

FEZANA *bulletin*

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Happy Yalda/Deygan and Happy New Year from FEZANA

May 2019 bring Good Health, Peace and Happiness to all our FEZANA family and friends. May Ahura Mazda shower his choicest blessings on you and your dear ones this holiday season and throughout the New Year!

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UPCOMING DATES

January 21-23, 2019

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention. Varanasi, India

March 11-22, 2019

United Nations 63rd Commission on the Status of Women Conference (CSW63). Individuals interested in attending the conference as FEZANA representatives are requested to contact: bpastakia at aol.com and mistry.afreed at gmail.com

April 6, 2019

Zoroastrian Studies: A Symposium. University of Toronto in collaboration with FEZANA, OZCF and ZSO

May 1-5, 2019

WZCC AGM hosted by Central Florida Zoroastrian Community in Orlando. www.wzcc.org in conjunction with FEZANA AGM. Details to come.

(Dates continued on page 4)

2018 SSZ Conference in Chicago



[L-R] SSZ Speakers Antia, Mirza, Brown and Zarolia



Next-Gen Panel

Rev. Dr. Brian Arthur Brown was keynote speaker at the SSZ (Society of Scholars of Zoroastrianism) conference, at the Zoroastrian Center of Chicago, October 19 – 21, 2018. Dr. Brown presented his research on *“The Dead ‘Zee’ Scrolls: Zoroastrian Concepts Buried in the Scriptures of the World Religions”* showing how the Magi spread Zoroaster’s thoughts along the Silk Road from Greece to China, impacting the birth of the seven World Religions. Brown also captured the audience with his “big reveal” of the tomb containing Zoroaster’s bones, in a crypt beneath the Blue Mosque in Afghanistan.

Other speakers were: **Mobed Kobad Zarolia** who presented an account of his tour of Uzbekistan and search for Zoroastrian connections; **Pervin Taleyarkhan**, who engaged the audience with an interactive discussion on the Zoroastrian religion, its teachings, and its practices; **Mobed Tehemton Mirza**, who gave an inspirational sermon, on *“Vohu Manah – the Good Mind;”* and **Dastur Dr. Kersey Antia**, who spoke about how Zoroastrianism had relations with most other religions. In the Panel Discussion moderated by **Persis Driver**, Next Generation panelists **Khurshed Ichhaporia**, **Kamal Saher**, **Zenobia Ravji**, and **Cyrus Rivetna** discussed aspects of the Zoroastrian religion.

The next SSZ conference is planned for Oct 2019 in Houston, by Sarosh Manekshaw and Aban Rustomji, in collaboration with FIRES and ZAH, where Almut Hintze, professor of Zoroastrianism at SOAS, London, will be the keynote speaker. The following SSZ conference is planned for October 2020 in Toronto organized by Mobed Kobad Zarolia and Mobed Tehemton Mirza, in collaboration with ZSO and OZCF.

For information on SSZ contact Rohinton Rivetna (rivetna@aol.com). Conference presentations and videos may be viewed at www.s-s-z.org. □

[Read more about the recent 2018 SSZ Conference in the upcoming FEZANA Journal]



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NGO in consultative status (Roster) with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

American Academy of Religion Meeting Report

By Parshan Khosravi

On Monday, November 19, Parshan Khosravi and Arash Jahanian, a young Zoroastrian from Denver, attended the Council on Foreign Relations American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado as representatives of FEZANA. The meeting covered a host of issues from the history of refugee movements to the modern day crises that have called for the need for more attention to be given to the issue of refugee resettlement and immigration.

At the heart of the issue, we know that the number of refugees have been on the rise over the past decades, to the point when today we have over 25 million refugees around the globe, the highest it has ever been. This is in part due to a large number factors, including but not limited to, political unrest, economic instability, and more growingly, environmental catastrophes. Without a doubt, navigating and resolving this issue requires a coordinated global effort including a full participation if all international actors, especially the world powers such as the United States.

