

ONLINE

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PEN Canada is a nonpartisan organization of writers that works with others to defend freedom of expression as a basic human right, at home and abroad. PEN Canada promotes literature, fights censorship, helps free persecuted writers from prison, and assists writers living in exile in Canada. PEN Canada is a registered charity.



FOREWORD

The dramatic advances in communications technology have forever changed not only how we access and disseminate information, but also how we connect with one another. The tumults of the Arab Spring have shown that networked citizens can harness tremendous power to effect social change. But we have also learned only too well how easily authoritarian regimes can choke the flow of information and control the infrastructure to repress popular uprisings and quash dissent.

What does this exciting, terrifying, profoundly ambiguous new world mean for writers? And what does it mean for a human rights organization, like PEN, that is focused on free expression?

This year's annual report pays tribute to writers whose online utterances have been monitored, hacked, censored and used by repressive regimes, often as a prologue to detention, imprisonment and torture. These writers have gone online only to be taken offline.

In our turn, PEN Canada has begun to leverage online platforms to strengthen ties with our members and supporters, to reach a wider audience and to engage in a broader public dialogue. The ongoing communications revolution is paving a way for us to form new alliances and to campaign more effectively for imprisoned writers and in defence of free expression, at home and abroad.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Ellen Seligman

PEN CANADA ENVISIONS A
WORLD WHERE WRITERS ARE
FREE TO WRITE, READERS ARE
FREE TO READ AND FREEDOM
OF EXPRESSION PREVAILS

This past year has been marked by successful campaigns and reinvigorated program work, by introspection, by innovation and looking outward, and by having made real strides in securing a base of financial support.

In late 2009 and early 2010, we were, with severely limited resources, attempting to pull ourselves out of a deficit. We had been in a position where we had to let staff go for 10 months in 2009. Then, in January, we lost our Executive Director. Our response to the difficult economic situation took a tremendous amount of energy and focus, of necessity, with some loss of our ability to fully execute our program work, before we were able to hire back our Programs Coordinator and Administrator. By the middle of 2010, as a result of fundraising efforts and increased interest in PEN through events and other initiatives, it was clear that we were indeed pulling out of what had been a grim and serious situation. The Board and I and the staff shared the optimism and determination that we would see this thing through, and we did, all the while taking on creative and smart planning for the future. As a result of our rebuilding process, we should all feel optimism about where we are and where we're going, and look forward to strong leadership to come.

In the last year, with the ability to hire back a Programs Coordinator, and having filled certain Board chair positions, we have been in a good position not only to fully resume our program work, but to bring new life to it. However, we still desperately need more advocates who are willing to take on cases or remain in communication with the families of writers in prison to let them know they are not forgotten. We intend to have in place in the fall an excellent and experienced person as Chair of the Writers in Prison Committee, who will make it a priority to focus on developing resources for our advocacy program.

Under the leadership and initiative of PEN Programs Coordinator Brendan de Caires, we have also strengthened our relationships with like-minded organizations such as Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE), Amnesty International and the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX), and we have benefited from joining forces in press releases and letters to governments on specific campaigns.

With the vision and dedication of our Chair of the Writers in Exile Committee, Mary Jo Leddy, we have improved and updated how PEN can identify and help writers in exile living in Canada. Our National Affairs Chair, Andrew Cohen, has been an extremely valuable resource concerning domestic issues of censorship.

We have added a new program: Community Outreach, the initial facet of which involves schools. Brendan de Caires has arranged to visit a series of schools throughout Ontario, accompanied each time by a writer in exile. Together, and from different perspectives, they have spoken to hundreds of students about the importance of freedom of expression. Students have participated in discussions about resisting censorship in various parts of the world and the value of dialogue. The writers in exile have given first-hand accounts of the dangers they faced abroad as well as the difficulties and transitions they face in Canada.

With the support and leadership of John Ralston Saul as President of PEN International, importantly we have thought more about our role as part of an international organization and have had increased interaction with other PEN centres, in support, in a spirit of mutual interest and exchange and in order to strengthen our work for common goals. We held our first event with another PEN centre (see below).

We have, in these last months, quickly adopted the use of social media, Twitter and Facebook, for our various campaigns, and have found these to be a very effective means of more quickly and widely disseminating information about our events, campaigns and other initiatives.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We launched our first online event on November 15, the International Day of the Imprisoned Writer, on behalf of honorary member, Canadian-Iranian journalist and blogger, Hossein Derakhshan, who is incarcerated in Iran. This event took the form of a *Globe and Mail*-sponsored online chat with London-based *Newsweek* reporter Maziar Bahari, who himself had been imprisoned in Iran for several months, about Derakhshan and freedom of expression issues in Iran. Later that day, CBC's George Stroumboulopoulos also interviewed Bahari via satellite.



A crisis in the organization afforded an opportunity to look at ourselves closely—who we are and what we do—and to bring new energy and new ideas to how we move into the future.

We received a grant in late 2009 from the Ontario Arts Council for a strategic planning exercise and we were in an excellent position to begin the process in late 2010 as a part of PEN's rebuilding phase. This process, facilitated by consultant and former publisher Valerie Hussey, was exhilarating and intellectually stimulating for all involved and resulted in a written document, a Four-Year Strategic Plan for PEN Canada. The plan has laid valuable groundwork for the organizational health and leadership that will ensure PEN's survival and growth into the future. This statement of PEN's priorities, and thoughtful blueprint of our vision and what we need to do in order to achieve our goals, was adopted by unanimous vote at a meeting of the Board on April 12.

I'd like to express my gratitude, on behalf of the Board and the staff, to Valerie Hussey, who, with insight, expertise, generosity and total commitment, led PEN through this months'-long process.

We are also benefiting from the expertise of Deborah Windsor, former Executive Director of the Writers Union of Canada, whose professional consultancy has been supported by a Canada Council grant. Deb will be providing a financial/resource development plan, and will work with the staff, Vice-President Charlie Foran and myself to build a work plan that will address how and when to implement the particular aspects of the strategic plan's key objectives.



As I look back to what we've accomplished and set in motion during the two years of my term as President, it seems impressive for any organization, much less one that has been operating with limited resources. Before I mention some things in particular, let me direct you to the reports on National Affairs, Writers in Prison and Writers in Exile, which appear later in this Annual Report, for highlights of our recent program work and thinking.

One of our key objectives is to expand our base of membership support, chiefly, to attract new writer members. We have made direct appeals to different writer populations, including book writers, editors and journalists (print and radio), and will continue with these efforts. I'd like to urge all existing members of PEN to bring in new members by instilling the understanding that freedom of expression is something essential in all our lives, and that fighting for writers whose voices have been silenced is something urgent, a responsibility of all writers, no matter where they live.

We launched a \$10-a-month giving program, TEN for PEN, as a convenient and less onerous way to make a membership donation and provide sustained support for PEN. Those who enroll will avoid receiving annual renewal notices, and in this way will be helping to reduce PEN's administrative costs.

In the past, PEN has worked with McClelland and Stewart to produce anthologies, as fundraisers, and another was released earlier this year. *Finding the Words: Writers on Inspiration, Desire, War, Celebrity, Exile, and Breaking the Rules*, edited by Jared Bland, a *Walrus* magazine editor and a PEN Board member, showcases original and provocative pieces by 33 writers, including: Joseph Boyden, Emma Donoghue, Rawi Hage, Steven Heighton, Martha Kuwee Kumasa, Pasha Malla, Lisa Moore, Alice Munro, Stephanie Nolen, Miguel Syjuco and Michael Winter. McClelland and Stewart will donate proceeds to PEN.

As part of our mandate to advance literature, encourage dialogue and raise consciousness in the community for our cause of defending freedom of expression and fighting censorship, in the last two years we have substantially increased the number and the variety of events we provide. In addition, we have begun to increase PEN's national presence by holding events outside Ontario.

Below is a selection of recent events that provides a good indication of the nature and depth of our recent event programming.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Yann Martel launched his novel *Beatrice and Virgil* in Newfoundland in a theatre on the campus of Memorial University.

Last spring, we held a three-city event (Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver) with Japan PEN and with the cooperation of the Japan Foundation in Toronto, the Munk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto, Concordia University and Simon Fraser University. These events featured visiting Japanese writers in (two-way-translated) dialogue with Canadian writers in each city.

