

From Benjamin Jonas-Keeling
Sent Tuesday, March 4, 2008 8:37 am
To Persian News Network <PNN@VOANews.COM>
Cc Steve Redisch, Barbara Brady, John Lennon , Donna Grace, Timothy Shamble, Sheila Gandji

Subject PNN Staff Meeting March 3, 2008

PNN Staff Meeting March 3, 2008 with Steve Redisch, Executive Editor; Barbara Brady, acting Chief of Staff; John Lennon, Associate Director of Language Programming; Donna Grace, Director of Human Resources; Tim Shamble, AFGE President.

Steve Redisch led with a strong statement of support for PNN's mission, broadcasters, and management: As journalists people will always criticize our work. When we receive criticism from all sides it's a sign that we're doing our job right. **If you disagree with any work that is being done at PNN, let's talk about it. Don't feed external criticism.** As a team we should work together to confront and resolve issues rather than letting them pull us apart.

Thanks to the staff of PNN for doing a great job in the face of long hours and stretched resources. Our job at VOA is to present balanced news and to let the audience decide. This is what you accomplish, and the audience is consuming it. Your work is worth every bit of energy you put into it. What we are doing is right for our audience. Voice of America thanks you for your hard work.

Donna Grace

Journalists are often criticized by people who only want to hear one point of view. Voice of America management is behind you and your director Sheila Gandji 100%. We look forward to working with Sheila for many, many years to come.

John Lennon

My job is to protect the Voice of America's mission. Broadcasters are the most important people in the building. Let's make sure everyone is pulling in the same direction.

Tim Shamble

Freedom of speech is a tricky issue. There are limits to free speech. You have the right to speak with elected officials and outside media but these comments need to be made in the public interest.

Sheila Gandji

Thank you all for coming today. We are a team, and I am proud to work with all of you. When we work as a team we can't go wrong.

Discussion

1. What is management doing to protect us?

Steve Redisch: We don't want to do what many of the governments whose countries we broadcast do, that is, take away someone's freedom of expression. Let our work speak for itself.

Donna Grace: Don't self censor yourself. You are all doing the right things. VOA management does not lend credence to recent blog attacks against PNN and its leadership or believe what they say.

Barbara Brady: VOA general counsel is fully aware of all communication and attacks on the Persian News Network. They are taking steps to protect the agency.

2. What can we do about blogs that attack our work and the people who support them who work at VOA?

Steve Redisch: **Blogs that discuss our work are a symbol of our success. We enjoy freedom of speech in America. However, I will not stand for people at VOA who undermine our mission.**