

Minutes – Pomona Valley Chapter, UNA-USA meeting
Tuesday, March 18, 2014 Porter Hall, Pilgrim Place 5:30 PM

Mel Boynton, President, welcomed 40 members and guests.

BUSINESS

A handout listing two upcoming PVUNA events was distributed:

Tuesday, March 25, 2014, Vigil for Syria, near Frary Hall, Pomona College 5:30 PM

Tuesday, April 15, 2014, meeting with Essay Contest winners, former US Ambassador to Pakistan, Cameron Munter and former director of the UNAIDS New York Office, Bertil Lindblad
Mel then gave the definitions of “displaced person” and “refugee”:

refugee: a person who has fled from home and crossed an international border

displaced person: one who has fled from home but remains within his/her country

New attendees were asked to introduce themselves and membership brochures were distributed
Defining the two missions of UNA, Mel and Marjorie Bray, Treasurer /Advocacy Chair, spoke of

ADVOCACY: visiting the offices of local Congressional representatives to speak for the UN,
request full funding of our commitment and promote the use of UN
Peacekeepers rather than the US military

Two visits have occurred and another is yet to be scheduled

EDUCATION: presenting programs about countries and events of international significance

Charlene Martin was thanked for bringing the refreshments

The Chapter Board will meet on Saturday, April 12, 2014

PROGRAM

Adnan Aswad introduced Nangy Ghafarshad, owner of Walter’s Restaurant and former pilot in the Royal Afghan Air Force. In 2009 – 10 Ghafarshad served as Senior Cultural Advisor in Afghanistan to the U.S. Department of Defense.

Ghafarshad began by explaining that his native country had become a buffer state as a result of the ongoing conflict between Great Britain and Russia, known as the “Great Game” that lasted, on and off, for more than a century. After WWII, when Afghanistan wanted weapons, the Soviet Union supplied them with the condition that the Afghans would be trained and educated. The education included Communist liberation theory. The Afghan monarchy and people, meanwhile, remained very conservative and religious, adhering to their Muslim faith. This conflict of values led to the king’s assassination, a Communist takeover and, later, invasion. The Communists, backed by the Soviet Union, attempted to secularize the people but, throughout the country, the various tribes resisted. The USSR entered Afghanistan only to encounter Islamic guerilla fighters, the Mujahadeen. The guerillas eventually defeated their opponents, with the help of the CIA, who supplied weapons, training and money. When the United States engaged in the Iraq War, the Mujahadeen became known as the Taliban. Today Afghanistan remains tribal, religiously conservative and impoverished. Americans have attempted to get rid of what they see as corruption but what the Afghans think of as their way of life. Ghafarshad believes that the country will collapse without US aid. There are untapped mineral, oil and gas resources that can be developed. Afghanistan’s future, Ghafarshad said, depends on three considerations:

1. The surrounding countries are currently too active within Afghanistan.
2. Democracy needs to be homegrown, not imposed from without.
3. A leader from among the people needs to emerge.

A lively Q/A followed the well-received presentation.

A handout, “Afghanistan: Facts at a Glance” and a map of the country, was distributed.