

Wednesday, November 13, 2019

Testimony to Portland City Council - Iran Diplomacy Resolution

Jason Ali Allen Intro

- Born in Pre-revolution Iran to an Iranian mother and American father serving in the US Army. Has over 100 family members living in Iran. Last visited in 2003.
- Owner of Portland ADU which has been renovating and repairing homes since 2006 and specializes in building Additional Dwelling Units.
- Was a 2016 Bernie Sanders National Delegate representing Oregon to the DNC.
- Current Endorsement Task Force Chair for the Multnomah County Democrats.
- Current State Central Committee member for the Democratic Party of Oregon.

Testimony Contents

- I want to start out by remembering my first day at Martin Luther King Laboratory School in Chicagoland where I was told not to tell anyone that I was Iranian-American, the ten year proxy war against Iran raged thereafter and I was only able to see my grandmother one time before she died. I was lucky enough to visit Iran in 2003 and directly experience my family, Iran's beautiful people, the cultural and environmental treasures there and I have lived with a lump in my throat as a US or Saudi or Israeli war on Iran seems ever more probable every year. In 2017, the arbitrary and cruel Executive order known as the Muslim Ban came into effect prohibiting my relatives and all Iranians from visiting the US.
- I am here today to state that sanctions do not work. Economic strictures are acts of war which act as a blunt force tool better able to destroy a country than influence it. Sanctions are never able to specifically target those to whom the US wishes to apply pressure and the governments we sanction are able to shift the entire additional cost of sanctions onto the general population. ¹
- There is no evidence to support the notion that the material suffering sanctions impose upon the Iranian populace inspires them to pressure their own government. Quite the contrary: outside pressure against Iran's economy strengthens the hand of

¹ <https://www.hoover.org/research/do-economic-sanctions-work>

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the most hardline elements within the Iranian regime by providing a scapegoat they can point to and deflect blame away from their own performance. ²

- The most recent uprising of Iran's middle class poor twenty-somethings just happened in 2018 and was spurred by rural people's frustrations that the nuclear deal's economic benefits had not reached average Iranians. The protesters (and 90% of those arrested were under 25 years old) protested income inequality where the Theocracy's 1% soaked up 80% of the Iran deal's economic liquidity and they protested the money Iran spends on regional interventionism leaving Iranians lacking government help.³
- Back in 2009 the Green Movement was led by Iran's Urban middle-class who rallied with excitement around a Presidential candidate representing greater social freedoms and then surged into the street to protest the election rigging that blocked him from winning. Green Movement activists were also against the militaristic policies of the US and its Middle Eastern allies in the region.
- Rural iranians did not participate in the protests of urban ones and vice versa. Imagine if the demographics of the 2018 and 2009 protests found common ground and came out in unison?
- Urban and rural people both feeling sometimes hopeful, sometimes hopeless: frustrated with the inability of their national government too broken by corruption to attend to the people's most pressing needs. Watching the administration hope for a foreign enemy or villainous "other" to distract from its own failings hoping that the people don't find a way to overcome their manufactured cultural divides, unify and step into their power as a people: Perhaps Iran is really not that different from the US after all.
- Here are a few demographic facts about Iran that might encourage you about the inevitability of positive change there if we give it a chance:
 - 70% of Iran's 80M population is under 30 years old.
 - 97% are literate.
 - 60% of all University students are Female.

² <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/dont-expect-regime-change-in-iran/>

³ <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/opinion-theres-more-to-irans-protests-than-youve-been-told>

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- Iran's labor force is expected to grow by 2.5% annually in the five years to 2020, equivalent to about 3M new job seekers. The unemployment rate for young people aged 15 to 29 is already over 24%.⁴
- If we give Iranians the space for their rural and urban movements to find each other and take away the easy scapegoat and distraction of US intervention, then both movements can fight against corruption together and strive for more social freedoms.
- But we shouldn't do nothing! People to people diplomacy works. City to to city diplomacy works. Let express our values as Portlanders by adopting Shiraz, Iran's city of Roses and poetry as our natural sister city. As such, I urge the Portland City Council to support Resolution Number #

⁴ <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2016/12/05/why-iran-is-finding-it-hard-to-create-jobs>

I am here to speak in favor of the Iran Diplomacy Resolution.

Prior to 2005, I knew very little about Iran, other than what I read in the newspapers or heard on television. At that time, President George Bush was threatening war with Iran. In December of 2005, I had an opportunity to be a part of a delegation to Iran with the Fellowship of Reconciliation which is a 100-year old international peace organization. To be totally honest, I was afraid to go because I believed much of the propaganda being disseminated by the media and our government. I even took a stash of food with me and fully expected to be spit upon by the people. But curiosity overcame my fears and I went.

That experience completely changed me and totally broadened my way of thinking. People on the street were extremely friendly and eager to meet us. The food was wonderful and I soon disposed of the food I had brought with me. We met Jews, Zoroastrians, Orthodox Christians and, of course, Muslims. In Qom, we met Mennonites and Presbyterians who were studying Islam in that holy Islamic city. We visited Tehran, Isfahan and Shiraz and were exposed to the rich Persian history and diversity within the country.

Following my return, I became involved with the American Iranian Friendship Council in Portland which advocates for diplomacy with Iran and peaceful solutions to political differences. Gretchen Kafoury, a member of the Portland City Council for seven years, often attended our meetings because she had been a Peace Corps volunteer in Iran and had a special affinity for the country.

I have also been involved with efforts to forge a sister city relationship between Portland and Shiraz, Iran. Both cities are known as cities of roses. In addition, to governmental diplomacy, I believe that citizen diplomacy is also imperative to foster greater understanding between cultures and nations. Working for people-to-people connections with citizens in Iran is now almost impossible due to the U.S. travel ban.