At our annual benefit, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Richard Ford was interviewed by Eleanor Wachtel on the opening night of the International Festival of Authors.

At our annual Freedom to Read event at the Toronto Reference Library, the topic of which was “What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Hate,” a panel engaged with the problems of regulating hate speech in a modern democracy.

Our online event to bring attention to the imprisoned blogger, Hossein Derakhshan, was considered a success in terms of the number of people who responded and the coverage it received in the media. Events of this kind will likely be duplicated as an effective way to raise awareness about imprisoned writers and PEN’s work in general among a wider audience.

We have, as I described earlier, introduced events held in schools involving talks given by writers in exile about their experiences, followed by a conversation with students.

In addition, we launched the Ideas in Dialogue Series, which is dedicated to the memory of former PEN President Connie Rooke. We have held two events so far, at Ben McNally Books: “A Conversation with Lawrence Hill” about the creative process, with Charlie Foran; “Institutional Lies,” with Linden McIntyre, Richard Gwyn and Andrew Coyne talking about abuse in the Catholic church, government secrecy and freedom of speech. This coming November, Romeo Dallaire and Stephen Lewis will be in conversation at the Royal Ontario Museum.



As a long-time literary editor and publisher, much of my life has been involved with finding and encouraging new voices and assisting them in being heard, in all their diversity and originality. All of us who read (or for that matter watch a film, look at a piece of art, listen to a song) in a relatively free society are the beneficiaries of artistic risk-taking and daring structures, those things that show us other ways of seeing ourselves and therefore, by extension, can change the world. But we must never take for granted the right to free expression in whatever form it takes. Among the other realities PEN faces even more compellingly now, in the current global political climate, is that defending the right to freedom of expression is not something that ever loses currency. PEN's work remains urgent. Appalling crimes against writers and journalists continue to proliferate around the world in alarming and unacceptable numbers.

My presidency has been marked by unusual challenges. Without an Executive Director in place for virtually the entire two-year term, the responsibility for keeping the organization going fell squarely on my shoulders as Chair and on the shoulders of the Board. We will be hiring an Executive Director in the new year.

Now at the end of an extraordinary two years, during which I have been privileged to lead this organization and help set it on a course for the future, I am aware not only of all that was accomplished, but of all that needs to be done. I'm grateful for having had this opportunity and grateful to the people who shared the journey. PEN Canada is at an exciting time in its just over 25-year history, and I feel confident in saying we're ready to take on the challenges of a changing world.

I would like to express my deep thanks to the Board for their support and all their work during this demanding time. Thanks too to our remarkable and dedicated staff, Brendan de Caires and Katie Addleman, who have and continue to contribute so much.

Much appreciation as well to Diana Kuprel for conceiving the theme, editing and overseeing the execution of this Annual Report. Thanks to everyone who contributed to it. And a special thanks as well, and as always, to Soapbox Design Communications and its partners for their innovative design work and tremendous generosity.

THE RETURN OF ORAL CIVILIZATION

John Ralston Saul

President of PEN International



The last great revolution in language led gradually over a half-millennium to a civilization dominated by the written word. Those of us who are writers and readers can easily see this as a great victory for novels and essays and for the formalization of freedom of expression. The battle for free expression over these 500 years has been very much about the growing power of the written word.

And yet, the last half-century in particular has also seen the growing domination of bureaucratic and managerial language, accompanied by the rise of a culture of secrecy, of omnipresent legal technicalities and of a curious response to all of this through what might be called false language—the language of entertainment and distraction. This organization of the written word into a strategy of power—and distraction from the realities of power—has also produced a growing threat to small languages. What greater loss of freedom of expression is there than the disappearance of one's own language?

During this half-century, the new electronic communications technologies, such as television, seem to have reinforced this negative aspect of the written word because of the formulaic structures of programming.

And now, abruptly, successive waves of communications technology have launched the revival of oral culture—almost as if we were re-embracing the pre-Gutenberg period. Suddenly, we are hearing language as an oral force that escapes the prison of written structures.

You can sense this in the WikiLeaks story—an exploding not only of the idea of secrecy, but also of managerialism and technocratic prerogatives. You can detect this return of oral civilization in the rise of blogging, Twitter and Facebook, and in the spreading street revolutions. The proliferation of these new oral means of communication is gradually producing multiple layers of confusion, not necessarily a bad thing. And indeed they are oral, because the written aspect of the text is secondary even when typed.

So we are now in the early stages of an era of deep uncertainty when it comes to understanding how civilizations will express themselves. This uncertainty will continue to grow for an indefinite period.

The old, written power structures, public and private, are moving as fast as they can to recuperate all these systems, to control them, to use them for the standard purposes of power and profit. What is more, they are having some success. But each new communications breakthrough disrupts these old methods in an unpredictable way. And these new breakthroughs are as often conceptual as technical. The youth-led revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt are obvious examples.

I worry only in the short run for the role of literature and for how we writers will actually earn our living. What we bring to civilization will adapt to the technical means available.

I worry much more, both as a writer and as President of PEN International, about the increasing attacks on free expression which we are now experiencing. They come both from governments and from the growing monopolies and oligopolies of the communications industry. Perhaps most dangerous, they come from what we might call the security state, which over the last decade has gained an influence not seen in peace time since the pre-democratic period.

HACKED, ERASED, HARASSED AND IMPRISONED

Brendan de Caires

DIEU CAY

BORN: 1953

ACTIVITY: BLOGGER

OFFLINE: 2008

Last year, a group of Vietnamese activists declared October 19 the inaugural “Day of Vietnam Bloggers.” The chosen date marked the non-release of Nguyen Van Hai, the country’s most famous cyber-dissident, better known by his online handle ‘Dieu Cay’ (“the peasant’s water pipe”). The group wrote President Obama to ask for his support in calls for the release of Dieu Cay and other bloggers whose work had been “hacked, erased, and harassed by Vietnam National Security unit.”



In 2006, Dieu Cay helped found the Free Journalists Network in Viet Nam (Cau Lac Bo Nha Bao Tu Do). The group focused on corruption and human rights abuses and Dieu Cay became one of the first local journalists to openly criticize Beijing's seizure of the Paracel and Spratly islands (jointly claimed by several Asian countries, including Vietnam). In December 2007, foreshadowing more recent events in the Middle East, the Free Journalists Network used free email accounts and blogs to coordinate pickets outside China's embassy and consulate in Hanoi. Hundreds of young Vietnamese gathered in solidarity before the protests were declared illegal and dispersed.

Undeterred by frequent threats from the police—including one reported claim that they would allow Chinese agents to kill him—Dieu Cay maintained his online criticism of the government. In January 2008, he joined another protest, on the steps of Saigon's Opera House, with bloggers wearing T-shirts on which the Olympic rings were re-drawn as handcuffs, a reference to China's appropriation of the Paracel Islands 34 years earlier. He also suggested a boycott of the Beijing Torch Relay scheduled for April 29, 2008.

On April 19, 2008, Dieu Cay was arrested for "tax fraud" in Dalat City. Following a trial in which the government denied censorship and insisted that it was prosecuting a common criminal, he received a 30-month sentence. But the day before his scheduled release, Dieu Cay was reportedly transferred to a public security detention camp in Ho Chi Minh City. The authorities now claim that new charges (which include "propaganda against the socialist state," forbidden under Article 88 of the Vietnamese Criminal Code) are based on online writings for the Free Journalist Network which pre-date his April 2008 arrest.

Blog Entry April 19, 2008



HONOR MEMBER RELEASE

CHINA AND THE AUTONOMOUS REGIONS

Hada, owner of the Mongolian Academic Bookstore, was arrested on December 10, 1995 for founding the Southern Mongolian Democracy Alliance and for publishing the underground journal, *The Voice of Southern Mongolia*, of which he was founder and editor-in-chief. On December 6, 1996, he was sentenced to 15 years in prison and four years deprivation of political rights on charges of “inciting separatism and espionage.” He is thought to have been released when his sentence expired on December 10, 2010, but was reportedly re-arrested in January 2011.

