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Introduction

Emily M. Keeler, PEN Canada Vice-President

PEN—founded 1921, in London, England as a rangy and roving writer’s club is the world’s oldest human rights organization. The idea was, in a spirit of friendship and peace, to create a space for writers to come together and discuss thorny ideas in the wake of the First World War. As a result, perhaps, of getting great poets, essayists, and novelists talking to each other about peace and conflict, the organization became the first to directly describe the connection between freedom of expression and literature: without the former, you won’t really have the latter.

As a wave of darkness crested over Europe during the Second World War, PEN became an activist organization, with a mission to defend freedom of expression and to provide assistance to a wave of suddenly silenced writers. By 1933, the international syndicate of PEN chapters was unable to stand idly by while National Socialism swept Germany. The secretariat, which is today known as PEN International, led by then-president H.G. Wells, launched an international protest campaign against the Nazi practice of burning books.

The organization soon adopted a board of multiple war-time presidents, including E.M. Forster, whose 1910 novel *Howard’s End* gave the world a key to understanding the role of literature and of love in the now famous dictum: “Only connect! That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer.”

I had the pleasure of reading *Howard’s End* for the first time this spring. The novel, which describes the intertwined lives of three families, and offers startlingly still-fresh insights into duty, love, and the mercurial alchemy of human relationships, made me think of our work at PEN Canada. The prose and the passion, as Forster’s heroine Margaret Schlegel has it, are at the core of everything we do. And we trade in connections. We connect writers to each other, through our events, prizes, committees, and membership. We connect readers and supporters to ideas, to writers, to each other, and to our core mission of aiding writers in peril and defending freedom of expression. As with the first members of PEN, we do this in a spirit of friendship and peace, and we do it because we believe in the world-changing power of the written word.

For this year’s annual report, I’m pleased to present several stories of PEN Canada which foster that most vital, human thing: connection. In addition to our committee and activity reports, we’ve included three features—on the making of our vital, on-the-ground country reports that do the work of calibrating and defending freedom of expression worldwide; on our Advocates program, which connects writers in prison to the free world through an international letter writing campaign; and on Laura Legge, the recipient of the RBC/PEN New Voices Award. May we live in fragments no longer.

President's Report

Randy Boyagoda

**PEN Canada
celebrates literature.**

**PEN Canada defends
freedom of expression.**

**PEN Canada aids
writers in peril.**

**PEN Canada connects,
it only connects.**

We live in an age of both seamless communication—with our intense connectivity—and of fragments, even chaos. Our experience of these rivalling conditions, of their simultaneity, is dramatically different than the conditions that inspired E.M. Forster's famous dictum. That said, what's true and good outlasts any one age.

Forster remains right: with so much to do, to say, to celebrate, to fight for, to worry about, in the beginning and the end, what matters to each and all of us is making connections. This past year PEN has been connecting its core mission—to celebrate, to defend, to aid—through its activism, its programming, and its multiform support of writers. Only connect: it's Salman Rushdie exploring the stakes of literature and freedom of expression in present-day America before a capacity crowd of supporters; it's Kim Echlin discussing women's rights with local colleagues in the Canadian Embassy during a literary festival in Cairo; it's Ethiopian writer and intellectual Solomon Hailemariam exploring his native country's literature with University of Toronto students; it's young Turkish refugee journalists sharing their stories of peril and steely-eyed determination with board members. Only connect, again and again.

But let me end with the best connection we witnessed and supported this past year. One spring ago, at Romero House in Toronto's west end, during a meeting of the Refugee Writers Group, we celebrated with Sri Lankan journalist Maran Nagarasa as he reconnected, at long last, with his wife and daughter. This family reunion was made possible by both endless on-the-ground advocacy by PEN board members, staff, and volunteers, matched with thoughtful and determined lobbying in our nation's capital. The end result of all that effort underscores the importance of meaningful connections—a smiling young woman, newly arrived in Canada with her mother, reunited with her father, and keen to tell her own stories.

