Two goals of FEZANA are to promote the study, understanding and practice of the Zoroastrian faith and the welfare of Zoroastrian communities and to foster and encourage Zoroastrian fellowship in the North American continent; and to represent the religious interests of its Membership in national and international forums.

Eighteen knowledgeable, gracious, and energetic Zarathushtis represented FEZANA at the Parliament of the World’s Religions from October 15-19, in Salt Lake City with these goals in mind: Ervad Jehan Bagli, Mobedyar Maneck Bhujwala, Dolly Dastoor, Homi Gandhi, Rustom and Shirin Ghadiiali, Firdosh Kavarana, Dr. Khoosro and Roya Mehrfar, Firdosh Mehta, Shernaz Minwalla, Mahrukh Motafram, Behram Pastakia, Rohinton and Roshan Rivetna, Sam Vesuna, Arzan Wadia, and Ervad Kobad Zarolia.

Organization of our engagement at the Parliament began months prior with written proposals for panel discussions and demonstrations, discussions with panelists from within and outside of the Zoroastrian community, and gathering educational materials for our display booth.

Dressed in our duglis and saris, the FEZANA group, consisting of individuals from various parts of North American and Singapore, entered the large ballroom together for the opening ceremonies to show our pride in our heritage. We were thrilled to see Ervad Kobad Zarolia take the stage to recite a prayer in front of 8,000 guests. His presence and commanding voice piqued the interest of many in the audience.
It was no wonder that over one hundred people flocked at 7:00 a.m. the next morning to witness a demonstration of our Jashan Ceremony conducted by Ervad Jehan Bagli and Mobedyar Maneck Bhujwala. After a shortened version of the ceremony, Ervad Jehan Bagli provided a clear and inspirational explanation of each prayer recited and action that took place. People were in awe of his knowledge and wanted to learn more.

They searched for answers at our booth, wonderfully set up with books, FEZANA Journal magazines, pamphlets and posters with collaborative efforts from Maneck Bhujwala, Roshan and Rohinton Rivetna, Behram Pastakia, Dolly Dastoor, and Firdosh Kavarana. Throughout the Parliament, guests were intrigued and learned about the Zoroastrian Religion as all of us volunteered our time and services at the booth. The wealth of knowledge was truly amazing. No wonder we sold most of the books and magazines on display. We had also provided a flyer with upcoming FEZANA Panels at the Parliament in the advent they wanted to learn more.

Curious guests were invited to hear about ways in which various religious faiths relate to the Divine from Ervad Jehan Bagli (Zoroastrian), Rabbi Michael Balinsky (Jewish), Susan Kopp (Catholic), and Bibi Jasbir Kaur (Sikh). Together they shared their thoughts and expertise, and all agreed that it is through their actions that they best relate to the Divine.

Later that afternoon, Ervad Jehan Bagli, Homi Gandhi, Maneck Bhujwala, and Firdosh Mehta directed our attention to specific passages in the Avesta in which we are charged to become Stewards of the Environment. Using his expertise in the field, Dr. Khosro Mehrfar concluded with ideas in which we and corporations can make a real difference.

With all of the religious and non-religious sectors represented at the Parliament, the question begs to whether the Interfaith Model is truly working or does it need tweaking. Rohinton Rivetna moderated a group of panelists to share their thoughts on this topic. Ervad Jehan Bagli, Mobedyar Maneck Bhujwala, Michael Terrien, Tarunjit Butalia, and Shernaz Minwalla all came at this topic from different angles provided ample room for questions and a robust discussion with the audience.

Throughout the Parliament, guests were asked to sign a petition for the establishment of a Religious Arm of the United Nations. Rohinton Rivetna, Homi Gandhi, Dr. Khosro Mehrfar, Dr. Harbans Lal, and Satpal Singh all joined forces at a panel discussion to describe the importance of having religious representation at the UN considering the current global issues and events.

If you would like to learn more about FEZANA events that occurred at the Parliament of the World’s Religions, take a look at posts made by Arzan Wadia on Twitter, Facebook and FEZANA.org. [Also look for comprehensive accounts and details of FEZANA’s participation at the Parliament in the upcoming FEZANA Journal, Winter 2015 issue.]
The ZAH Library (Home of FIRES) hosted its 3-day annual event in Houston starting on Friday, October 9. The theme, “Survival of Zoroastrians in North America: Potential for a Positive Outlook”, addressed the burning issue of how the Diaspora in North America can thrive and remain a vibrant force in the coming decades.