LIBRARY BERS SED

CUBA

Normando Hernández González, a journalist (Cubanet) and the director of the news agency Camagüey College of Independent Journalists (Colegio de Periodistas Independientes de Camagüey), was released from Kilo 7 prison and arrived in Spain on July 14, 2010 following a deal brokered by the Catholic Church and the Spanish government in early July. Hernández had been serving a 25-year prison sentence handed down under Article 91 and other provisions of the Criminal Code in the 2003 “Black Spring” crackdown on Cuba’s dissidents.

MYANMAR

Aung San Suu Kyi, a writer and the leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD), was kept in ‘protective custody’ following violent clashes between opposition and pro-government supporters on May 30, 2003. She was held under successive house arrest orders at her home in Yangon until May 14, 2009, when she was detained under Section 22 of the State Protection Law for “subversion,” following an incident in which a US citizen reportedly swam across the lake to her home and in doing so violated the ban on her meeting with anyone without prior permission. Her trial began on May 18, 2009 and she received a three-year prison sentence from a criminal court inside Insein Prison on August 11, 2009. The verdict was reduced to 18 months to be served under house arrest, and she was returned to her home soon after the trial ended. Aung San Suu Kyi was released unconditionally on November 13, 2010. She had spent much of the past 20 years in detention.

UZBEKISTAN

Muhammad Bekzhon (“Bekjanov”) was reportedly released in March 2011 after the expiry of a 15-year prison sentence. In March 1999, he had been deported from Ukraine following accusations of his involvement in a series of explosions in Tashkent. Bekjanov’s arrest is thought to be linked to his association with the exiled opposition leader Muhammed Salih (his brother), and to his work for the opposition party’s newspaper, *erk*, which has been banned since 1994.

HUMAN BEINGS
THE WORLD
OVER NEED
FREEDOM AND
SECURITY THAT
THEY MAY BE
ABLE TO REALIZE
THEIR FULL
POTENTIAL.

AUNG SAN SUU KYI

TAGGED AND BLOCKED

Kerry Pither

TAL AL-MALLOUHI

BORN: 1991

ACTIVITY: STUDENT, POET, BLOGGER

OFFLINE: 2009

I was horrified when I learned about the children in Syria's detention centres. It was Abdullah Almalki who first told me about them. He, like Maher Arar, was one of four Canadians detained and tortured in Syria after being falsely accused of terrorist ties by Canadian security agencies.

Abdullah had survived 17 months of torture and interrogation in the Palestine Branch, one of the more notorious Syrian detention centres, an underground house of torture run by Syria's much-feared military Intelligence. There, when detainees weren't themselves being tortured, they were forced to hear the screams of other victims. It was in the halls outside the interrogation rooms there that Abdullah saw a seven- or eight-year-old boy taking his younger sister to the washroom.

Syrian children and teenagers are often detained along with their parents or are themselves deemed a threat by the authoritarian Syrian ruler Bashir Al-Assad and his mukhabarat, the secretive security agencies.



peace



freedom

love

human

rights

justice

One such teenager, a poet and blogger named Tal al-Mallouhi, has helped draw attention to the plight of youth who dare to speak out in Syria. She was just 17 years old when, on December 27, 2009, she was dragged from her home by security agents. She was held incommunicado for nine months before her family was allowed to see her.

Soon after, in what Amnesty International says was a “flawed trial,” she was accused of “divulging information to a foreign state.” Without a lawyer or her family present, she was convicted and sentenced to five years in prison.

It was through her blog, say Syrian authorities, that she committed her crimes.

Her poems have since been translated and shared on many “Free Tal” websites and blogs that have sprung up around the world. Her postings—with tags like “freedom,” “human rights,” “humanity,” “love” and “peace”—are often musings about the fate of the Palestinian people. Others are about the fate of humankind in general.

Tal’s detention is a testament to the power of the written word, and the defensiveness—and weakness—of authoritarian regimes like Syria’s. And it is young people like Tal who have inspired today’s uprising—one that, as I write these words at the end of April 2011, may yet bring down the Al-Assad regime.


But why should we, as Canadians, pay particularly close attention to Tal’s fate, and to the popular uprising she has helped inspire?

After the terror attacks of 9/11, Canadian security agencies, like those in the United States and some other Western countries, lacking any evidence that would survive the test of our own justice system, turned to Syria’s more barbaric system to have Canadians detained, interrogated and tortured on their behalf. That explicit endorsement for secret detention and torture made conditions far worse for Syrians like Tal who dare to publicly express their views about human rights and freedom.

So we must care and do all we can to help Tal and to help ensure she has freedom in her future—a future she wrote about in a poem titled “Second message to the humankind of this world”:

Oh my “Brother Human,” we are always looking forward to the future: a future in which women, men and children live in freedom; a future in which there is plenty of jobs; a future in which there is plenty of hope for a better tomorrow; a future in which there is plenty of freedom for humankind.

MY BLOG



**PEOPLE
DO NOT TALK
SPEECH IS FORBIDDEN
FREEDOM IS OUR AIM**

EXCERPT FROM "YOU WILL REMAIN AN EXAMPLE TO GANDHI"
BY TAL AL-MALLOUHI, TRANSLATED FROM THE ARABIC
BY GHAS ALJUNDI



**A
R
T
I
C
L
E**



EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION; THIS RIGHT INCLUDES FREEDOM TO HOLD OPINIONS WITHOUT INTERFERENCE AND TO SEEK, RECEIVE AND IMPART INFORMATION AND IDEAS THROUGH ANY MEDIA AND REGARDLESS OF FRONTIERS.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

WRITERS IN PRISON COMMITTEE REPORT

Brendan de Caires


Programs Coordinator

In the darkened backstage of the KVS theatre in Brussels, participants in a free expression workshop on digital media, dissidents and dictatorships listen to a soft-spoken Tamil. The 90-minute morning session is part of PEN International's annual Writers in Prison Committee (WiPC) conference, the audience, a polyglot mix of Europeans, Asians, North Americans and Africans. Murmuring to his interpreter, with graceful, measured gestures, the Tamil notes the difficulty, in such placid surroundings, of describing the horrors he has seen. He offers to share three minutes of video footage from the closing weeks of Sri Lanka's civil war—his Quixotic attempt (in the absence of foreign media) to record the army's "human rights violations" against civilians in his area. The war's bloody climax claimed the lives of his brother and nephew and dozens of friends and neighbours. And yet, somehow, this man held his nerve and recorded it all on a phone-sized camera, transferred the files to a laptop and beamed them, via satellite phone, to a website in Europe.

As it happens, the technology catches stagefright. Without the right codec, none of the computers in the room can play the clip, so the Tamil has to use words after all. He talks about the shock of watching people he knew well die in front of him, of the challenges of charging hi-tech gadgets with solar panels, the dangers of sending email when army surveillance can quickly detect the phone's signals and bomb his location.


Later, courtesy of a thumb-sized flash drive, I watch his footage in Toronto, a city in which thousands of Tamils took to the streets peacefully in a futile effort to stir up public opinion. In one scene, small children lie bleeding through bandaged heads in an improvised field hospital, nearby, a woman tends to a little boy, unconscious with pain, as his shattered tibia pokes through the skin on either side of a gaping wound. I wonder how differently the Canadian public might have responded to the Tamils' protests if it had seen this.

The Arab Spring has awakened great hopes in the power of new technologies and much has been written about the power of Twitter and Facebook to coordinate protests and bypass government restrictions on freedom of expression. But the singular power to broadcast information in distributed networks (many to many) is only one part of the freedom of expression equation. To be consequential, information needs to alter public opinion and to force governments to act. Absent this attention and the most harrowing footage is nothing more than a digital file, understood too little and too late to halt the suffering it records. In this sense, the last year has been no different to the previous 50 in which PEN's WiPC has defended writers and journalists against those who would silence them.



“We don’t need a writers in prison committee in Sri Lanka, because in my country they don’t put writers in prison. They just kill them.”

JOURNALIST AT PEN'S WIPC CONFERENCE



After nearly two years of detention, the Canadian-Iranian journalist and blogger Hossein “Hoder” Derakhshan* received a 19-and-a-half-year prison sentence on September 28, 2010. Derakhshan was PEN Canada’s “Empty Chair” for the opening night of the 2010 International Festival of Authors (IFOA), and a petition during the festival gathered more than 400 signatures. Several hundred other signatures were collected at our Word on the Street booth and via an online petition. On November 15, the International Day of the Imprisoned Writer Newsweek reporter Maziar Bahari, a Canadian-Iranian journalist held in Evin prison for several months in 2009, fielded questions about Derakhshan and freedom of expression in Iran as part of an online forum sponsored by *The Globe & Mail*.

