

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



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Department of Sociology

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To the Iranian Studies program at the University of Toronto,

I write this letter in strong support of Pegah Nobar as applicant to the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship in Iranian Studies. I worked closely with Pegah as her co-supervisor during the end of her dissertation research at UBC-O. Her dissertation project concerned the rise and challenges to informal housing in an outlying neighbourhood of metropolitan Tehran. Based upon extensive analysis of the history of the neighbourhood as well as interviews with residents, Pegah argues, in particular, that informal, self-built housing ought to be understood as a form of social housing in Iran. She further suggests that the state's relationship to informal housing should be understood as complicated by its actions and claims to legitimacy, leading her to develop the notion of Iran as a squatter state. In developing this notion, Pegah also provides a case study of a particular Bahá'í community targeted for eviction and destruction by the state. She has also published this work in *City*, an excellent international urban studies journal, see full paper at:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13604813.2023.2230020>.

I came late to joining Pegah's committee and have only worked with her over the course of the last year. But during this time I've learned so much from her. I've also witnessed her strong research and writing skills continue to grow dramatically, a testament to her hard work and determination. I have every reason to believe she will further develop as a formidable scholar, and make strong contributions to any scholarly community lucky enough to include her. One of the reasons I was brought on to Pegah's committee was to provide further grounding in housing research and the broader field of urban studies. Importantly, this isn't the only area where Pegah's impact is likely to be felt. While Pegah has positioned her work as an important contribution to urban studies, and indeed I think many in that scholarly community will be studying her pieces in years to come, I think she also would benefit greatly from time to surround herself with other scholars in Iranian Studies. Moreover, I believe the program at the University of Toronto would benefit greatly from Pegah's participation as a fellow.

I endorse Pegah's application whole-heartedly. Please feel free to contact me with any further questions.

Sincerely,

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nathan Lauster', written over a faint, light blue grid background.

Nathanael Lauster
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