please email Skip Auld (Borujerd, 1973-74) or Jackie and we'll loop you in!

**Resolution Supporting Peacemaking with Iran**

The resolution approved by PCIA membership at the San Diego conference in October has now been posted to the website. You may [read it here](#).

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**We Get Mail**

From National Peace Corps Association
September 22, 2019 marked the premiere of *A Towering Task: The Story of the Peace Corps*, a documentary sparking conversations about the meaning of global citizenship in today’s world. The premiere was just the beginning. NPCA and the documentary director Alana DeJoseph (Mali, 1992-94) plan to distribute the film far and wide to reach as many communities as possible. [Host a screening in your community!](#)

**From Marcia Franklin, Idaho Public Television Journalist**

I note with interest this [upcoming series of Kiarostami films](#) at the National Gallery of Art in DC that I wish I could see. Perhaps one of you will have that stellar opportunity.

**From Atlantic Council**

You’re invited: [US-Iran Tensions Rising with Iraq in the Middle | Jan 9 - 2:00 p.m.](#) Washington, D.C.

**From Google Alerts**

Dr. Dennis White, Sturgeon Bay, WI, spoke to his local newspaper, the *Door County Daily News*, about his Peace Corps experience in Iran (1968-70). Here is a [summary and clip](#). Dr. White is to be commended for reaching out to tell his story. This is another simple action that all of us can take. Americans need to hear that Peace Corps was once in Iran, and that volunteers worked among the people and made friends. Believe it or not, our
simple stories can change the narrative. We strongly encourage you to speak to your local media about Iran and then let us know.

Submit Your Photos

Message from Jackie

Each month, *From the Field* features a photo submitted by one of our members. We invite you to submit your own photos of Iran, from either your Peace Corps years or recent trips. Thanks to everyone who has submitted recently. It will take a few months, but we plan to use them all.

Find Us on Facebook

For some time, we have had a lively Facebook group, now at about 350 members. We post articles, photos, questions, and comments about Peace Corps in Iran or Iran itself. We invite you to click here and ask to join. We will accept your request within a day or two, and you’re in!

We also have a Facebook page, open to the whole world! Located here, this is a public page that features news about Iran and PCIA. We add photos and videos regularly. The purpose of the FB page is to engage our visitors to consider Iran with a more complete and nuanced view, in the spirit of Peace Corps’ Third Goal. Hope to see you participating there. Invite your friends too!
We Accept Donations

Supporting PCIA with your donations is crucial to our success because we don’t charge dues. Donations support our biannual conferences (for example, the recent one in San Diego, CA in October, 2019), as well as our many other advocacy, legacy, civic engagement, publishing, and member connection projects. If you are proud of your Peace Corps experience and believe that PCIA leverages and amplifies your ideals and your voice as an RPCV, we invite you to donate as you are able, either through PayPal or by printing this form and mailing it with an (optional) check. We are grateful.

Donate with mail-in donation form.

Donate with PayPal.

Shopping on Amazon?

Check out AmazonSmile. It’s a simple and automatic way to support PCIA, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you’ll find the exact same prices and shopping experience as at Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to PCIA.

PCIA Publications

- KhabarNameh, PCIA’s official e-newsletter is published in February, June, and October. All PCIA members receive it. You may become a member here. Back issues may be found here. Editor Joan Gaughan (Lahijan, Rasht, 1964-66).
• *From the Field* is the board's monthly e-newsletter. It is emailed to all members during the first weekend of every month. Back issues may be found [here](#). Editor *Jackie Spurlock* (Abadeh, Riz/Zarrinshahr, 1974-76).

• *Advocacy Bulletin*, covering Iran relations, opinion, analysis, and commentary, is published monthly and emailed to all members in the third week of the month. You may become a member [here](#). You may sign up for the Bulletin only [here](#). Back issues may be found [here](#). Editor *Paul Barker* (Bidokht, Shiraz, Tehran, 1971-76).

Membership in PCIA is free (no dues). We welcome everyone who shares our values of peace, diplomacy, cultural understanding, and preserving the legacy of Peace Corps Iran. Members do not need to have served in the Peace Corps or lived in Iran.

