



انجمن گروه صلح ایران
News from Peace Corps Iran Association's Advocacy Committee

June 25, 2017



Photo courtesy of Doug Schermer, Tehran, 2014

Welcome to the first issue of PCIA's new Advocacy Bulletin, of, by, and for PCIA members! The Bulletin will be published as needed, rather than on any regular schedule. Each issue will feature an opinion piece by a member, along with actions you can take. The first piece, below, is by Carolyn Yale. Opinions expressed here do not reflect the official position of the Board of Directors. To receive future issues, you must subscribe [here](#).

Expression of sympathy from the PCIA Board of Directors, on behalf of the Peace Corps Iran Association in response to the terrorist attacks in Tehran:

We are all shocked and saddened by the June 7 terror attacks in Tehran. On behalf of the membership of the Peace Corps Iran Association, we extend our deepest

sympathy to the people of Iran and to Iranians of the diaspora with deeply held ties to friends and family in their homeland.

Editorial by Carolyn Yale (Shiraz, 1974-76). This is one person's perspective, meant to prompt thought and discussion.

June 9, 2017

On terrorism, fear, and disorder

On Wednesday June 7, a stronghold was breached: An attack on the Iranian parliament and the tomb of Ayatollah Khomeini killed at least 17, injuring others, and shattered Iran's image of invulnerability. The attack has set off off new rounds of conjecture as to intent and consequences. What does this mean? We know that ISIS has claimed responsibility: Does this portend internal unrest? A ramp-up of hostilities with Saudi Arabia? Our President has insinuated that Iran brought the attacks on by supporting terrorism elsewhere — live and die by the sword. If there is some truth in this, is any state involved in armed

conflicts immune? We might wonder, in what sense – under what circumstances -- is there a meaningful distinction between terrorists and freedom fighters; between militia and troops? What is terrorism if every side can define its terms?

I am not the student of military combat, counterinsurgency and so forth, but I offer some civilian's thoughts on 'terrorism' as it relates to Iran.

We have all seen the effects of attacks by organized groups such as ISIS: Fear, feelings of vulnerability, speculation as to 'root causes', accusations and blame. The reaction to violation of the presumed order and values is visceral. But there can be, I believe, as much danger in the responses as in the attack. Indeed, this danger is greatest where 'victims' are very capable of marshaling response that creates further problems. After all, refugees, families in war zones, vulnerable as they are, are largely helpless. But an organized state can react with force and restrictive laws, taking measures disproportionate to the actual threat.

In other words, terrorism undermines civil order. Such an attack undercuts trust among citizens and their relationship to the government; it discredits governments that count on cooperative behavior and invites repressive means to keep the 'peace.' Now, Iran is not Canada or Denmark. But within a troubled region it has maintained integrity as a state and has been perceived as a 'safe' country. The aspirations of many citizens, especially the younger generation, and some government leaders are clearly pointed towards a mature civil society.** Will this change? What can we and our leaders do to encourage the growth of civil society, rather than force Iran into a more repressive posture?

For one thing, avoid isolating Iran. Support for implementation of the Nuclear Agreement should, with Iran's compliance, help to open up economic and diplomatic ties.

Second, avoid positioning Iran as the 'enemy' in the region. The Senate Bill 722, which passed the Senate on June 15 has this intent. It is an effort to use United States resources and Presidential powers to further solidify the Arab/Sunni states and Israel against Iran.

Third, speak out with both conviction and information. Investigate labels commonly applied to Iran, such as ‘state sponsor of terrorism.’ Try to understand ‘terrorism’ from the perspective of other countries and communities. Look into the basis for concerns about Iranian missile tests.

The [PCIA website](#) and [Facebook group](#) have information about these issues, and more. We encourage you to share your opinions with us.

** To read more about civil society in Iran, see, for example:

Hamid Yazdan Panah, [*Iran's Civil Society Shines Through Darkness*](#).
HuffPost, January 25, 2017.

Masih Alinejad, Nina Ansary, Karim Sadjadpour, Laura Secor, [*Iranian Civil Society: Past, Present, and Future*](#). A dialog sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 4, 2016.

Reza Marash and Trita Parsi, [*As Iranians Vote for Peace, Trump*](#)

[Helps Saudi Arabia Pick Another Fight.](#) HuffPost, June 6, 2017.

To continue the discussion on this and other Iran issues, please join our [Facebook group](#).

Why an Advocacy Bulletin? Why now?

As members of the Peace Corps Iran community, we believe that people everywhere, including in Iran, have basic human rights, and that they want to live in peace and prosperity, and participate in the world community. We are concerned about biased media coverage of Iran issues, the fact that so many Americans are ill-informed about Iran and its people, and the frightening potential for a blow-up in that region. We are concerned about Islamophobia, and terrorism, and protecting the Nuclear Agreement. These are the general issues the Advocacy Bulletin will explore.

Each issue will notify you of urgent matters having to do with Iran relations, suggest actions you can take, and keep you informed with information and views you may not find in the mainstream media.

The opinions expressed in the Advocacy Bulletin will not necessarily reflect the official position of PCIA or its Board of Directors. Rather, we invite alternative perspectives on current events. Issues will often include actions that you can take. These actions will be in line with PCIA's [Mission Statement](#), [Advocacy Purpose Statement](#), and Guiding Principles (see below).

Members are encouraged to [submit opinion pieces](#) for future issues.

The Advocacy Bulletin is opt-in. **We will only send it to you if you want it.** We invite you to [sign up for the email list](#). You may unsubscribe at any time using the "Unsubscribe" link in the footer.

If you are not a member of PCIA, we highly recommend that you join! Membership is free and you do not have to have served in the Peace Corps. We want you! You can join by clicking [here](#).

The Bulletin will not be published on any regular schedule. Instead, we'll publish whenever there is an urgent need for communication. We expect that may be fairly often.

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.

Adopted February, 2017

ADVOCACY COMMITTEE PURPOSE STATEMENT

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

Adopted February, 2017

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. *World peace and friendship are possible when Americans have acceptance and understanding for people in other countries.*
2. *Tolerance, respect, inclusiveness, and mutual understanding form the foundation for how nations and peoples should interact with each other.*
3. *The world works better when all countries are integrated into the global community and economy.*
4. *Negotiation and diplomacy are necessary in order to resolve international issues.*
5. *War is rarely successful in resolving international conflicts.*

Adopted June, 2017

The opinions expressed in this issue are those of the authors and do not represent those of the Board. Contributions to the Advocacy Bulletin are most welcome and may be submitted by [email](#).

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