



The Cyrus Cylinder **استوانه کوروش** or Cyrus Charter **منشور 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.

Contents of December 2023 Advocacy Bulletin

- Note from the Editor: Regional Turmoil Needs Red Lines
- Iranian Politics
- US Politics
- Region
- When Should PCIA Speak Up? Does Yemen Count? By Carolyn Yale
- Is there a Way Forward for Israel and Palestine? By Paul Barker
- Nuclear Concerns
- Economy
- Environment
- Legislation
- Refugee Assistance
- Human Rights
- Media
- History

Regional Turmoil Needs Red Lines

Note From the Editor, by Paul Barker

Stomping out ideas is hard. President Bush embarked on a Global War on Terror in pursuit of revenge for the al-Qa'eda attacks on the US on 11 September 2001. Twenty-two years on that unwinnable war has cost trillions of dollars, spread across Africa, led to US defeat in Afghanistan and certainly nothing that could be called victory in Iraq. Similarly, Israel's response to the horrific 7 October 2023 attacks on communities in southern Israel has led to a months long bombing and ground invasion of the Gaza Strip under the promise of destroying Hamas as a military and governing entity. The massive death and destruction wreaked on Gaza shows little sign of ending, even as the popularity of Hamas seems to have grown in the West Bank and neighboring countries. There might not be much left of Gaza when the fighting dies down, but the resistance ideology of Hamas will live on.

With some luck and some restraint by all parties, and despite mounting skirmishes, the conflict in Gaza has not yet morphed into a major regional war. The end of a week-long pause in fighting in Gaza came with intensified bombing and ground action. [It also came with increased threats to regional security.](#) Attacks by Houthis on shipping in the

Red Sea have seriously disrupted international shipping and led the US to forge a multi-national force to confront this threat from Yemen. Escalating militia attacks on US forces in Syria and Iraq have miraculously not yet led to US casualties. Clashes across the Israel-Lebanon border have escalated, leading the Israeli Minister of Defense to boast that Israel can “copy and paste” what it is doing to Hamas in Gaza onto Hezbollah in Lebanon. Iran’s support for actors in Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Gaza is well known. The dangers of missteps and escalation are real.

Diplomacy depends on effective communication with one’s adversaries. Yet the US is dependent on the good offices of third parties like Qatar and Oman to facilitate communication with Iran, the Taliban and even Venezuela. Some of our politicians in Washington seem to want to punish Qatar for being in a position to facilitate this diplomacy, and some seem determined to undermine agreements that have been painstakingly negotiated. An example of this is the recently passed HR 5961 which, if passed by the Senate and signed by the president, would undo the arrangements that were negotiated to secure the release of US citizens unfairly imprisoned by Iran. In so doing it would further undercut the credibility of the US as a negotiating partner.

The holiday season is well upon us. The lights of Hanukah have been lit; the longest night of the year is just passed and with it the celebration of Yalda; the western Christmas is in a few days; and a week later we welcome in 2024. May it bring us more wisdom and urgently needed peace.

Iranian Politics

[Is Iran’s foreign ministry losing authority?](#) Amwaj, 2023/11/27

[Sectarian Dilemmas In Iranian Foreign Policy: When Strategy And Identity politics Collide,](#) Afshon Ostovar, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2016

[Is Iran shifting its stance against the two-state solution?](#) Amwaj, 2023/12/5

[Tehran’s Anti-West Policy At Odds With Most Iranians - Ex-President,](#) Iran International, 2023/12/12

[Hamas-Israel war highlights divergent views among Iranian clerics,](#) Amwaj, 2023/12/5

[Iran’s Kharazi: Defining red lines before an Israeli aggression,](#) Al-Jazira, 2023/12/5

[The 7 Reasons Iran Won’t Fight for Hamas,](#) [Arash Reisinezhad,](#) Foreign Policy, 2023/12/4

[Secularism in Iran,](#) Patrick Hassan, aeon, 2023

[Will Iran succeed in dismantling most organized exiled opposition?](#) An MEK Timeline, Amwaj, 2023/12/13

[A Viral Dance and ‘Happiness Campaign’ Frustrates Iran’s Clerics,](#) [Farnaz Fassihi](#) and Leily Nikounazar, NYT, 2023/12/16

It all started when a 70-year-old fish market stall owner nicknamed “Booghy” was grooving in public, in violation of Iranian law.

US Politics

[House Dems sabotage Biden's Iran diplomacy](#), Ryan Costello, Responsible Statecraft, 2023/12/1

Nearly half the caucus voted to renege on the president's prisoner deal, a move that could derail any future agreements with Tehran

[How A Deeply Controversial White House Adviser Is Running The Agenda On Gaza](#), Akbar Shahid Ahmed, Huffington Post, 2023/12/1

Brett McGurk has sought to put a Saudi-Israeli relationship "at the forefront" of the U.S.'s Middle East policy — downplaying Palestinian concerns and human rights.

[The American Way of Economic War](#), Paul Krugman, Foreign Affairs, 2023/12/6
Is Washington Overusing Its Most Powerful Weapons?