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**PCIA MISSION STATEMENT**

*Peace Corps Iran Association advances peace and understanding between Americans and Iranians through outreach, education and advocacy, and upholds the legacy of Peace Corps in Iran.*

*Adopted February, 2017.*

**PCIA CORE VALUES**

• **Experience.** We value the experience and knowledge of Iran and its people that our members have acquired through Peace Corps. We seek to preserve and share the legacy of our experience. We believe the experience of living in another culture shaped our worldview and commitment to giving back.

• **Making a Difference.** We aspire to make a difference by speaking up in accordance with our mission and goals.
• **Diversity and Inclusion.** We value diversity of experience and opinion, and believe understanding is achieved through open mindedness, inclusiveness, and respectful dialogue.

• **Integrity, Accountability and Transparency.** We are accountable to our members and donors to ensure that our activities meet the highest ethical standards of organizational and personal integrity. We are good stewards of the time, talent, and treasure of our members and volunteers. We practice sound financial management. *Adopted, Feb. 2017*

**ADVOCACY COMMITTEE PURPOSE STATEMENT**

Peace Corps Iran Association advocates for peace and understanding through education, outreach, and cultural diplomacy. *Adopted Feb. 2017*

**PCIA GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

1. Understanding and acceptance of other people and cultures are the building blocks of friendship, inclusiveness and world peace. As citizens of a world power, Americans bear a special responsibility.

2. Tolerance and mutual respect form the foundation for peaceful interactions between countries and their citizens.

3. Bringing countries and their citizens into the global community through cultural and economic ties reinforces international cooperation and reduces the likelihood of armed conflict.

4. Negotiation and diplomacy are essential to resolving international issues.

5. Force is rarely justified in dealing with conflicts. Peace is built and sustained through voluntary agreement and consent.

The Principles will be used as guidelines for the Advocacy Bulletin and other
advocacy activities. The board may speak for the Association in the sense of upholding our mission, values and principles. *Adopted June, 2017*

**Peace Corps Iran Association** is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit based in Portland, OR. We are affiliated with the National Peace Corps Association.

**Title:** *From the Field* comes from the Rumi quote at the top of each issue: “Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I will meet you there.” Jalal ad-Din Rumi. The idea is that PCIA is operating in a field that is outside of the conflict between our two governments as to who is right and wrong. In that field we meet all those who, like us, find the conflict detrimental and irrelevant. This newsletter is sent from that field.

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**PCIA Board Members**

- Jeanette Gottlieb, President *(Noshahr, Hamadan, 1965-67)*
- Jackie Spurlock, Vice-President; Dooreh co-leader; *From the Field* Editor *(Abadeh, Riz/Zarrinshahr, 1974-76)*
- Ed Seiders, Treasurer *(Noshahr, Chalus, 1967-69)*
- Carolyn Yale, Secretary; Advocacy Chair *(Shiraz, 1974-75)*
- Doug Schermer, Board Member; Website Manager *(Semnan, 1966-67)*
- John Holehan, Board member *(Mashhad, 1967-71)*
- John Krauskopf, Board Member; Anthology Editor *(Ahwaz, Kermanshah, Arak, Babolsar, 1965-69)*
- John Salamack, Board Member *(Bojnurd, 1965-67)*
- Kathleen MacLeod, Board Member *(Tehran, Gorgan, 1964-66)*
- Paul Barker, Board Member; Advocacy Bulletin Editor *(Bidokht, Shiraz, Tehran, 1971-76)*
• **Skip Auld, Board Member (Borujerd, 1973-74)**

**Other PCIA Leaders**

• **Genna Wangsness**, Historian (Shiraz, Tehran, 1965-71)
• **Jim Goode**, Dooreh Co-leader (Tuyskerkan, 1968-71)
• **Joan Gaughan**, *KhabarNameh* Editor (Lahijan, Rasht, 1964-66)

**About this email**

You have received this email because you are a member of Peace Corps Iran Association or have an interest in Iran. If you do not wish to receive future issues of *From the Field*, please use the unsubscribe link in the footer.

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