At our 2010 IFOA Annual Benefit, Sayed Parwez Kambakhsh was awarded PEN Canada’s One Humanity Award, made possible by the generosity of PEN supporter Florence Minz. Kambakhsh is an Afghan student journalist who was sentenced to death for blasphemy in 2007. Marian Botsford Fraser, Chair of PEN International’s WiPC, accepted the award on his behalf. “Parwez Kambakhsh is safe, in exile,” said Botsford Fraser, “but I don’t think he can yet be said to be free as he did not feel it was wise to travel here tonight. Instead, he sent me these words to read to you: ‘I am sorry that for many reasons I cannot be here. But anyway, let me say my most sincere thanks to PEN Canada. For their good faith towards me, I am thankful. I will use this money to spend on my education. And I say endless thanks to you, for releasing me from prison.’”

In December, PEN Canada joined Amnesty Canada for a letter-writing campaign on behalf of the Burmese poet and comedian Zargana. For the first time, we used social media to promote this event and more than 150,000 people received notice of the campaign, thanks to the retweeting by prominent PEN Canada supporters.

We also joined Amnesty in a day of Global Action for Nobel Laureate Liu Xiaobo on December 5. After PEN Canada Vice-President Charlie Foran participated in a panel discussion on the future of democracy in China, despite the sub-zero wind chill factor, a modest but determined group of protesters made its way from the University of Toronto's OISE auditorium to stand outside the Chinese embassy.

In January 2011, we joined the Canadian Directors Guild and Writers Guild of Canada to share our concern for Iranian director Jafar Panahi and his fellow filmmaker Mohammad Rasoulof with the government of Canada. Imprisoned in December 2010 for “colluding with the intent to commit crimes against the country’s national security and propaganda against the Islamic Republic,” Panahi was subsequently sentenced to six years in Evin prison, with a 20-year ban on making or directing movies, writing screenplays, giving media interviews and leaving Iran. A letter sent to Minister Cannon on January 31, 2011 was co-signed by Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, the Professional Writers Association of Canada, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International Canada and PEN Québec.

On February 22, 2011, the PEN Canada board unanimously adopted two new Honorary Members: Nasrin Sotoudeh*, a prominent lawyer and journalist, and Tal Al-Mallouhi*, a 19-year-old Syrian blogger.

Since September 2010, PEN Canada has worked with Beth Spratt and Cara Gibbons, graduate students in the University of Toronto's International Human Rights Program (IHRP), to produce a comprehensive overview and analysis of recent efforts to end impunity for crimes committed against journalists in Mexico. The final report will guide future advocacy to improve national media coverage and political debate around the issue. It will also inform impunity campaigns mounted by PEN centres all over the world.

**See section on Honorary Members for further case details.*

BLACKLISTED KEY- WORDS

Brendan de Caires

SHI TAO

BORN: 1968

ACTIVITY: JOURNALIST, WRITER, POET

OFFLINE: 2004

China's censorship of cyberspace is focused primarily on a long, shape-shifting set of sensitive words. Prime among them are the four Ts: Tiananmen, Tibet, Taiwan and Torture (of Falun Gong members) and hundreds of associated references ("June 4," "Truthfulness, Compassion, Forbearance"). Steer clear of these and you should be safe. Avoid animals, too, especially exotic ones like "dragon, tiger and leopard" (a pornographic magazine in Hong Kong) or "people pig" (a homonym for "democracy") or potential embarrassments for the country's uneven bureaucracy (like the 2008 Sichuan earthquake), lest Beijing's state-of-the-art filters cull your messages.



TIBETAN

TORTURE

TIBET

TRUTHFULNESS

COMPASSION



Human censors handle the more problematic references, especially those that involve the “divulging of state secrets.” Having a personal email account with a Western company won’t save you from the Thought Police either—just ask Shi Tao. In November 2004, while working as a journalist for *Contemporary Business News* magazine, Shi was detained for describing the contents of an internal Communist Party communiqué (read aloud to the editorial staff at the newspaper where he worked) with a foreign website. The memo warned that pro-democracy protesters might visit mainland China to commemorate the 15th anniversary of Tiananmen Square protests.


Chinese authorities pressured a subsidiary of Yahoo! to disclose Shi’s personal user information and used it to detain him in November 2004, before arresting him formally a month later. In March 2005, Shi was found guilty and given a 10-year prison sentence. Yahoo! also provided information that led to the arrest of Li Zhi, another PEN Canada Honorary Member.

At a February 2006 US Congressional Human Rights Caucus on Internet censorship in China, Congressman Tom Lantos of California grilled Yahoo! representatives on the company’s role in facilitating arrests of pro-democracy activists. After pleading ignorance of the censors’ intentions, Yahoo! revised its account during a subsequent congressional hearing pointedly entitled “Yahoo! Inc.’s Provision of False Information to Congress.” Under pressure, the company conceded that Shi’s case “raises profound and troubling questions about basic human rights,” but remained evasive about its own role until, in 2007, a human rights group sued Yahoo! for helping with the prosecution of Shi and Wang Xiaoning (another dissident traced via a Yahoo! email account). Later that year, Yahoo! agreed on an undisclosed settlement with Shi.

During his imprisonment Shi’s wife was harassed by security officials and pressured by work colleagues to divorce him, which she eventually did. Shi has also reportedly been forced to work in harsh conditions in Chishan prison, Hunan Province. Over the years, he has become an emblematic figure for Beijing’s crackdown on political dissent. In April 2011, as the Independent Chinese PEN Centre sought the release renowned artist Ai Weiwei and several other writers, lawyers and human rights advocates, it renewed its forlorn appeal for “all of those imprisoned for their words . . . including ICPC members Liu Xiaobo, Shi Tao and Yang Tongyan.”

excerpt


FROM HELPING, COMPLYING, INFORMING
PUBLISHED BY DEMOCRACY FORUM WEBSITE
ON MAY 23, 2001
BY SHI TAO



Not long ago, a group of journalists met at a dinner party. Everyone freely discussed the politics of the time, offering their thoughts and ideas. During the evening one journalist from Shaanxi, without thinking, brought up rumor that had spread on the Internet concerning General Secretary Jiang Zemin and the singer Song Zuying. The result was that one journalist from Beijing who had been sent there reported the joke internally. The Shaanxi journalist subsequently lost his job. And every journalist who heard this felt an icy chill.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT

Sarah Elton
Chair



A few weeks before he was arrested in Tehran, Canadian-Iranian blogger Hossein Derakhshan posted what would become his last video on YouTube. In the clip, a relaxed Derakhshan rides an escalator and addresses the camera in Farsi, the caption indicating that he is answering “his blog readers’ questions, before his return to Iran.” Then, on November 1, 2008, while staying with his family in Tehran, he was arrested by Iranian authorities and jailed for nothing more than the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression on his blog. Derakhshan is known as the “blogfather” for his online writing and the Farsi language blogging manual he authored that helped a whole generation of Iranians to go online and express their opinions. However, Derakhshan isn’t speaking out anymore: the 36-year-old is serving a jail sentence of 19 years and six months.

Derakhshan, a PEN Canada Honorary Member, was imprisoned before the rise of the social media platform Twitter and only about a year after Facebook was embraced by the general public; the Internet revolution and its power to provide a forum to promote free speech has continued without him. In 2010, PEN Canada and the Membership Committee harnessed the power of these fora by launching a social media campaign to raise awareness and lobby the Canadian government to act to bring Derakhshan back to this country. (See Writers in Prison Committee Report for more details.) We continue to watch his case and to agitate for his return.


PEN Canada is reaching out to our membership and to other writers, readers and supporters of free speech through Twitter and Facebook. We urge you to join us there to keep up with the latest news and campaigns and to encourage those you know to get involved. Just search for “PEN Canada.” Our goal is to connect with every Canadian writer and journalist, editor and translator, songwriter and poet, and others who are able to speak their mind without fear of reprisal, unlike our colleagues who live in countries where freedom of speech is not something they can take for granted. A stronger membership means a more effective voice in advocating for freedom of expression.

