

# *Looking Back Moving Forward*



*Iranian American  
Jewish Federation*

**December 2016**

**[www.iajf.org](http://www.iajf.org)**

## **Warmest Greetings and Best Wishes for the New Year from the President**

Dear friend of our IAJF community:

As 2016 draws to a close, on behalf of Mr. Manochehr Nazarian, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Executive Board, staff and volunteers of the Iranian American Jewish Federation, I wish each and every one of our community members a year filled with good health, sweet moments and renewed dedication to Jewish and Persian cultures and values.

It is time to reflect on 2016 and welcome 2017. Looking back, the year was marked by significant challenges in the face of which we made significant progress. The boards and active members of the IAJF committees have taken strong stands to support the policies and practices that are impacting the lives of many Jewish students and families. We shared conferences and seminars with leaders and colleagues of other faith-based groups to examine the global perception about Israel, reporting on important events and Israel's right to exist. Our Public Affairs Committee, together with the support of coalition of activists and like-minded organizations, stood up against hatred, bigotry, and BDS, and supported liberty and the rights of our communities here and abroad. With the help of our Jewish friends, we took the anti-BDS bill (AB-2844) all the way to Governor Brown's desk which passed on September 24, 2016. Our Emergency Fund Committee has continued to serve the needy effectively and to receive support from members of our community to keep the fund strong. As the umbrella organization, we have held dialogues with state and federal entities to ensure our safety and represent our community in the US and elsewhere. As a community, we acknowledged the vision of the pioneers and collectively honored and celebrated a distinguished neurosurgeon and scientist, Dr. Asher Taban, along with a humanitarian philanthropist, the late Elias Esfandi and a remarkable journalist, Mr. Menasheh Amir.

I would like to thank all our valued staff, volunteers and board members for their continued support and devotion. We could not have achieved so much without such a tremendous level of endorsement from all of you. I also would like to thank all IAJF supporters for all the hard work and incredible level of enthusiasm for serving the community.

We invite you to read about the activities and events of the last few months and offer us your ideas to help "Your Federation" meet your needs.

In closing, please accept my very best wishes to you and your families for a healthy and prosperous 2017!

Susan Azizzadeh

President

## **2016 at a Glance**

**CAMERA:** (Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America) held a conference at the Iranian American Jewish Federation on January 18, 2016. The conference examined the underpinnings of the anti-Israel agenda and discussed the need for renewed leadership in the Church, the Jewish roots of Christianity, and ways to strengthen joint Evangelical and Jewish efforts on behalf of Israel.

**Christians United For Israel:** On Jan. 20th, 2016, Pastor Dumisani Washington, the outreach coordinator with a great understanding of the biblical roots and reasons to stand with Israel, gave an elaborate discussion on the path that over 700,000 Jewish refugees have passed throughout the years from the Middle East and North Africa.

**Roots of Persian Language:** On February 15, 2016, Dr. Tamar Eilam-Gindin, lectured to a large audience on the similarities of some of the Persian literature and Biblical words. Dr. Gindin explained that the early Classic Judeo Persian language has evolved into the new Persian language which is used in Iran, Afghanistan, parts of India and Pakistan.

**Raheel Raza visits IAJF:** On February 16th, 2016 we heard from a renowned Canadian Human Rights Activist about the impact of policies in the Middle East and the effects on women issues. Raheel Raza, a journalist and public speaker holds many interfaith discussions to promote democratic and humane treatment of all men, women and children around the world.

**Roundtable with the Homeland Security panel:** One of many attempts to educate and enhance the protocols for safety and security of Jewish organizations and places of worships was held at the IAJF on May 4, 2016. The meetings and collaboration with other entities continues to create new platforms and ideas for the protection of our community.

**Honoring Dr. Asher Taban:** On April 7th, 2016 over 400 guests and many community leaders, media personalities and the IAJF family witnessed a night of excitement, camaraderie and expressions of gratitude toward a prominent neurosurgeon with long history of public and community service. The first Elias Esfandi Award was presented to Dr. Asher Taban.