I fully support the U.S. rejoining the Joint Comprehensive Plan Of Action (a.k.a. the Iran deal) and exercising all diplomatic initiatives. I support the removal of mean-spirited crippling sanctions which only serve to hurt the Iranian people and cause untold suffering. The sanctions severely affect families of many Iranian Americans living in Portland and elsewhere.

Wars in the 21st century threaten life on this planet. Using nuclear weapons is unthinkable, yet the threats to use them go unabated. The nations of the world need to pull together to address climate change, not engage in military actions which kill thousands of people and devastate civilizations. In addition, the U.S. military is the single biggest user of fossil fuel in the world, adding significant amounts of carbon dioxide and poisons to the atmosphere. It seems clear to me that the U.S. would not be threatening military conflict with Iran if it didn't have the fourth largest oil reserves in the world. With Mother Earth and its inhabitants in serious danger of extinction, military conflicts need to cease immediately.

Please cast a vote for peace and adopt the resolution.

Marion Ward
735 SW St. Clair Ave., Apt. 1605
Portland, OR 97205

November 13, 2019

Catherine Thomasson, MD
6201 NE Oregon St.
Portland, OR 97213

Dear Mayor and Commissioners:

I am the former Executive Director of Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) and previously traveled to Iran as a citizen ambassador as President of PSR in 2009. I am also speaking on behalf of the Multnomah County Democrats in their support of this resolution.

I embarked on a trip to Iran in 2009 as president of PSR because I was petrified our country was heading toward a useless and deadly war with Iran. It was so important to convey via citizen to citizen diplomacy that we can increase awareness of the characteristics of our societies and to share ideas to better understand common values. My citizen contingent reached out to the victims of war in Iran--specifically the chronically ill victims of chemical warfare. Our visits were written up in the Tehran news.

Back in the U.S. we were able to speak out for the principles of sovereignty of Iran but also to draw parallels for those lost and harmed in the unnecessary wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere. I was able to speak around the country humanizing the people of Iran to counter the arcane ideas that I heard in our own U.S. Congress—that Iranians are incapable of negotiating, even though their efforts in ending one stage of hostilities in Afghanistan couldn't have happened without them. By sharing the stories of Iranian victims of war we bring our two countries closer and develop the drive to work toward peace and diplomacy. Because war is the ultimate failure of society to negotiate and is devastating to the entire fabric of society.

In my capacity as Director of PSR, and with our 50+ years of working to reduce the threat of nuclear weapons, our staff worked very hard to convince U.S. moderates that the Iran Nuclear Deal was indeed a wise move to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons to insure its ratification. Indeed the treaty was successful while in force to stop enrichment of uranium to weapons grade. It was a travesty for our current administration to walk away from this deal. It was never designed to achieve other diplomatic goals that threaten peace in the Middle East region.

I am also representing the Multnomah County Democrats to support this resolution. It is essential that city, county and state officials go on record opposing the severe sanctions imposed on the Iranian people which they do not deserve having kept their obligations under the treaty. The sanctions actually undermine negotiation as it strengthens the hard-liners in Iran to point to the demon U.S. government and perpetuate animosity.

I am fully in support of developing a sister-city relationship with the people of Shiraz. Increasing awareness of the shared human experience is essential in opening citizen diplomacy channels. I will always cherish my experience playing table tennis as a woman in one of the vice-presidents offices. And getting to know some of the 63% of physicians who are women.

Thank you for bringing forth this resolution. I urge your support.

Catherine Jones, MD

McClymont, Keelan

From: Kelly Campbell <kelly@oregonpsr.org>
Sent: Tuesday, November 12, 2019 5:14 PM
To: Council Clerk – Testimony
Subject: 20 Organizations Urging Support for No War on Iran resolution
Attachments: Organizations supporting PDX City Council Res on Iran.pdf

Please find submitted testimony attached.

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Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility
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Pronouns: [she / her / hers](#)

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Tuesday, November 12th, 2019

To: Mayor Wheeler and Portland Commissioners

Via email to cctestimony@portlandoregon.gov

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From: Kelly Campbell, Executive Director, Oregon PSR

Re: Support for Portland City Council Resolution to "Urge our Federal Government to engage in diplomacy with Iran"

I am writing to share with you the list of organizations and individuals supporting the resolution before Portland City Council tomorrow for diplomacy, not war, with Iran.

The attached page lists the 20 community organizations that are endorsing this resolution and urging you to adopt it.

Thank you for considering this support as you make your decision.



Organizations supporting the Portland City Council Resolution to "Urge our Federal Government to engage in diplomacy with Iran"



American Friends Service Committee



Augustana Lutheran Church



MULTNOMAH DEMOCRATS
EMPOWERING PEOPLE

CODEPINK
WOMEN FOR PEACE

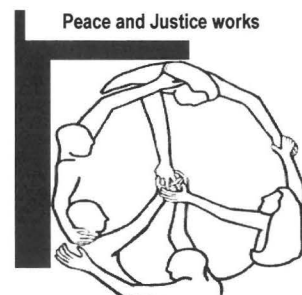
ENVIRONMENTALISTS AGAINST WAR
STOP THE WAR AGAINST THE PLANET AND ALL ITS PEOPLES



*National Association of Atomic Veterans



OPAL
ORGANIZING PEOPLE / ACTIVATING LEADERS



Buddhist Peace Fellowship
BUDDHISM + SOCIAL JUSTICE
*Portland Chapter



First Unitarian Portland

*Peace Action Committee



SIERRA CLUB
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WORLDBEYONDDWAR.org
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