The dedicated staff at PEN Canada continue their work, supported by members, and have been aided this year by our new monthly giving membership plan. TEN for PEN offers our members the convenience of low monthly payments and the knowledge that the little extra they donate over and above their membership fee is helping to provide stable funding to advance PEN’s work. Please consider converting your membership to the TEN for PEN plan. And thank you to those who have made the switch! Even in this social media world, we still require old-fashioned bricks and mortar to defend freedom of expression.

Twitter remembers Derakhshan. A search of his name will usually yield chatter as the Twittersphere watches and advocates for his release. Now, a new blogger has been named the “blogfather.” In Bahrain, Mahmood Al Yousif earned the title through his outspoken writing during the political unrest in that country. On March 30, 2011, he too was jailed for speaking freely, sparking an online campaign calling for his release. He was released on April 1 and we sincerely hope that one day soon, Derakhshan will follow.

WRITERS IN EXILE COMMITTEE

Mary Jo Leddy
Chair



In the Fall of 2010, the PEN Board decided to refocus efforts of the Writers in Exile Committee on writers who have newly arrived in the country—namely, those who are not yet citizens. As a result, the Committee was re-formed. Joining me on the committee are Miki Andrejevic, Aaron Berhane, Sturla Gunnarsson, Judith Koomar, Keith Leckie, Marina Nemat and Fraser Sutherland. We are finding our way and taking guidance from the writers who are seeking assistance from PEN.

We are making efforts to contact the newly arrived writers by communicating PEN's interest to the Refugee Law Association and to publishers of writers from other countries. This outreach has already put us in touch with a Kurdish journalist from Iraq, a multimedia journalist from Sri Lanka, a young fiction writer from Iran and a video producer/journalist from Ecuador.

The committee has offered to accompany refugee writers to their hearing at the Immigration and Refugee Board and to provide whatever documentation might be helpful. Our first experience of this "accompaniment" was very moving and inspired those who attended. We have developed a set of guidelines for those who act as PEN companions at a refugee hearing. Anyone who would like to provide this kind of support is encouraged to contact the PEN office.

We are also developing guidelines and suggestions for PEN members who would be interested in acting as mentors for newly arrived writers.

In the past, the focus of the committee has been to develop a series of residencies at various academic and artistic institutions, in order to provide writers in exile with the opportunity to write and to network with other writers. Many of these residencies have been suspended, largely because of the financial crisis that affected these institutions. We are attempting to reactivate them but do not see them as the major focus of the committee work. An arm's-length selection committee oversees the application process and makes recommendations to the sponsoring institution.

Recently, we placed advertisements in the multiethnic press in an effort to contact newly arrived writers. This will act as a kind of census and allow us to estimate the number of writers who could use PEN's assistance. Our greatest fear is that there may not be that many newly arrived writers because of the severe restrictions and barriers that our government has placed around Fortress Canada. We are aware, through anecdotal evidence, that there are now many writers who are neither in prison nor in a safe place. They are travelling from place to place seeking safety, hiding when needed, often in a limbo state of existence for years. The committee hopes to assess this new situation and to recommend what course of action PEN Canada might want to take.

THE
PAIN
OF
EXILE

Ayub Nuri

For many years I couldn't understand the idea of exile. I would always ask myself why dictators exiled someone when they were upset with him. I used to laugh at the naiveté of these rulers for sending a dissident to another country or to a remote part of the land, thinking that would be punishment.

To me being told to go somewhere else was a gift. What would one lose by leaving his city and settling somewhere else? I thought to myself. The person can still breathe, eat and sleep there. So I got to see exile as vacation, as a journey.

When our history books in high school told us the story of the king of Kurdistan, Malik Mahmoud, and his exile to India by the British colonial authorities in the 1920s, I had no sympathy for the king. Our books meant to tell us about the harsh treatment the king had received, but I didn't see it that way. The king had simply gone to India.

By being sent into exile by the Soviet authorities, I saw Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn as having received an award. Not many people could afford leaving the Soviet Union on a foreign trip like that. I felt the same about Trotsky and the Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran, who were expelled by their regimes.

Only years later did I realize the pain of living in exile. If those dictators and rulers had not known that sending someone into exile is as painful as shooting him in the back of his head in a dark and cold prison cell, they wouldn't have chosen exile as punishment.

Rulers and judges usually know their victims. They know who suffers most by imprisonment or hanging and who can be crushed by exile. They were not fools. The British knew that the king of Kurdistan would have preferred to be hanged in his homeland—that's why they sent him to India, to break him within.

In exile, you may become more determined to fight back, but your confidence could also fade away. You may falter and doubt yourself. Exile is dangerous. It is like uprooting a tree and, instead of replanting it in the same soil and climate, throwing it away in a distant land with its roots exposed to the sun. It will dry and break up within days.

No one can feel the pain of an exiled person. It is impossible to imagine the suffering of someone who has been forced to live away from his birthplace, from the weather he is used to and the culture in which he thrives. Even though I live far away from home, I still lack words to describe how it feels to be an exile.

Ayub Nuri was born in 1979 in the Kurdish town of Halabja in northern Iraq. He was the Baghdad correspondent for London-based Global Radio News, covering the Iraq war in 2003, and the subsequent insurgency and sectarian violence. He reported from Iraq for Public Radio International/PRI and BBC World Service. His articles have appeared in The New York Times, The Washington Post and the Toronto Star.