Everyone has the
freedom of opinion
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THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION
OF HUMAN RIGHTS.
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Executive Director's Report

Grace Westcott, interim ED

Stepping off the PEN Canada board and into the role of Executive Director has been an interesting challenge. Serving in this capacity during Tasleem Thawar's maternity leave has given me the opportunity to see just how much the PEN Canada office gets done, and to appreciate the organization's capabilities in a new light.

PEN Canada is small, but, as I discovered many times this year, it has an enviable reputation that attracts spontaneous support well beyond what a similarly sized organization might expect. I experienced a kind of bestowed status as executive director that made me feel like a custodian of something valuable—something to be guarded, respected and cared for. That sterling reputation is part of our working capital; it allows PEN Canada to do outsize things, when joined with the talent and commitment of its directors, patrons, members and staff, and through its many partnerships with like-minded organizations.

PEN is what it is in no small part on account of its writer membership, a group who, working from a sense of writerly fraternity, publicly embraces the call to act for freedom of expression in solidarity with persecuted writers worldwide. Answering that call is the bedrock of our mandate and the principal reason our supporters seek us out. But while there is firepower among our own members, a critical source of our effectiveness is due to our membership in the international network of PEN centres, as the Canadian centre of PEN International.

ANSWERING THE
CALL TO ACT
FOR FREEDOM
OF EXPRESSION
IN SOLIDARITY
WITH PERSECUTED
WRITERS IS THE
BEDROCK OF
OUR MANDATE.

PEN International creates a current case list of verified writers in peril for the reference of all the centres, and it's from this case list that we select the Honorary Members of PEN Canada.

Our Honorary Members are given our support, becoming priority cases for the use of our Emergency Fund, and by being the focus of our Advocates Program. The PEN Canada Advocates are members who volunteer to regularly write letters to writers in prison. One story from our Advocates Program is detailed in this report. The message that “You Are Not Forgotten” is a powerful one.

Our centre's relationship with PEN International is a two-way street. For the past few years, in partnership with the International Human Rights Program at the University of Toronto Faculty of Law, PEN Canada has produced reports for PEN International on the state of freedom of expression in Mexico, Honduras, and India. Our current report on Guatemala was just submitted by PEN International to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review process, at the end of March. Brendan de Caires, our Programs Manager, details the process and importance of the work represented by these reports on page 10.

There's a lot to be proud of at PEN Canada, and I know that we can do yet more with the tools we have—our talented staff, dedicated board, and the many writers and supporters of free expression in our network are a capable and inspiring group. I throw the torch back to Tasleem with pride and anticipation of things to come.

Canadian Issues Committee Report

Elise Moser, Chair

Bill C-51

Bill C-51, the Anti-terrorism Act introduced in June 2015, was a pressing issue for the Canadian Issues Committee this year. The Act's vague language created new terrorism offences, and allowed for the unconstitutional overreach of the RCMP and CSIS in making arrests. In December, as part of the Consultation on National Security, we provided a written submission to express our central concern regarding the implications for freedom of expression in Canada given the Act's broadening of the existing criminal offence of terrorism to include "advocating and promoting" the commission of "terrorism offences in general." On May 2, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security (SECU) issued its report and called for removal of what it conceded was a "vague and overly broad term": "terrorism offences in general." In other words, it took our point.

In 2014, PEN Canada became one of the 56 organizations that have been, since 2012, audited by the Canada Revenue Agency for compliance with the rules for charities restricting “political activities” to 10% of their operations. The CIC has been—for years now—advocating for clearer language regarding what are classified as “political activities.” This year, PEN Canada’s Executive Director, Grace Westcott, participated in an official consultation on the political activities of charities and described how charities have difficulty complying with political activity restrictions while pursuing our broad societal aims. At the core of PEN’s work is reminding governments of their obligations to uphold human rights, in particular freedom of expression, and calling them out when these obligations are breached, particularly when writers are involved. Our written submission said, in part: Charities are important civil society organizations, vehicles for public participation crucial to a functioning democracy. Individuals need to act collectively to be heard, and charities with a public interest mandate are a means to that end: Encouraging such organizations to speak out on public policy matters related to their mandates would enhance democracy.

