

PCIA Advocacy Bulletin

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The Cyrus Cylinder منشور کوروش or Cyrus Charter استوانه کوروش was discovered under the foundation of a Babylonian palace in 1879, making it perhaps the oldest time capsule on record. It commemorates Cyrus' victory over Babylonia in 539 BC and sets out the rights of subjects in his expanding empire. It is often commemorated as the oldest charter of human rights in the world.

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Note from the Editor

Be Ready for Success in Vienna

Paul Barker (Bidokht, Shiraz, Tehran 1971-76)

Carolyn Yale (Shiraz 1974-76)

As the finishing touches go on this PCIA Advocacy Bulletin for May 2021, it appears that the United States and Iran are on the verge of agreeing on the steps to return to compliance with their obligations under the JCPOA, the Iran nuclear agreement.

As they will be agreeing to return to an agreement which has already been vetted by the US Senate, there should be no question of additional congressional reviews being

required for restoring the deal. Opponents of the agreement will nonetheless try to do what they can to obstruct it.

In order to pre-empt or counter opposition to restoring the JCPOA to health, we are encouraging our members and supporters to copy, personalize through editing, then send the following message to your Senators and Representatives in Washington:

Subject: Support United States reentry to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

Dear [Senator / Representative],

I am writing to ask that you openly support the United States' return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). I served as a Peace Corps volunteer in [city____], Iran from 19__ to 19__, before the divide between our countries that has until now seemed unbridgeable. I am encouraged by President Biden's pledge that the United States will return to its commitments under the 2015 Agreement provided Iran also fully complies with the terms of the JCPOA. The JCPOA benefits the United States and allies in reducing concerns over Iran's nuclear program and can become a promising step toward diplomatic solutions to other disputes.

Some members of Congress have opposed the JCPOA because it does not address issues such as ballistic missiles or further denuclearization of Iran; some insist that additional sanctions will force Iran to accede to such demands. These positions are both unrealistic and unjust. Iran's resolve to withstand hostile pressure and unilateral demands is clear: The Iranian government has survived the most punishing sanctions regime in the world; it is the people of Iran who have suffered the hardships brought on by sanctions.

Without the JCPOA we would face a situation in which Iran is unconstrained in proceeding with its nuclear program. We would forego inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Repudiating the JCPOA only sends a message that undermines leaders who championed diplomacy. The JCPOA is our best opportunity to begin constructive discourse and cooperation with Iran.

The Agreement is intended to benefit both parties. It is important to recognize that full compliance with the JCPOA, as negotiated, requires that both countries 'live up to' the intent of the Agreement, which means that, to reduce the nuclear threat, Iran will follow prescribed protocols to limit its nuclear program and that to reduce the stranglehold on Iran's economy, the United States will lift specified sanctions.

Sincerely,
(Name)

Vienna Breakthrough?

[US negotiator: "We definitely made progress" in "most productive" Iran talks, but still key gaps](#), Laura Rozen, 2021/5/21

“Progress towards reaching an understanding of what the contours of a deal would look like,” senior US diplomat.

[Biden is getting closer to a deal with Iran, and Democrats in Congress need to get with the program](#), Thomas Countryman, 2021/5/4

Enough Already: The US, Israel and Iran

Steve Gottlieb (Shiraz 1965-67)

On a recent Friday evening, the rabbi asked a congregant to sing a traditional song based on Psalm 133, “*Hinne mah tov umah na'im, Shevet achim gam yachad*,” which means “Behold how good and how pleasing, to sit together in unity.” Except she wasn’t singing the tune as I learned it in the summer of 1948 at the age of seven. The rhythm and cadence I remembered was a version being sung in Israel, like many of the songs we learned that summer. For years we were fired by the Israeli example, by the kibbutzim or farms on which people shared everything, and by the struggle for independence. I grew up thrilled by their example and wanting to learn Hebrew the better to enjoy traveling there – until our Temple kicked me out because I’d become a young critic of our Sunday school and refused to go.

I later discovered that someone I knew and admired was running guns to the Israeli army in 1948. A colleague on the Board of the NYCLU, Jerry was also a member of the Israeli analog to the Civil Liberties Union, fighting against abuses by the State of Israel.