CACHING CONSCIENCE

Charles Foran

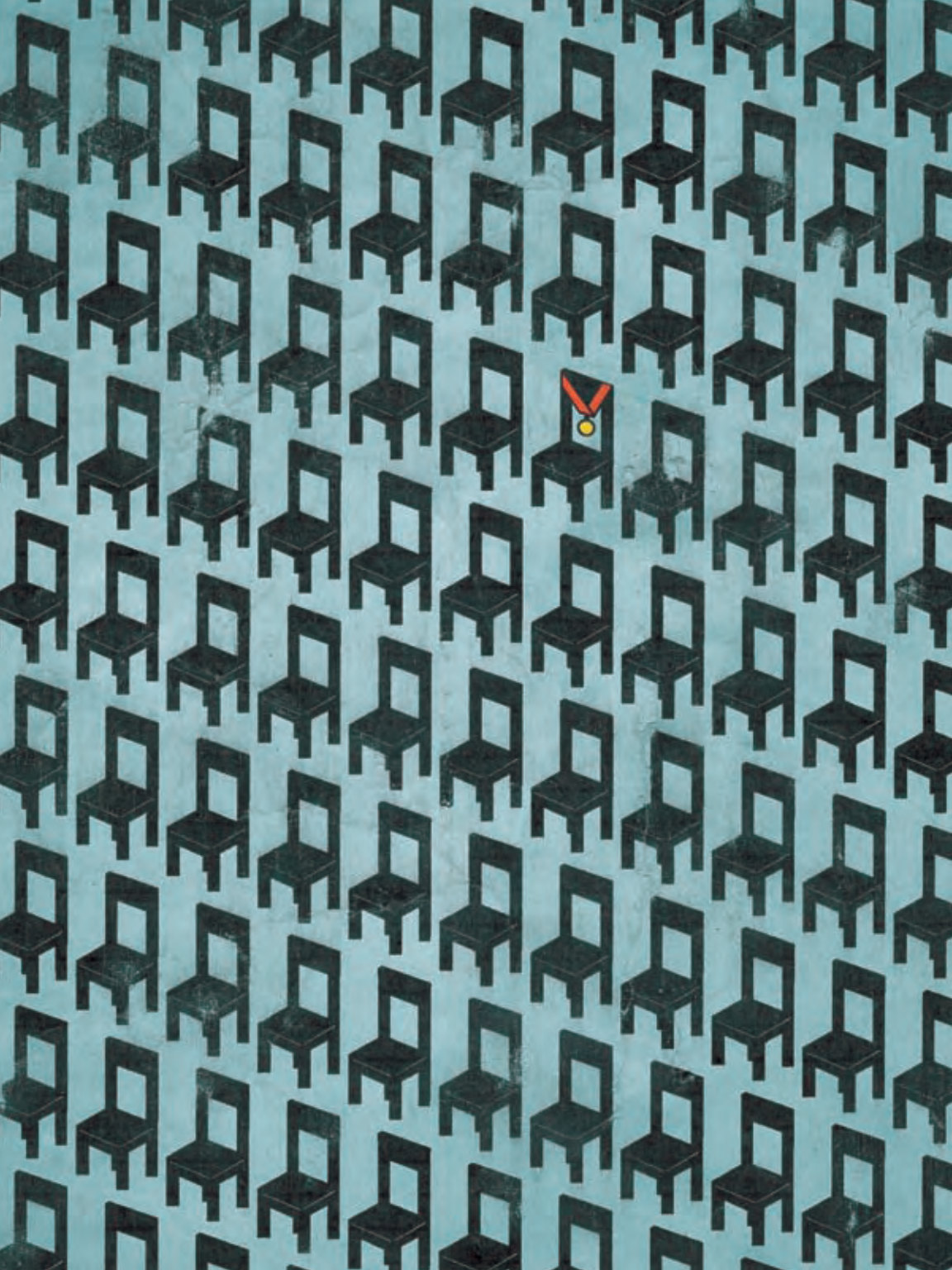
LIU XIAOBO

BORN: 1955

ACTIVITY: LITERARY CRITIC, POET, HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST

OFFLINE: 2008

At the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in Oslo last December, the PEN tradition of the empty chair accrued a powerful new symbolic import. The empty chair at PEN events represents writers who are absent because they've been silenced, imprisoned or killed. In Oslo, the chair, crafted by high school students and transported to Oslo by the Scottish PEN Centre, had to stand in for the 2010 Nobel laureate himself, Chinese writer and pro-democracy activist Liu Xiaobo. While a thousand dignitaries, including the king and queen of Norway, paid tribute to Liu, he spent another day in an isolated prison in northeast China. "This fact alone shows that the award was necessary and appropriate," said the chairman of the Nobel committee.




PEN International President John Ralston Saul, also in Oslo, said of Liu: “It is the Chinese constitution that commits their government to civil and political rights. Liu Xiaobo is a model of the serious citizen who embraces his full legal rights.”

Nor was Liu Xiaobo, the former President of the Independent Chinese PEN Centre, silent at the ceremony. Though he has been incarcerated since late 2008 for co-drafting Charter 08, the human rights manifesto first circulated online and quickly signed by more than 10,000 Chinese, he, too, ‘spoke’ in Norway. Imprinted on the chair were his thoughts: “I have no enemies and no hatred... for hatred is corrosive of a person’s wisdom and conscience.” Shortly after being sentenced, Liu had made an equally striking assertion: “For an intellectual thirsty for freedom in a dictatorial country, prison is the very first threshold... Now I have stepped over the threshold, and freedom is near.”

The Nobel committee decided not to give his prize out, especially with his wife, Liu Xia, under house arrest in Beijing. (Many months later, she remains under close surveillance, unable to communicate with her husband.) The decision was just. In a sense, the hall in Oslo contained not one but one thousand empty chairs. As authors of conscience, thirsty intellectuals and serious citizens, we were all unavailable to collect that Nobel prize. We have all stepped across that threshold.

Another kind of freedom still exists for Liu: the freedom of his published words. This fearless, outspoken thinker is also an ardent love poet. “Beloved my wife,” he wrote during an earlier stint in prison, “in this dust-weary world of / so much depravity / why do you / choose me alone to endure.” PEN Canada trusts that Liu Xiaobo will endure this latest injustice, and write many more poems.

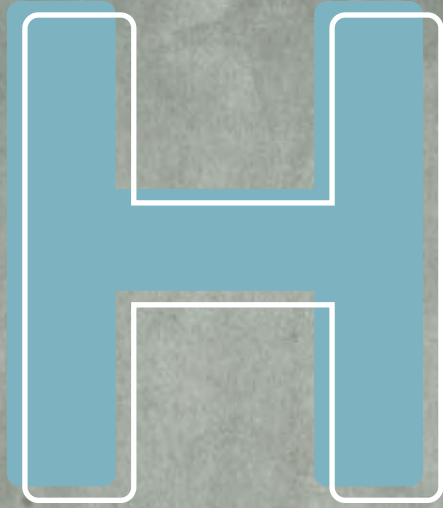
I have no enemies, and no hatred.



None of the police who have monitored, arrested and interrogated me, the prosecutors who prosecuted me, or the judges who sentence me, are my enemies. While I'm unable to accept your surveillance, arrest, prosecution or sentencing, I respect your professions and personalities.... I was aware of your respect and sincerity in your interrogation of me on December 3.

For hatred is corrosive of a person's wisdom and conscience; the mentality of enmity can poison a nation's spirit, instigate brutal life and death struggles, destroy a society's tolerance and humanity, and block a nation's progress to freedom and democracy. I hope therefore to be able to transcend my personal vicissitudes in understanding the development of the state and changes in society, to counter the hostility of the regime with the best of intentions, and defuse hate with love....

I do not feel guilty for following my constitutional right to freedom of expression, for fulfilling my social responsibility as a Chinese citizen. Even if accused of it, I would have no complaints.



HONORARY MEMBERS



CHINA AND THE AUTONOMOUS REGIONS

Shi Tao, a poet and journalist at *Dangdai Shangbao* (*Contemporary Trade News*) in Hunan, was charged in November 2004 with “illegally divulging state secrets abroad” after emailing contents of a propaganda ministry memo on prohibited subjects to foreign media. The Chinese authorities seized Shi’s computer and private documents and warned his family to keep quiet about the matter. On April 30, 2005, the Changsha Intermediate People’s Court sentenced Shi to 10 years in prison. The sentence was upheld at an appeal in June. Court documents revealed that a Hong Kong subsidiary of Yahoo! helped Chinese police trace Shi’s computer. In November 2007, two of Yahoo’s senior executives apologized at a 2007 US congressional hearing on the matter, but would not confirm that their company would reject similar requests in the future. Since his transfer to Deshan Prison in June 2007, Shi’s living conditions and health have reportedly improved, and he is no longer required to do hard physical labour.

Yang Tongyan (“Yang Tianshui”) was convicted of subversion during a three-hour closed trial on May 16, 2006 after being charged with posting anti-government articles on the Internet, organizing branches of the outlawed China Democracy Party and accepting illegal funds from foreign sources. He was sentenced to 12 years in prison and four years “deprivation of political rights.” A freelance writer and member of the Independent Chinese PEN Centre (ICPC), Yang had previously criticized the Chinese government in the *Epoch Times* and on websites like Boxun.com. Between 1990 and 2000, he was jailed on counter-revolution charges because of his involvement in the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. His previous conviction may have contributed to the severity of his current sentence. Yang suffers from a number of illnesses, including intestinal tuberculosis, diabetes, kidney inflammation and high blood pressure. His health is reportedly worsening in prison due to lack of medical care, and he reportedly has been hospitalized since mid-September 2009. His family is appealing for medical parole. While in prison, Yang received the 2006 Independent Chinese PEN Centre’s Writer in Prison Award and the 2008 PEN/Barbara Goldsmith Freedom to Write Award.

HONORARY MEMBERS

Uighur writer **Nuremuhamet Yasin** received a 10-year sentence in November 2004 during a closed trial, with no legal representation, for “inciting Uighur separatism” in a short story published in a literary journal. “Wild Pigeon” recounts the experiences of a young pigeon trapped and caged by humans while trying to find a new home for its flock. Instead of forfeiting its freedom, the pigeon kills itself by swallowing a poisonous strawberry, a choice that Yasin’s own father had made in similar circumstances several years earlier. Yasin is an award-winning and prolific freelance writer with a well-established literary reputation among Uighur readers. Since his arrest, he has been permitted no visitors and there are serious concerns for his well-being.