Two outstanding experts were featured – Dr. Rashna Writer from France, and Roshan Rivetna from Chicago.

Friday evening, which was a meet-and-greet opportunity for the community, was dedicated mainly for the speakers to introduce themselves.

The next morning (Saturday, October 10) began with the first speaker Roshan Rivetna, who presented fascinating, but alarming, statistics on worldwide Zoroastrian population trends, births, deaths, fertility rates, conversions and immigration patterns. Roshan’s demographic study has been presented in detail in the Fall 2013 issue of The FEZANA Journal.

The second speaker, Dr. Rashna Writer, widely recognized for her books and lectures around the world, noted that the challenge before the community was daunting, and that Zoroastrianism could lose its identity in the multi-religious, multi-cultural society of North America. Widespread dispersal of Zoroastrians in a dynamic and mobile North American society will lead to atomization that will enfeeble the Diaspora.

Both speakers suggested several approaches that could be implemented at the local and global level to reverse the disturbing trends.

After lunch, the group gathered again to hear from a panel of three younger members of our community who shared their perspective of the future of Zoroastrianism in North America. The audience was fascinated and impressed with the varying viewpoints and the suggestions made to enhance the experience of people in their age group in the community.

The third day of the event (Sunday, October 11) was a 2-hour informal discussion with the speakers in a smaller group. Rashna Writer stressed that for Zoroastrianism to thrive in North America, it is vital to keep the second-generation immigrants (grown children of first-generation immigrants) involved in the community.

The three-day event was an unqualified success. Those who filled the main hall of the Zarathushti Center of Houston recognized this event as the first serious attempt to address the issue. [Read full account in FEZANA Journal, Winter 2015]
Persepolis: Images of an Empire Special Exhibit Opens in Chicago

Persepolis: Images of an Empire Exhibit – On October 11, 2015, ZAC-CHI members, Dinaz Weber, Erv. Rayomand Ravji, Hoshang and Bonnie Karani, and Mobedyar Boman Damkevala representing the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago and FEZANA, attended the Member’s Preview of this special museum exhibit at the Oriental Institute Museum of the University of Chicago. This exhibit presents large-format photographs taken during the Oriental Institute Persian Expedition of 1931–1939. These extraordinary images show the ruins of Persepolis, built at the height of the Achaemenid Persian empire (550–330 BC).

FEZANA is collaborating with the Oriental Institute as one of the sponsors of this pictorial exhibition. Many FEZANA Member Associations have already made contributions in support of this exhibit. If your Association would like to contribute, please contact admin@fezana.org for details. In the future, Oriental Institute would like to make this a travelling exhibition. Currently, this exhibit will be on display at the Oriental Institute through September 2016. Visit https://oi.uchicago.edu/museum-exhibits/persepolis

2016 FEZANA AGM in Michigan

April 29 – May 1, 2016
Location: Holiday Inn & Suites Farmington Hills-Nov 37529 Grand River Avenue, Farmington Hills, MI 48335

Group Room Rate is $112 – breakfast included

Reservations can be made by:
Phone – Please contact the Hotel directly at 248.477.7800
Website – customized website reservation system for this event, which allows group attendees to book their hotel reservations on the website using special Group Code: FRB.
More details about the AGM will be circulated in coming weeks and months.

ARTS AND HERITAGE

Zubin Mehta – Talk to Al Jazeera
A one on one interview with the world class conductor. Topics cover the Arts, Peace in the Middle East, His Career, Classical Music and much more.
[Approx 25 mins]
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLH9b1sKiWM

CONNECTIONS

Zoroastrianism Project
By Pallavi Shroff
A video documentary on the basic traditions, customs and beliefs of Zoroastrians created as a final year project by Pallavi Shroff.
[Approx 15 mins]
http://zoroastrians.net/2015/10/24/zoroastrianism-project-pallavi-shroff/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+Zoroastriansnet+%28Zoroastrians.net%29
On October 18, 2015 members of the Zoroastrian Association of California held a Jashan and ground breaking ceremony of their Atash Kadeh to be constructed on the grounds of their ZAC Center in Orange County, California. Expected grand opening for the Atash Kadeh is targeted for March or April, 2016. For full write up of the auspicious event, visit the FEZANA website. To view more photos, visit ZAC-LA website.