I too became disgusted not only by its denial of civil liberties to its Palestinian minority but also by Israel’s baleful influence on the Middle East. While Iran was quietly working with America to fight both the Taliban in Afghanistan and the terrorists from Arabia, Israel [convinced](#) the Bush Administration that Iran was the major problem. Saudi Arabians were responsible for 9/11 but Israel [convinced](#) the leadership of this country that Saudi Arabia was the good guy and Iran was the danger. Iran called attention to the radical madrassas that the Saudis supported to develop the extreme version of Islam that led to 9/11. But we stayed friends with Saudi Arabia and haven’t been able to shake off the politics that branded Iran part of the Axis of Evil. Never mind that Iran would have nothing to do with the other so-called axis members – Iran fought a bloody war with Iraq and helped the US deal with the Iraqis but no matter, Iran had to be the enemy.

An increasing body of scholarly literature based on [deep dives](#) into diplomatic documents [traced](#) that distortion to Israel. Apparently, Israel needed a powerful enemy to convince America it needed more weapons. When Iraq was crushed by American forces, it started warning about Iran – though Israel and Iran were cooperating, and Iran, by popular vote and then with clerical blessing, got rid of the demagogue prime minister Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Let’s be clear – few nations are angels. Everywhere nations slaughter each other over race, ethnicity, wealth, resources and other ill-gotten gains. I’d like to see Israel succeed, but not by allying itself with evil and extreme Middle Eastern forces, risking American blood and increasing the problems the Middle East poses for our country. I

have no more obligation to support the hard wrong in Israel than the alt-cruel in America. The US needs its own foreign policy, for its own interests, not as a proxy for the worst versions of Israeli politics. And as a distinguished physicist pointed out over lunch a few days ago, even if the Iranians made “enough” fuel to create a “bomb,” with the technology they were using, it would be too heavy to deliver to a target. Instead, the nuclear material they’re creating was clearly intended for medical use in hospitals, not as a weapon. America needs to get straight who its enemies are and who is doing what. Let the hawks fly in a cage.

This commentary was broadcast on the [WAMC Northeast Report](#), on May 11, 2021

Israel-Iran-USA

[Israel and Iran Are Pulling the United States Toward Conflict](#), Daniel C. Kurtzer, Aaron David Miller, and Steven N. Simon, 2021/4/26

Without intensified U.S. diplomacy designed to restrain both Israel and Iran, the administration could easily find itself drawn into a conflict it neither wants nor needs and that undermines its real priorities at home.

[The Countdown to an Israeli War With Iran Has Begun](#), John Hannah, 2021/5/6

[IRGC Commander Says Israel Vulnerable](#), NIAC, 2021/5/6

[Iran’s Rockets to Palestinian Groups](#), Fabian Hinz, 2021/5/19

[Iran’s Confrontation with Israel over Four Decades](#), Garrett Nada, 2021/5/19

Iranian Political Considerations

[In leaked audio, Iran’s foreign minister laments interference by Revolutionary Guard](#), Kareem Fahim, 2020/4/26

The story was leaked to Iran International, which is Saudi owned and financed.

[Iran’s foreign minister is playing a precarious political game](#), Jason Rezaian, 2021/4/27

[Zarif’s Beefs](#), Arash Azizi, 2021/4/30

A leaked gossip interview with Iran’s outgoing foreign minister confirms that the Revolutionary Guards’ domination is much more advanced than previously imagined

[Is Iran’s economy really sinking?](#) Djavad Salehi-Isfahani, 2021/5/7

JCPOA opponents have been cherry picking an IMF report to claim Trump’s ‘maximum pressure’ campaign worked.

Iranian Elections

US Institute for Peace’s “[The Iran Primer](#)” project brings together key information on the timetable, nominating process, candidates’ qualifications, and bios of possible candidates in Iran’s June presidential election. The latest update on this page is from May 17.

[Iran's Presidential Election](#), Barrett Nada, 2021/5/12

[Iran's 'reformists' contemplate their post-election future](#), Ali Faghollah-Nejad and Amin Naeni, 2021/5/13

[Reformists Propose Candidates](#), Negar Mortazavi, 2021/5/3

Iran's Reformist coalition proposes 14 candidates for president; Top candidate is Zarif, then VP Jahangiri, then progressive Mostafa Tajzadeh who was imprisoned after the 2009 election. Also two prominent women, Shahindokht Molaverdi and Zahra Shojaie.