The poet and essayist **Zheng Yichun** was arrested in 2004 by the security services in Yingkou, Liaoning Province on “suspicion of inciting subversion of state power.” At his trial, the prosecution exhibited 63 postings, signed by Zheng, which had appeared on dajiyuan.com, a website popular among China’s intelligentsia. Several hundred other articles were confiscated during a police raid on Zheng’s home. A professor of English at the University of Liaoning, Zheng has long been a prominent critic of the government. In one essay, he refers to China’s one-party system as “the root of all evil” and the title of one of his self-published books of poetry is *The Era of Brainwashing*. On April 26, 2005, at a trial attended by senior authorities from Liaoning Province, Zheng pleaded guilty. Although his lawyer argued that Zheng’s work was protected by Article 35 of the Chinese Constitution, which guarantees freedom of the press, Zheng was convicted in July 2005 and later sentenced to seven years in prison. Zheng suffers from diabetes and his health has deteriorated since his arrest. In May 2008, there were reports that he had suffered cerebral thrombosis, which caused paralysis in part of his face and constrained movement in his right arm. He was sent to a hospital outside the prison, but was returned when doctors concluded that his condition was not serious. Medical facilities in the prison are not able to treat his condition and his relatives are said to be requesting his release on medical parole.

ERITREA

In September 2001, 13 newspaper journalists were arrested after President Issaias Afewerki closed Eritrea's independent newspapers, leaving only the state-run *Hadas Eritrea*. PEN Canada adopted the following journalists as Honorary Members: **Yusuf Mohamed Ali** (editor-in-chief of *Tsigenay*), **Mattewos Habteab** (editor-in-chief of *Meqaleh*), **Dawit Habtemichael** (reporter for *Meqaleh*), **Medhanie Haile** (editor-in-chief of *Keste Debena*), **Emanuel Asrat** (editor of *Zemen*), **Temesken Ghebreyesus** (reporter for *Keste Debena*), **Dawit Isaac** (writer and co-owner of *Setit*), **Fesshaye Yohannes** "Joshua" (playwright, poet and publisher of *Setit*) and **Said Abdelkader** (writer, editor of *Admas* and owner of the press that printed most of the independent newspapers). In September 2009, Reporters Without Borders reported that many of the imprisoned journalists were being held in metal containers or underground cells in Adi Abeito Military Prison, in Eiraeiro Prison and in the Dahlak archipelago.

In 2007, reports indicated that four of the journalists had died in custody between 2005 and early 2007: Abdelkader, Haile, Ali and Yohannes. Their deaths were attributed to harsh conditions and lack of medical attention. Some sources indicate that Yohannes had been tortured prior to his death, including having his fingernails ripped out. In May 2007, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACPHR) of the African Union ruled that the detention of the journalists was arbitrary and unlawful and called on the Eritrean government to release and compensate the detainees.

Isaac, who spent a number of years in Sweden during the Eritrean war of independence and the border dispute between Eritrea and Ethiopia, holds Swedish citizenship. In November 2001, the Swedish local consul held a brief meeting with Isaac in jail. In April 2002, it was reported that Isaac had been hospitalized suffering from injuries sustained through his torture. In November 2005, Isaac was briefly released for a medical check-up and was allowed to call his family and friends in Sweden. As of January 2010, Isaac was reportedly being kept in solitary confinement in a tiny cell with no windows, and was in very poor physical and mental health. He and the other inmates are reportedly not allowed any contact with each other or the outside world, are routinely shackled and receive almost no medical care.

HONORARY MEMBERS

On February 18, 2010, Reporters Without Borders reported that Asrat and Habtemichael were being held at Eiraeiro Prison. However, an April 2010 article by the Committee to Protect Journalists cited reports from a former prison guard at Eiraeiro that Habtemichael had died in custody; this death is unconfirmed. The former guard reportedly also said that Ali had died in June 2003 as a result of extreme heat, Haile had died due to lack of medical treatment, while Yohannes and Abdelkader had committed suicide. These reports are likewise unconfirmed.

In an interview published on the website of the Swedish daily newspaper *Aftonbladet* on August 1, 2010, a senior adviser to President Afeworki said that Isaac was being held for his involvement in a “conspiracy” by a group of Eritreans “to facilitate” an invasion of the country by Ethiopia during the border war between the two countries. He refused to provide assurances that Isaac was still alive.

IRAN

On November 1, 2008, **Hossein Derakhshan** was arrested by Iranian authorities and, on June 23, 2010, he was placed on trial for “conspiracy” and “acting against national security.” No verdict was made known until late September when the Farsi news website Mashreq reported his conviction on charges of “propagating against the regime,” “promoting counter-revolutionary groups,” “insulting Islamic thought and religious figures” and “managing an obscene website.” Derakhshan was sentenced to 19 years and six months in prison. He was held in solitary confinement for the first eight months of his detention. He has been held incommunicado in Evin Prison and is said to have been ill-treated. On December 9, 2010, Derakhshan was released conditionally, on two days parole, after posting a bail of \$1.5 million. Within two days, he was taken back to prison. There are serious concerns for his physical and psychological well-being.

On September 4, 2010, **Nasrin Sotoudeh**, a prominent writer, journalist and lawyer, was arrested after being summoned to the special court in Evin Prison to answer charges of “propaganda against the state.” The arrest followed a raid on her home and office the previous month by security officers, who confiscated files and documents. Sotoudeh’s lawyer was not allowed to represent her in court or accompany her client during questioning. Sotoudeh received an 11-year sentence from Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court on January 9, 2010. She was also banned from practicing law

and from leaving the country for 20 years. The sentence comprises one year imprisonment for “propaganda against the regime,” and a total of 10 years for the two charges of “acting against national security” and “violating the Islamic dress code (Hijab) in a filmed speech.” Sotoudeh is believed to have been charged for critical interviews given to overseas media following Iran’s disputed 2009 presidential election and for her membership in the Association of Human Rights Defenders. She is currently being held in solitary confinement at Evin Prison, where she has been on a hunger strike for much of the time since her arrest. Sotoudeh has been granted very limited access to her family since being detained. Sotoudeh is best known as a human rights lawyer and activist, but has also worked as a journalist for several reformist newspapers including *Jame’e*. Since qualifying as a lawyer in 2003, she has specialized in women’s and children’s rights, and has continued to write articles on these issues. She is a close associate of exiled lawyer and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi, and has represented many imprisoned Iranian opposition activists arrested in the crackdown on dissent following the disputed 2009 presidential elections. Sotoudeh’s husband, Reza Khandan, was reportedly detained at Evin Prison on January 16, 2011 following a summons from the prosecutor’s office.

MYANMAR

Maung Thura (“Zargana”) is currently serving a 35-year sentence following his arrest for leading a private-relief effort to deliver aid to victims of Cyclone Nargis, which struck on May 2, 2008. The Asian Human Rights Commission reported that Zargana had ridiculed state media accounts of the impact of the cyclone and criticized the inadequacy of the government’s relief efforts during interviews with foreign media. In August, Zargana was charged with seven offences under the Criminal Code, the Unlawful Associations Act, the Video Act and sections of the Electronics Act. On November 21, 2008, he was sentenced to 45 years for violating the Electronics Act. Days later, he was given a further 14-year sentence for offences under the Criminal Code related to his peaceful opposition activities. In 2009, the news agency Mizzima.com reported that on February 13, the Rangoon Division Court reduced the sentence by 24 years, leaving Zargana to serve 35 years in prison. In late April 2009, Zargana reportedly collapsed at Myitkyina prison due to heart problems, jaundice and a stomach ulcer which pre-date his current imprisonment. He was taken to Myitkyina

HONORARY MEMBERS

Hospital where he underwent some tests, although the specialist medical care he requires was reportedly not available at this hospital. However, he subsequently received medication and, in early May 2009, he was returned to prison. While in prison, Zargana has been denied full family visiting rights. On October 22, 2008, PEN Canada presented the One Humanity Award to Zargana in absentia.

SYRIA

High-school student **Tal Al-Mallouhi**, a poet and blogger, was detained on December 27, 2009 after being summoned by state security officers for questioning about her blog entries. Following her arrest, Tal Al-Mallouhi's family home was raided by security agents who confiscated her computer, notebook and other personal documents. She was held incommunicado at an undisclosed location without charge or access to her family for the first nine months of her detention. Her family was allowed to visit her once at Doma Prison in Damascus in September 2010. On September 2, 2010, her mother published an open letter to the Syrian president seeking information about her daughter's welfare and calling for her release. On October 5, 2010, it was reported that Al-Mallouhi had been charged with spying for a foreign country. On February 14, 2011, she appeared before Damascus State Security Court in a closed session, during which she was convicted of "divulging information to a foreign state" and sentenced to five years in prison. Al-Mallouhi has no known political affiliations, and sources close to the family are baffled by the charges. It is feared that she could be targeted for comments and poems published in her blog.