It is hence that much more shocking and striking to note the recent movement of the US government against accepting refugees. This year, for the first time in its history, the United States was not the country with the highest aggregate of refugee resettlements, falling behind Canada. It is important to further note that this statistic is simply the total aggregate, and that the United States has long been behind many other developed nations in accepting refugees in a per mile radius.

The impact of the United States' regressive policies toward refugee resettlement has certainly been felt by our community, as the HIAS program, the leading program for Irani Zoroastrians who are seeking refuge to the United States, reported shockingly low numbers of admitted refugees for the year, one that is a mere fraction of what it historically used to be. It is evident from these discussions that there continues to be a need for FEZANA's active presence in pushing for the expansion of refugee resettlement programs, and I certainly hope that the board takes more active steps in pursuing this in the future.

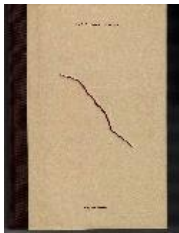
On a more positive note, it was truly great to see Arash and being able to represent FEZANA as the youth. Furthermore, we totally had the most numbers in the room, due to a surprise visit from another one of our respected fellow Zoroastrians, and it was all just too great (see pictures below):



(Left) Sousan Abadian, Mark Hetfield, President and Chief Executive Officer of HIAS, Parshan Khosravi, Arash Jahanian; (Right) With Jennifer Sime, senior vice president of the United States programs and awards management unit at the International Rescue Committee.



BOOK AWARENESS



Like Sugar in Milk
by Majlend Bramo, Self
Published, available at
Parsiana Bookstore, 2018.

Italian photographer Majlend Bramo puts the spotlight on the Parsi community of Mumbai, their unique history and culture, and how they manage to thrive despite the challenge of dwindling numbers. Various aspects of the community, wedding, navjotes, jashans as well as birthday parties are featured – in photographs. With a preface by Dr. Shernaz Cama, Director, UNESCO PARZOR Project, this book hopes to introduce readers across the world to think again about the great migrations that are affecting us today. Born in Albania, Bramo cites, “The Parsees were refugees exactly like the Syrians that are coming to Europe for shelter. And our response to migrations should be more open and focused on the future and not only the present.”

Visit our website at
<http://www.fires-fezana.org/>

Meeting with U.S. Department of State

By Homi D. Gandhi



(Left) Presenting a FEZANA lapel pin to Mr. Knox Thames, Special Advisor for Religious Minorities; (Right) Knox Thames, Homi D. Gandhi, and Sousan Abadian



Recently Kersi Shroff, Co-Chair

FEZANA Research and Preservation Committee, and I visited the US Department of State and met with Knox Thames, Special Advisor for Religious Minorities, and Sousan Abadian, Franklin Fellow and Foreign Policy Advisor in the Office of International Religious Freedom at the US Department of State. We discussed about FEZANA and its committees organizing many global events in the USA at which many Zoroastrian participants from around the world, including from Iran, have attended.

I informed Mr. Thames that as FEZANA President and a concerned member of the Zoroastrian religious community in the USA I have been made aware of the problems of, and experienced by, the Iranian Zoroastrians in obtaining the US visa currently. Further, the individuals attending the events in the past have returned to their home countries and do not become illegal immigrants.

I submitted a memorandum to Mr. Thames listing the forthcoming global events to be hosted in the USA for the next 5 years, beginning with the VII World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in Los Angeles, July 1-6, 2019, and urged that the visas for Iranian Zoroastrians attending this and other events should be facilitated at the time of application at the Consulate nearest to them.

Calling All Designers!

Have your artwork prominently featured at the largest annual NGO Forum held at the United Nations

Preparations for the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2019 are gearing up. Enter the handbook cover contest. **Click here to learn more about the [NGO CSW63 Forum](#)**

Your artwork should incorporate the CSW63 Priority Theme: **Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.** Visit UN Women website [here](#) for more information.