**Emergency Fund Dinner Gala:** Mr. and Mrs. Yoel Neman graciously held a gala benefiting the Emergency Fund of IAJF on June 15, 2016 at their residence. David Suissa, President of the Los Angeles Jewish Journal and a community activist as keynote speaker, reiterated the responsibility of the community to giving a helping hand to the needy. This event informed the community of the multiple tasks and effective assistance that have been provided to the community throughout the years.

**Adrin Nazarian Visits IAJF-Public Affairs Committee:** The first Iranian American Assembly member joined a group of participants on July 27th to build community bridges and take the message of unity and support back to the State Capitol.

**AB-2844 Anti-BDS Law:** On September 24th, California Governor Jerry Brown signed AB 2844, the anti-BDS bill, into law. The Iranian American Jewish Federation and the Community Coalition were actively involved in advocating for this important piece of legislation. Our efforts could not have been as effective without the leadership of Assembly Member Richard Bloom, the California Legislative Jewish Caucus, and Assembly Member Travis Allen.

**Shared Dream:** Iranian American Jewish Federation will be memorialized as one of the sponsors of a permanent iconic monument to the City of Los Angeles representing universal individual and group freedom and multicultural coexistence. Inspired by the ideals of Cyrus the Great, Farhang Foundation raised money to start fabrication of this gift, only the second symbol of freedom since the Statue of Liberty. IAJF is honored to share the dream of hope, equality and peace.

**Simon Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance:** The first of the educational and cultural guided tours, pioneered by Mrs. Jila Rahban, was held on Sunday September 25th, followed by an intimate luncheon at Dr. and Mrs. Rahban's residence. This emotional and insightful visit was well received, and requests for future programs were expressed. A Farsi copy of *Night*, written by Elie Wiesel was a gift to all of the attendees.

**High Holiday Coupon Distribution:** Thanks to the donations made throughout 2016, the IAJF Emergency Fund was able to provide food to more than 150 needy families in order that they may have enjoyable and abundant High Holiday celebrations.

**Inspiring and Uplifting High Holiday Services:** Beth El Synagogue affiliated with the Iranian American Jewish Federation is proud to have provided High Holiday services for community members for decades. Creating a spiritually meaningful and vibrant blend, the compelling and moving services led by Rabbi Dr. Isaac Norman, and Hazzanim: Dr. Babak Eghbalieh, Dr. Sammy Eghbalieh, Mr. Isaac Yaghoubieh, Mr. Ezatolah Nazarian, and Mr. Ezri Pedouim.

Seeking to present a contemporary and spiritual Judaism through easy to follow services, Drs. Babak and Sammy Eghbalieh created prayer handbooks which offer explanations and insights ensuring a unique interpretive and uplifting service.

We had an illuminating presentation by Assembly member Travis Allen who authored the anti BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel) Assembly Bill 2844 along with Assembly member Richard Bloom. The bill which was signed into law by Governor Brown on September 24, 2016 prohibits California from entering contracts with businesses that participate in boycotts against Israel. Mr. Allen is very passionate about the land of Israel and he insisted on Israel's safety and equal access to opportunities.

Our distinguished member, Dr. Ruben Melamed addressed the congregants on the recent wave of Antisemitism and the efforts made by IAJF in conjunction with other organizations to combat the movement and support the historic anti BDS Bill.

Hundreds of congregants attended the services to renew and revitalize their Judaism and as always we welcome all members of the community especially young professionals to our services.

**IAJF Honors Menasheh Amir:** On October 27th, 2016, the Iranian American Jewish Federation, IAJF, hosted an honoring ceremony in recognition of Mr. Menasheh Amir's contributions to the Iranian community as a radio broadcaster, commentator, and expert on the Middle East over half a century.