[Why Do So Many Praise Henry Kissinger?](#) Joe Cirincione, 2023/12/4

A man responsible for the slaughter of millions is lauded, not condemned
Because we didn't completely discredit Kissinger or his policies, we see them repeated today. Benjamin Netanyahu's carpet bombing of Gaza is a direct descendent of Kissinger's failed Vietnam strategy.

[Senate votes to keep US troops in Syria amid Iran-backed attacks](#), Bryant Harris, Defense News, 2023/12/7

Region

[Trita Parsi on the Risks of a Regional War](#), Beinart Notebook, 2023/12/14

[Gallant warns Hezbollah: Israel can do in Beirut what it is doing in Gaza](#), Yonah Jeremy Bob, Jerusalem Post, 2023/12/17

The defense minister told reservists that Israel can "copy and paste" what it is doing to Hamas in Gaza onto Hezbollah in Lebanon.

[How regional developments are affecting Iran's perspectives on its international relations](#), European Leadership Network, 2023/12/15

[With End of Humanitarian Pause, Risks of Disastrous Regional War Return](#), NIAC, 2023/12/14

[U.S. Considers Task Force to Guard Red Sea Ships From Iranian Proxy Forces](#), Peter Baker, 2023/12/4

[Iran, Taliban step up engagement amid rare 'joint' intelligence operation](#), Amwaj, 2023/11/21

[Iran signals de-escalation on Gaza amid pressure on Israel's Muslim partners](#), Amwaj, 2023/11/29

[Iran's political factions aren't united on Hamas, or the Middle East](#), Muhammad Sahimi, Responsible Statecraft, 2023/11/24

But most favor a policy of restraint in reaction to the Gaza war.

[Qatar burnishes diplomatic credentials as Gaza war set for pause](#), Amwaj, 2023/11/22

[The Harvard Law Review Refused to Run This Piece About Genocide in Gaza, Rabea Eghbariah, The Nation, 2023/11/21](#)

The piece was nearing publication when the journal decided against publishing it. You can read the article here.

[America's Unwavering Support For Israel Fuels Iran-Backed "Axis Of Resistance", Simona Foltyn, The Intercept, 2023/11/22](#)

Israel's war on Gaza unites Hezbollah, Hamas, the Syrian government, the Houthis in Yemen, and armed groups in Iraq and Syria.

[A U.S.-Iranian Miscalculation Could Lead to a Larger War, Helene Cooper, Eric Schmitt and Julian E. Barnes, NYT, 29/11/2023](#)

U.S. forces and militias backed by Iran have launched tit-for-tat attacks, fueling concerns as Israeli forces have also clashed with Iranian-backed groups.

[The Implications of the Gaza War, Stimson Center with Barbara Slavin, Ali Vaez, Khalil Jahshan, Randa Slim, Mairav Zonszein, Collin Meisel, 2023/11/29](#)

[Israel's Failed Bombing Campaign in Gaza, Robert Pape, 2023/12/6](#)

Collective Punishment Won't Defeat Hamas

[Why Are the Houthis Getting Involved in a War Between Israel and Hamas? Marc Junyent, Amwaj, 2023/12/4](#)

[US Weighs Risky Response to Houthi Attacks on Red Sea Shipping from Yemen, Cavid Ottaway, Wilson Center, 2023/12/16](#)

[Is Israel behind cyber-attack on Iranian gas stations? Amwaj, 2023/12/18](#)

[Deadly Sunni militancy in southeastern Iran puts spotlight on Pakistan, Amwaj, 2023/12/18](#)

[Red Sea Coalition: Why have major Arab nations opted out? Rabia Ali, Anadolu Agency, 2023/12/20](#)

When Should PCIA Speak Up? Does Yemen Count?

By Carolyn Yale, Shiraz 1974-76

Recently the PCIA Board received a sign-on letter directed to President Biden expressing distress at the carnage in Gaza and opposing actions that widen the conflict, specifically potential US military action against Yemeni forces or sanctions against Yemen. As one of an informal group of pro-peace organizations, PCIA was invited to join in signing. The Board decided to decline in consideration of PCIA's Iran-focused mission, noting that the letter addressed regional issues and policies without reference to Iran.

This situation and the sense of the Board bring up several points worth considering. First, is the leverage of having a voice as an organization: Collectively our voice has more weight. But what is the scope of PCIA's interests? What is the understanding between members and the Board which represents them? How can PCIA further its mission in the context of the turbulent region that includes Iran? in a time when direct engagement with Iran and the people of Iran is in eclipse?

To the extent that PCIA wishes to advocate for peace and diplomacy on behalf of-- or in consideration of – Iran, it is impossible to do so without taking account of the regional dynamics. News articles, editorials, analyses in the Advocacy Bulletin say it all: a thorough read shows the range of Iran's roles and the distortions, opinions and fact-based information about Iran's position. Sorting this out and considering differences in perspective is challenging but this is an 'arena' that is crying out for peace and justice. This message needs to get through to our government, on behalf of all the countries and people entangled in conflict.