Deadline For Submissions: 14 January, 2019
and should be submitted to contest@ngocsw.org



**WZCC & FEZANA AGM's
MAY 1- 5, 2019
ORLANDO, FL USA**

Visit <http://www.wzccandfezanaagm.cf> to view detailed program so you may appreciate the content and excellence of the speakers & panelists.

Mr. Ajay Banga, President & CEO of Mastercard, co-founder of the Cyber Readiness Institute, first vice chairman of the International Chamber of Commerce, trustee of the U.S. Council for Intl. Business and 2016 recipient of the Padma Shri Award, will be the Keynote Speaker and Chief Guest at the Gala WZCC/FEZANA Dinner and WZCC Awards Event on Saturday May 4, 2019. It will be in the form of a fireside chat with **Mr. Dinyar (Dinny) Devitre**, retired Sr VP & CFO of Altria Group and currently on board of Altria Group, IHSMarkit and Vice Chairman of Pratham Educational Foundation.

Information for discounted lodging and optional tours including a cruise from May 6-10 is also on the link.

Please register early! Early bird pricing available through December 31, 2018.

We expect strong representation not only from North America but also from Global Participants. It will be a perfect environment to network with 'movers and shakers' from all over the world

[\(continued on page 5\)](#)

A Toddler with Third Degree Burns and a Community that Came Together to Help

Some years back we had an appeal to help the family of a 4-year-old, little girl who fell in a vat of boiling milk and was severely burnt. She was being treated in India but needed help. This news spread like wildfire in our community.

Through the help of FEZANA welfare committee and other well-wishers and with her parent's approval it was decided to bring her to a Shriners Hospital in Boston which specialized in sever burn victims. Within a short period of time, we were able to obtain visas for the child, her mother and a nurse to travel. We were able to find donors who paid for all the transportation expenses from the hospital in India to the travel to New York.

The time frame for action was very tight, she had to be stable enough for a long journey, the flight from India to New York was very long, she could not sit a number of seats had to be removed to accommodate a stretcher, a special nurse had to be with her twenty four hours, her mother had to accompany her for her comfort and understanding, all the visas had to be arranged for travel.

Another challenge was to transport her from New York to Boston. The local airlines did not have any provision for a stretcher, after the long flight from India to New York she might not be able to withstand the ambulance drive to Boston. After frantic trial and error of different options we got a phone call from a pilot, an angel who volunteered to take her as soon as she landed on his small plane that had a stretcher to Boston Shriners hospital. There are angles all around us, this man who we had never met or known, came to our aid and refused to take any money for the emergency service.

There were so many miracles that happened to prove that when the intentions are for the right reasons and when we all come together, the universe makes the impossible, possible. We had angels who arranged for Shriners Hospital in Boston, Shriners Hospital did not charge a penny for the months of stay and rehabilitation, the small plane pilot with stretcher facility who flew the family from New York to Shriners Hospital in Boston and refused to accept any compensation. So many volunteers/angels from India to New York to Boston who took care of whatever arrangements that were necessary to make a smooth journey, so that the family did not have to worry about anything else besides taking care of the little girl's needs.

The Boston community went out of their way to make the family feel at home as much as they could and the girl recovered completely. The result is always positive when we do our best, no matter what the outcome. It is even more gratifying when the outcome is life enhancing, as it was in this case.

While the FEZANA team reaches out for urgent medical appeals, we cannot do this in every instance. In many cases the team attends to the matter without going out to the wider community. Particularly in cases where the applicant requests anonymity, we offer what assistance we can with complete confidentiality. Your generous donations allow us to do this good work, helping individuals to regain a measure of control after difficulties. Donate today to take advantage of year end charitable deduction benefits. Please donate online at www.fezana.org/donate



**WZCC & FEZANA AGM's
MAY 1- 5, 2019
ORLANDO, FL USA**

(continued from page 4)

with cross fertilization of ideas
and collaborative Synergy.