[After Khamenei](#), Amir Toumaj, 2021/5/5

What's at stake for Iran after its 82-year-old supreme leader dies, and why the upcoming presidential elections may decide the country's future

US Political and Security Considerations

[Views from the Hill: A Conversation with Senator Chris Murphy](#), MEI, 2021/5/13
[Quotes from the conversation](#)

[Détente with Iran Could Unlock a Foreign Policy Gold Mine](#), Shahed Ghoreishi, 2021/5/18

[Conversation with Lawrence Wilkerson](#), MESF Conference, 2021/5/19

More on Wilkerson and his views at [Wikipedia](#).

[How US and Iranian hardliners work toward shared goal of killing the nuclear deal](#), Sina Toosi, 2021/5/

Both sides require an antagonistic relationship for survival.

[Biden the bold vs. Joe the timid](#), Andrew Bacevich, 2021/5/18

If Biden wants to be "Dr. Build Back Better," he should assume the additional role of "Dr. Curb the War Habit."

[Robert Menendez Is the Last Hawk on the Left ... But don't tell him that](#), Colum Lynch, Robbie Gramer, 2021/5/7

[McCaul, Wilson, Chabot Urge Blinken to Ensure IAEA Has Access to Iran's Nuclear Sites](#), HFAC, 2021,5/4

[Top Senate Dem quietly inserts Iran poison pill into China bill](#), Mathew Petti, 2021/4/30

[The U.S. Navy Isn't Ready to Take On Iran](#), Michael Moran, 2021/4/30

[Hesham Youssef: An Unopened Window: The potential of the Iran nuclear talks](#), Hesham Youssef, 2021/5/4

[Democrats Are Calling on Biden to Renew Diplomacy With Iran](#), Aida Chavez, 2021/5/10

In spite of the president's criticisms of Trump for backing out of the Iran deal, he has done little to reinstate it.

[Maximum Pressure Failed: Biden Must Reverse Course on Iran](#), Tyler Cullis and Amir Handjani, 2021/5/12

The notion that "enormous leverage" was handed over to President Biden by the Trump administration is a fiction.

[Why Biden should ignore the latest move to halt diplomacy with Iran](#), Jamal Abdi and Ryan Costello, 2021/5/13

A new letter from Senate Republicans once again displays the bankruptcy of 'maximum pressure.'

Legislation

[Senate Bill Threatens Sensitive U.S. Diplomacy](#), Ryan Costello, 2021/5/7

Bills to repeal the 2002 Authorization for Use of Military Force are now moving through congress. SJ Res 10 now has 14 co-sponsors incl 5 Republicans. Sponsors hope to get at least 10 Republican co-sponsors to make it filibuster proof before sending it to the Senate floor for a vote.

House Resolution 256 now has 127 Co-sponsors. It is likely to get a vote in the House in May.

Stats on casualties of the Afghan and Iraq wars are published by the Brown University [Cost of War Project](#).

Sanctions

[‘Poison pill sanctions’ are hard for Vienna negotiators to swallow](#), Brian O’Toole, 2021/4/23

Regional Issues

[What JCPOA compliance could mean for South Asia](#), Mushin Puthan Purayl, 2021/2/12

[Regional Connectivity: Afghanistan’s Key to Economic Self-Reliance](#), Ahmadullah Azadani, 2021/1/27

[Middle East countries are learning to ‘build back better’](#), David Ignatius, 2021/5/11

[Fierce Foes, Iran and Saudi Arabia Secretly Explore Defusing Tensions](#), Ben Hubbard, Farnaz Fassihi and Jane Arraf, 2021/5/1

Talks between the two regional powers, if successful, could start to lower the temperature on several conflicts across the Middle East.

[Why Mohammed bin Salman Suddenly Wants to Talk to Iran](#), Trita Parsi, 2021/4/29

Secret meetings have been going on at least since January, catalyzed by the specter of U.S. withdrawal from the region.