UZBEKISTAN

Mamadali Makhmudov, a well-known Uzbek writer and opposition activist, was arrested in February 1999 after a series of explosions in Tashkent. He was charged with "threatening the president," "threatening the constitutional order," "organizing banned public associations and religious organizations" and "organizing a criminal group." On August 3, 1999, he was found guilty and sentenced to 14 years in prison. Previously, Makhmudov had been imprisoned between 1994 and 1996 for alleged embezzlement and abuse of office. At the time, these charges were considered by PEN and Amnesty International to have been fabricated in order to persecute


Makhmudov for his association with the exiled opposition leader Muhammed Salih. This view was supported by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions. A successful international campaign was launched and Makhmudov was released early as part of a presidential amnesty. Makhmudov is currently being held at a high-security prison in Tashkent. He was hospitalized in July 2000 reportedly for facial and throat surgery made necessary by extreme ill-treatment and neglect during his detention at another prison. His sentence will expire in 2013. Makhmudov's book, *Immortal Cliffs*, was published in French in late 2008.

VIETNAM

Nguyen Van Hai, better known by his pen name "Dieu Cay," is a renowned blogger, journalist and democracy activist in Vietnam. He should have been released on October 20, 2010 on completion of two and a half years imprisonment for "tax fraud"; however, he was reportedly transferred to a public security detention camp in Ho Chi Minh City on October 18, 2010, apparently on charges of "conducting propaganda against the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam" under Article 88 of the Criminal Code. The charges are said to be based on his online writings for the Free Journalist Network in Viet Nam before his April 19, 2008 arrest after participating in protests against the police in Ho Chi Minh City earlier that year. He was still detained as of December 31, 2010. As one of the founding members of the Club of Free Journalists (Cau Lac Bo Nha Bao Tu Do), founded in 2006, Dieu Cay is well known for reporting on human rights abuses and corruption and for his participation in protests against Chinese foreign policy.

WESTERN CANADA OUTREACH COMMITTEE REPORT

Miki Andrejevic
Chair



The Outreach Program was established in Edmonton to promote a strong presence for PEN Canada in the western provinces. We took the first steps as prelude to a coordinated campaign that will raise awareness of PEN Canada and its work in support of freedom of expression and promote its programs through various activities such as membership drives and events. In these efforts, I have been working closely with Edmonton PEN Committee volunteers Goran Simic, a past PEN Canada writer in exile, and Todd Babiak, a former PEN Canada Board member and an *Edmonton Journal* columnist.

I am pleased to report that we have forged a solid partnership with the Writers Guild of Alberta. My letter about PEN Canada and our TEN for PEN membership drive was printed in the January 2011 edition of *WestWord* magazine. We have also had preliminary discussions with the Federation of BC Writers to undertake a similar initiative later in 2011.

Moreover, thanks to the tremendous support of LitFest, Edmonton's creative non-fiction festival which organized the PEN Canada Writers Cabaret in partnership with the Canadian Literature Centre at the University of Alberta and the Writers Guild of Alberta, we are reaching new audiences. LitFest's well-attended opening night event, held on October 14, 2010, was a series of open-mike readings by William Beard, Tim Bowling, Joan Dixon, Myrna Kostash, Gordon Laird and Jane Marshall. It was hosted by Ted Bishop. Visiting authors congregated, read and mingled with the audience.

Marian Botsford Fraser, Chair of PEN International's Writers in Prison Committee, was in attendance to present PEN's Empty Chair, representing the Vietnamese poet, novelist, journalist and cyber-dissident Trần Khai Thanh Thuy. As Bostford Fraser eloquently reported, since 2006, Trần Khai Thanh Thuy, an honorary member of English PEN and the recipient of the 2007 Human Rights Watch's Hellman/Hammett Award, had been repeatedly harassed and interrogated for writing and publishing online articles critical of the Vietnamese government. In 2009, after marching with other activists in Hai Phong City, Thuy was dragged away by plainclothes police officers. She is now serving a three-and-a-half-year prison sentence under deplorable conditions in Hanoi. Botsford Fraser movingly recited from the poem, "Until When?," which Thuy wrote in prison, and called upon those gathered to hold Thuy in their thoughts.

Finally, I am delighted to be joined in my Western Canada outreach efforts by Jim Vavra of Calgary and Mark Larein-Young of Vancouver, who have offered to be the points of contact in their respective regions.

We look forward to strengthening the important relationships we have established over this past year and to reaching out to more writers, readers and supporters of freedom of expression in Western Canada.



UNTIL WHEN



My soul has
become a
wild garden

Outside,
the clouds
cease to
move

My life is
buried in
the dark
cell

With not
the slightest
glimmer
of star

EXCERPT FROM "UNTIL WHEN?"
A POEM BY TRẦN KHAI THANH THUY

NATIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Andrew Cohen

Chair



The National Affairs Committee has been active on several fronts in defence of free expression over the last year.

Represented by the law firm of Ruby & Shiller, PEN Canada supported the bail review application of Jaggi Singh in the Superior Court of Justice in November. Singh is a prominent activist and writer who had been arrested and charged with criminal conspiracy based on his alleged involvement in the G-20 protests in June 2010. PEN Canada's motion to intervene was focused on one of the bail conditions

imposed on Singh that he was challenging in court: a prohibition on organizing, participating or attending a public demonstration. To us, this was a violation of the right of free expression under the Charter of Rights. Preventing someone from taking part in a demonstration, we argued, does nothing to ensure the safety of a single Canadian.

The Superior Court ultimately removed the restriction of house arrest, but upheld all the remaining conditions, including the blanket ban on organizing, participating in or attending any public demonstrations. In April, Singh pled guilty to a charge of counselling mischief over \$5,000 for encouraging people to tear down the security fence during the G-20. As a result, there will be no application for leave to appeal the bail review decision to uphold the “public demonstration ban” and PEN Canada’s role in this case has come to an end.

In January, we endorsed PEN International’s statement on the WikiLeaks disclosures. The statement noted that while the leaking of government documents is a crime in the United States, the publication of such documents is not a crime. It said that WikiLeaks is doing what the media has historically done, except that the documents have not been edited. PEN Canada supported the belief, expressed by PEN International, that champions “the role of free expression in healthy societies and the rights of citizens to transparency, information and knowledge.”

Also that month, we urged the federal government not to accede to Vivienne Poy’s request to disqualify *Maclean’s* magazine from federal subsidies for publishing a contentious article about Asian-Canadian university students. We argued that to deny a magazine funding on the basis that an official might find views unacceptable would set a dangerous precedent. We argued that such actions would amount to censorship.

In February, we opposed the decision of the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) to ban the original version of “Money for Nothing,” the Dire Straits song. We argued that no regulatory body, private or otherwise, should decide what forms of public speech are permissible, and urged the CBSC to respect the right of free expression and lift its original ban.

It is our belief that freedom of expression should be interpreted as broadly as possible and we will continue to work to defend Canadians against censorship at home.

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*Special thanks to the following
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- Random House of Canada for supporting PEN through its Open House event
- McClelland & Stewart for manufacturing, publishing, and selling the anthology *Finding the Words: Writers on Inspiration, Desire, War, Celebrity, Exile, and Breaking the Rules*, and donating proceeds to PEN; Jared Bland for editing the anthology; Anita Chong, the in-house editor; Seth, for donating the cover art; all the writers who contributed
- Janet Somerville for her generous contribution of time in organizing events
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CONCEPT & DESIGN

Soapbox Design Communications Inc.
416.920.2099

EDITOR

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ILLUSTRATION

Doug Ross
dougross.com

PRINTING

Somerset Graphics Co. Ltd.
905.890.2553

PAPER

Unisource Canada, Inc.
905.771.4119

This report is printed on certified Lenza PC 100, which is produced using biogas and is process chlorine free. The Lenzing Paper mill is ISO 14001 Environmental Management process certified.

Charitable Business Number 88916 2541 RR0001





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