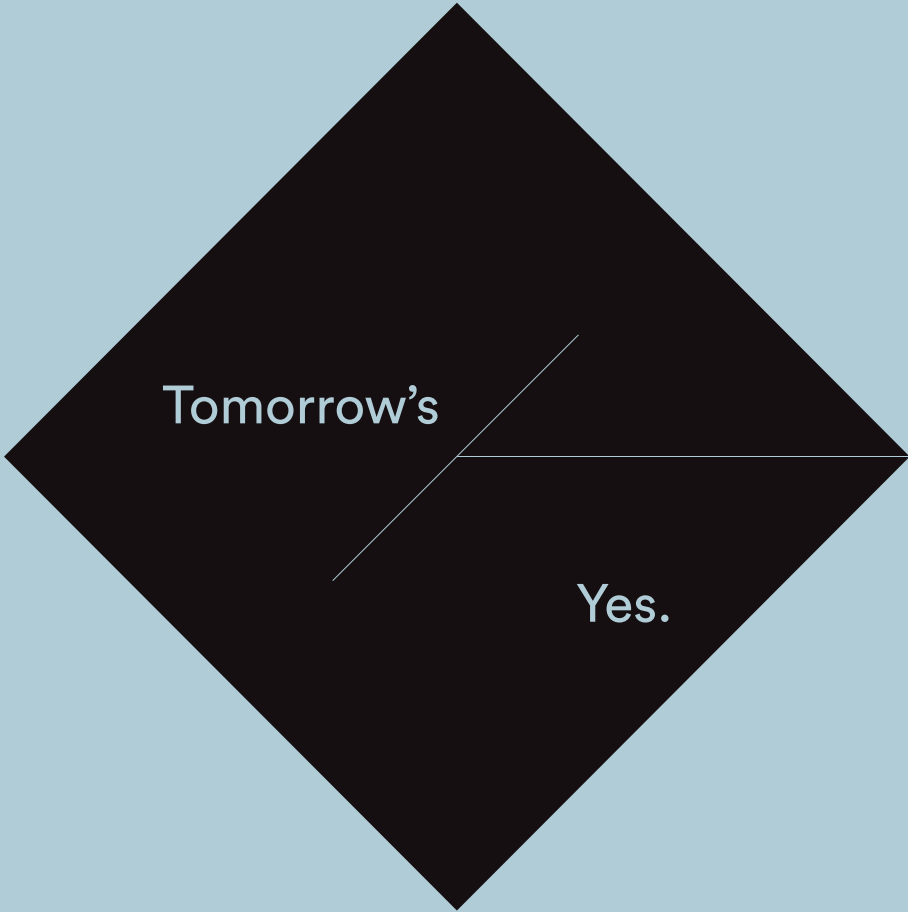
The *Report of the Consultation Panel on the Political Activities of Charities* agreed with us (and the many others who made similar points). They are recommending refinements that would improve the ability of registered charities to engage in what is now being called “public policy dialogue and development,”—clearer language that still maintains an absolute prohibition on partisan political activities. Pending amendment of the Income Tax Act, the Consultation Panel suggests an immediate enabling amendment to the CRA’s administrative policies. The adoption of these recommendations would be hugely significant for PEN, removing a constant constraint on our work. Warmest thanks are due to Grace Westcott and Janne Duncan, to whom we owe these successes.

The committee’s Know Your Rights guides are being actively promoted. Know Your Rights pairs basic information with useful tools for demystifying four issues—prisoners’ right to receive printed materials, protesters’ rights, the right to film or photograph police, and whether the police can search your phone. Leslie Vryenhoek, a St. John’s-based public relations consultant, joined the CIC this year and immediately helped us map out a new and improved publicity plan. The resource is now prominently featured on the PEN Canada website, and PEN staffer Amy Smith uses social media to send them out in an ongoing and targeted way.

In October, at the PEN Canada benefit at the IFOA, the CIC awarded the second annual PEN Canada/Ken Filkow Prize to Bangladeshi blogger Raihan Abir. One of our goals for the coming year is to create a proactive and effective publicity strategy for this prize and its winners.