More than 400 Iranians of different faiths, beliefs, and political views enthusiastically joined IAJF to celebrate Mr. Amir's accomplishments. Consul Generals, ambassadors, assembly-members as well as prominent journalists were among the guests.

Mr. Amir is highly respected and praised for providing comprehensive coverage of the news and broadcasting accurate and objective information on the Voice Of Israel "Kol Yisrael" radio network. He is especially well-known for hosting the popular show "Seday-e shoma dar seday-e Israel" (Your Voice on the Voice of Israel) which provides an opportunity for Iranian listeners in Iran and worldwide to voice their opinions and exchange ideas.

Following the reception, Mrs. Azizzadeh welcomed the attendees, delivered the opening address and insisted on IAJF's commitment to support cultural and social efforts. Dr. Mehdi Aghazamani hosted the ceremony as the MC. The honoree, Mr. Amir addressed the audience followed by a Q&A session. The evening also featured remarks by esteemed speakers: Honorable Sam Grundweg Consul General of Israel to western region of the United States and Lisa Daftari, an outstanding journalist. Assembly-member Richard Bloom was presented an Appreciation Plaque. Persian classical music was performed by distinguished artists, Shahram Fassazadeh and Shahla Sarshar.

We commend Mr. Amir and wish him much success in his future endeavors.

**New Addition to Executive Board:** Iranian American Jewish Federation welcomes the Real Estate Division to the Executive Board. This group was formed with the interest and compassion to grow the young leadership, exchanges of ideas, networking and prosperity which would directly benefit the recipients of assistance through the Emergency Fund.

The inauguration breakfast was held on November 17th, 2016 at the Beverly Hills Il-Fornaio by invitation with presence of many successful members of various industries in Real Estate, Banking, Lending, Legal, and Escrow Services. This meeting has resulted in joint ventures while several checks have been received to help families in need. We take this opportunity to thank co-chairs of the committee, Mr. Sean Nass and Mr. David Yashar for their dedication to enhancing the lives of the individuals in our community.

**StandWithUs Fundraiser Gala:** On December 11, Mr. and Mrs. Chadorch, extended a generous invitation to the IAJF President Mrs. Susan Azizzadeh to attend a gala honoring Debbie and Naty Saidoff of StandWithUs, the organization which has been a significant arm in fighting BDS and Anti-Semitism in US and around the world. Mr. and Mrs. Travis Allen

were special guests in this gala for pioneering the bill 2844 which was presented by Assembly Member Richard Bloom and passed in September 2016. Mr. & Mrs. Elie Alyeshmerni made a generous donation on behalf of the Iranian American Jewish Federation for which we are grateful.

**Revisiting the classical approach to Agunah cases (Jewish Divorce):** Iranian American Jewish Federation's human rights advocates and activists joined Nessah Synagogue in sponsoring an informative program on 15th of December. In this program Rabbi Simcha Krauss and Rabbi Abraham Lieberman discussed their approach to allowing the women to obtain their Jewish Divorce, GET, based on the understanding of the Jewish Laws. Esther Mecner, a family law attorney and many attendees brought examples of the implications to the women and their children when GET is not awarded timely and used as a revengeful bargaining tool. The collective suggestion in this gathering was that forming coalitions of community leaders, victims, and attorneys are necessary to start dialogues with the spiritual leaders and Beit Din to protect the community and bring justice to women in the processes of divorce.

### **Upcoming Board of Directors Election**

The Iranian American Jewish Federation (IAJF) will hold Board of Directors election. In accordance with the provisions of its by-law, IAJF Board of Directors is elected by the vote of the community members to serve a four-year term alongside the representatives of IAJF's affiliated organizations and the elected community trustees.

IAJF endeavors to strengthen and sustain both Iranian and Jewish heritage, culture and values, so as to ensure leadership succession. We invite you to participate in our upcoming election and shape the future of our community.



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