[Adding an Ishmael Track to the Abraham Accords: How to pursue détente between Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE](#), Kirsten Fontenose, 2021/4/29

[Even After Withdrawal, U.S. Retains Leverage Over Taliban](#), Karen Decker, 2021/4/29

[No-Win War: The Paradox of U.S.-Pakistan Relations in Afghanistan's Shadow](#), Zahid Hussain

[Iran Nuclear Talks Open a Window for Broader Middle East Security](#), Hesham Youssef, 2021/4/29

COVID

[COVID-19 depressed women's employment everywhere, and more so in Iran](#), Nadereh Chamlou, 2021/4/29

[Sanctions-battered Iran, weary of pandemic, faces worst wave](#), Nasser Karimi and Aya Batrawy, 2021/4/22

Environment

[US and Iranian researchers collaborate on Lake Urmia restoration](#), Kelsie Holman, 2021/4/23

Human Rights

[Iranian women in the year 1400: The struggle for equal rights continues](#), Mehrangiz Kar, 2021/4/29

[Iran 'orders Bahais to bury dead at mass grave for executed prisoners'](#), BBC, 2021/4/30

[Khamenei critic faces 'imminent death' in Iran prison](#), Al-Moniitor, 2021/4/23

[Human Rights in the Middle East](#), 2021/5/14

Negar Mortazavi speaks to Sarah Leah Whitson, Executive Director of DAWN, about the latest cycle of violence between Israelis and Palestinians, what the United States can do to help improve human rights and peace across the Middle East, and the Biden administration's policy towards friends and foes in the region.

Media

The War Game, by film maker **Peter Watkins**. Created for BBC in 1966 which would not then allow it to be shown in the UK as the realities of nuclear war were deemed too dangerous for the public to know.

[Internet Archive, where you can view *The War Game* in full.](#)

[Pre-Written messages to President and Congress](#)

[Video of discussion, a talk by Dr. Ira Helfand, and the Q&A session](#)

[Clubhouse is the new platform for political debate in Iran, Negar Mortazavi](#), 2021/4/29

[Iran's Hard-Liners Are Using a TV Thriller to Undermine Their Rivals](#), Sina Toosi, 2021/4/29

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-linked spy drama "Gando" is designed to discredit moderate politicians before the June election.

[An Iranian TV show targeted me. Now it's attacking journalism — and it's not alone](#), Jason Rezaian, 2021/5/3

[Washington's Problems of Iran Expertise](#), Negar Mortazavi and Negar Mortazavi, 2021/5/7

“There Is No Evil,” Reviewed: A Powerful Feature About Iranian Executioners, Richard Brody, 2021/5/14

Mohammad Rasoulof's haunting new drama reveals horrific truths about the secrecy-shrouded practice of capital punishment in Iran.

History

A deadly fight 33 years ago shows just how destructive a war between the US and Iran could get, Benjamin Brimelow, 2021/4/23

'Conspiracy is hard': Inside the Trump administration's secret plan to kill Qassem Soleimani, Jack Murphy and Zach Dorfman, 2021/5/8

ADVOCACY MISSION STATEMENT

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

ADVOCACY COMMITTEE PURPOSE STATEMENT

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

PRINCIPLES: The Board of Peace Corps Iran Association has adopted the following Guiding Principles for our advocacy efforts toward improving relationships between Iran and the United States, and their peoples.

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.

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1. The Advocacy Bulletin is an opt-out email publication for PCIA members interested in this subject. It is a way to share ideas, information, and opportunities for action. The Bulletin is archived on the website.
2. PCIA members are invited to share articles for publication. The editor decides which articles are selected for publication. Some pieces, particularly when not aligned with PCIA's Mission, Values, and Guiding Principles, or which do not relate to the current state of Iran advocacy issues, may be posted in PCIA's Facebook group.
3. Articles should be addressed to AdvocacyBulletin@peacecorpsiran.org and the release question answered, "I consent/do not consent to the release of my writing beyond the Advocacy Bulletin distribution and PCIA archives." If consent is given, statements issued to the public will be identified as coming from the author, and not PCIA, the Advocacy Committee, or Board.
4. Writers are encouraged to include action recommendations and reference information to help readers understand issues.
5. The Advocacy Bulletin is not an academic journal, but it does aspire to be fact-based. Whenever possible citations and links to web-based articles should be included in the articles.
6. Opinions and ideas from members expressed in the Bulletin do not represent Board positions. However, members of the Advocacy Committee may present a position to the Board and request endorsement. Positions adopted by the Board to be posted in the Advocacy Bulletin will be identified as such.

The opinions of the in this issue are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the board of PCIA. Contributions to the Advocacy Bulletin are most welcome and may be submitted to the editor at Advocate@peacecorpsiran.org

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