Is there a Way Forward for Israel and Palestine?

By Paul Barker, Bidokht, Shiraz, Tehran 1971-76

Perhaps Eugene, Oregon is an isolated island and out of touch with much of the hate and angst that seems to fill much of our country in the wake of the raging conflict between Israel and Hamas. Nonetheless, I'd like to share a few encouraging signs. To show sympathy with the suffering on both sides of the conflict, members of our Friends Meeting have participated in worship services at both the Islamic Center and Temple Beth Israel. The weight of the conflict is palpable in both locations. Yet the Islamic Center organized a prayer service at the University of Oregon to honor both the Jewish and Palestinian victims of the fighting. Leaders from the local Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities participated in an interfaith event which demonstrated a joint longing for peaceful coexistence. The Rabbi encouraged participants to learn more about the work of [Standing Together](#), and [A Land for All](#). One participant observed that whatever actions "our side" uses against "the other side" will be seen as validity for using the same tactics against us.

An interesting book with a vision of peaceful Palestinian and Israeli coexistence is [Beyond the Two State Solution](#) by the Palestinian Human Rights lawyer and co-founder of Nonviolence International, Jonathan Kuttab. It is a reasonable potted history of the conflict and a strong argument for why the Two State Solution no longer seems viable. Perhaps there is a variation of the way forward, based on his insights. A Minute by the Eugene Friends Meeting on the Conflict in Gaza can be found [here](#).

Nuclear Concerns

[Will the Gaza War Affect Iran's Nuclear Strategy?](#) Mohammad Salami, Stimson Center, 2023/11/28

Iran will have to balance between using the Gaza crisis to advance its nuclear program without also provoking a major response

[The P4+1 and Iran Nuclear Deal Alert](#), Arms Control Association, 2023.12.11

[Is Biden taking the Iran nuclear deal off life support?](#) Edlar Mamedov, Responsible Statecraft, 2023/12/12

If the JCPOA really is dead, as a top State Department appointee declared last week, that's an own goal for the US and a huge risk for regional security

[Lessons From Libya's Nuclear Disarmament 20 Years On](#), Ludovica Castelli, Stimson Center, 2023/12/15

Libya's disarmament initially hailed as a "model" or a "success story" soon turned into a cautionary tale

Economy

[Despite public outrage, Iran moves to raise retirement age](#), Amwaj, 2023/11/21

[Examining Iran's 1403 Budget: Navigating Economic Hurdles in an Era of Extensive Sanctions](#), USIP, 2023/12/1

[Iranian Parliamentary Research Center Warns of Budget Shortfalls for Next Year](#), USIS, 2023/12/15

Environment

[Iranian Cities Overwhelmed by Influx of Climate Migrants](#), OilPrice.Com, 2023/12/18

[For the Planet, December 2023 Newsletter](#), RPCVs for Environmental Action

Legislation

[US Scholars of Mideast dispute House Resolution 894's Equation of anti-Zionism with Antisemitism](#), Committee on Academic Freedom, MESA, 2023/12/8

Refugee Assistance

[New Volunteer Opportunities to Support Refugees and Asylum Seekers](#), NPCA, 2023/12/14

Human Rights

[A Doctor Tried to Renew His Passport, Now He's No Longer a US Citizen](#), Theresa Vargas, WAPO, 2023/11/25

[Notable Women Detained in Iran](#), USIP, 2023/11/27

[Iranian Rapper Tomaj Salehi Re-Arrested Amid Torture Allegations and Public Outcry](#), USIP, 2023/12/1

[What You Should Know About This Human Rights Day](#), Julie Gregory, Stimson Center, 2023/12/8

[Iran 'using Gaza conflict as cover' for execution of 127 people since war began](#), Deepa Parent, The Guardian, 2023/12/2

[EU's Foreign Policy Chief Calls for Immediate Release of Swedish Citizen Detained in Iran](#), USIP, 2023/12/15

[Sweden demands immediate release of EU diplomat from Iran jail](#), The Guardian, 2023/12/11

Johan Floderus has been held for more than 600 days and is facing trial on charges of spying for Israel

Media

[Fox Continues Longstanding Push for War against Iran](#), Zachery Pleat, Media Matters, 2023/11

History

[That Time when Napoleon Bonaparte's Army in Palestine Burned Crops, Pounded Houses with Artillery, and Cut off Water to Cities](#), Juan Cole, Informed Comment, 2023/11/24

[Thirty years ago, a negotiated settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict seemed achievable. The story of how it fell apart reveals why the fight remains so intractable today.](#) A discussion moderated by Emily Bazelon With Daniel Kurtzer, Khalil Shikaki, Omar Dajani, Avishai Margalit, and Efraim Inbar, NYT, 2023/11/20

[Classic Intelligence Failure: The Impact Of Arrogance and Hubris](#), Melvin Goodman, Counterpunch, 2023/12/8

[Podcast on Empires of Iran](#)

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.

GROUND RULES:

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 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

Donations to PCIA Welcome: In order to support the advocacy and other work of the Peace Corps Iran Association, please consider [making a donation](#).