**WE ARE REQUESTING ALL
FEZANA ASSOCIATION
MEMBERS NOT ONLY TO
ATTEND THE FEZANA AGM,
BUT ALSO TO COME A FEW
DAYS EARLY TO
PARTICIPATE IN THE WZCC
AGM**

The Central Florida Team is
working hard to make your visit
an added value, memorable and
enjoyable

UPCOMING DATES

(continued from page 1)

July 1-6, 2019

[7th World Zoroastrian Youth
Congress](#). Los Angeles, CA.

August 20-23, 2019

*10th World Assembly, Religions
for Peace International in
Lindau, Germany*

August 26-29, 2019

*68th Annual DPI / NGO
Conference. Salt Lake City,
Utah. Details at www.un.org*

July 1-5, 2020

*Zoroastrian Games
(Washington D.C. area)*

December 29-31, 2020

*North American Zoroastrian
Congress hosted by ZAH
(Houston)*

The B.D. Petit Parsee General Hospital Clarifies its Situation Over Potential Loss of Donations

[FEZANA and its members have been supporting B.D. Petit Parsee General Hospital (PGH) for years. In view of a large number of stories floating around, their President has requested FEZANA to include this statement below for FEZANA Bulletin readers.]

The B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital (PGH) has been providing yeoman service to the community for the past 106 Years in the area of charity healthcare. For the past few years, PGH has been facing severe financial constraints in providing the current level of healthcare services especially to the poor and indigent members of the community. Under these circumstances, to ensure PGH continues to serve the community for at least the next 50 years, the benevolent couple, Pervin and Jal Shroff of Hong Kong, magnanimously came forward to support PGH by pledging US \$ 22.5 Million for establishing a state-of-the-art New Hospital within the campus of PGH. The New Hospital to be a multi-specialty non-communal Hospital to be operated by a professional organization Medanta, which was selected with due diligence after considering the candidatures of various Hospital Groups of India. Medanta as per an Agreement signed was to pay an annuity and a certain percentage of gross billable revenue to PGH besides treating PGH sponsored patients at subsidized rates, thereby helping PGH sustain in provisioning of Healthcare Services to Poor and Needy community members. PGH has taken legal advice to ensure that it does not breach the provisions of the Trust Deed/Rules and Regulations of PGH by entering into the New Hospital Project.

However, during last 3-4 months, a few persons from the community started raising questions on the viability of the New Hospital Project. They alleged that the project was ill-conceived and costs inflated. Besides, Medanta was not the right selection to operate the New Hospital. PGH Trustees did make attempts to clarify various issues raised by them and shared with them, in good faith, details including the finances of the project. Regrettably, some gentlemen have now started personal attacks on social media on the President and some of the Executive Committee members casting aspersions on their character and integrity. Further, an Application challenging the New Hospital Project, has been filed with the Charity Commissioner's Office wherein unsavoury allegations have been made. PGH Trustees do not want to allow a handful of ill-informed and misguided persons to make personal accusations, they would rather call off the Project if the community is not with them, rather than allow anyone to point a finger and question their integrity. In the meantime, the Donors have stated that if the community issues are not sorted out in the next few months, **they will withdraw their pledge to donate US \$22.5 Million offer and Medanta will also terminate the Agreement.** In such a situation, the only losers will be the community and unfortunately the poor and needy, and the responsibility for this disastrous fallout will rest squarely on the heads of these self-appointed critics, for scuttling a well-conceived and thoroughly researched project that would sustain the PGH for the benefit of generations to follow. In order to clarify the situation, PGH Trustees gave out a Press Release on 14th November 2018, the full contents of the same have been put on the **Home Page of PGH Website:**

<https://www.bdpetitparseegeneralhospital.org>

HOMA D. PETIT
PRESIDENT
THE B D PETIT PARSEE GENERAL HOSPITAL