Finally, perhaps the biggest news for this committee is the designation of the city of Surrey, BC as an ICORN City of Refuge last October. Thanks in part to the hard work of CIC-member-on-hiatus Anne Giardini, Surrey became Canada’s first International City of Refuge. There are, in the opinion of the CIC, still too many bureaucratic and financial hoops to get through before a persecuted writer or artist can actually be hosted for the first two-year respite period.

DEFEND FREEDOM
OF EXPRESSION



HOW PEN CANADA'S COUNTRY REPORTS SET
A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR LASTING, MEANINGFUL CHANGE

Brendan de Caires

Imagine that you are a female journalist in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, the once and future murder capital of the world, writing about people who would prefer your silence. Your cellphone buzzes and there's a text message signed by CAM—Comando Álvarez Martínez—a notorious paramilitary group. It tells you, the mother of teenage children, “[w]e are going to burn your ‘pipa’ [vagina] with caustic lime until you scream, then the whole squad will have fun;” a second text says “[y]ou’ll end up dead like the Aguán people, there’s nothing better than screwing whores.” Both threats are credible; dozens of your colleagues have been attacked, some killed, as have at least 46 campesinos in the lower Aguán Valley.

What would you do?

This happened to the journalist Dina Meza in 2012. At that time, intimidation had become so commonplace in parts of Central America that the words *autocensura* (self-censorship) and *impunidad* (unprosecuted crimes), were used without explanations. These terms are legal abstractions in North America, but living presences in Honduras. They are used like common nouns. One journalist we interviewed in Tegucigalpa described how death arrives in a signature style: “assassins come in the form of two men on a motorcycle: one [man] is fine, two means death.”

A team of PEN researchers met Dina two years later—shortly after similar threats forced her into a brief exile—while working on a country report that would later be published as *Honduras: Journalism in the Shadow of Impunity*. Heartened by PEN’s engagement with Honduras, and its sustained interest in fighting impunity, she and her colleagues set up a PEN centre in Tegucigalpa. In 2014, PEN Canada sponsored PEN Honduras’s formal adoption, as PEN’s 150th local centre, at the 80th PEN International congress in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Human rights work has few good responses to dire situations like the one in Honduras, and none are adequate. Faced with such levels of violence, traditional advocacy’s restrained tones often feel morally questionable. Is it fair to visit Tegucigalpa for a few days only to return to safety—like most other NGOs—and publish an analysis of the crisis? After some reflection we concluded that intermittent engagement, such as the publication of reports, wasn’t enough. We needed to forge closer relationships with our sister centres in places like Mexico and Honduras, try to move beyond analysis and try to contribute to potential solutions. After a second visit to Tegucigalpa, we co-sponsored, with the new PEN centre, a competition for public interest journalism. Since its inauguration, the *Escribir Sin Miedo* Prize has fostered a greater sense of solidarity among Honduran journalists—one of our report’s key recommendations—and it has translated and republished two winning works: an incisive analysis of the country’s remilitarization, and a moving account of murderous violence in the Bajo Aguán River Valley.

During the last six years PEN Canada has worked with the International Human Rights Program at the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Law to produce country reports on Mexico, Honduras, and India as well as Universal Periodic Reviews (for submission to the UN) for these countries and for Guatemala and Brazil. The reports analyse the climate for freedom of expression and they outline the shape of future advocacy. Each project requires months of research and, usually, a field trip filled with interviews. Large undertakings for a small office. Occasionally a bilingual edition extends the process of consultation, revision and fact-checking even further, so it is always worth asking the hard question: Does this make a difference?

The answer tends to depend on when you’re asking the question. Today’s maybe often evolves into tomorrow’s yes. Like much else, effective advocacy requires the

right conditions. Our first report, *Corruption, Impunity, Silence: The War on Mexico's Journalists*, appeared at a moment of general despair. Five years into President Calderón's disastrous "war on drugs"—a clumsy, quasi-military campaign that triggered a wave of violence which claimed more than 40,000 lives—there seemed to be no prospect of change. A culture of impunity was entrenched in Mexico, and shored up by a cynical bureaucracy. Between 2000 and 2011, for instance, the government of Mexico had accepted at least 950 human rights recommendations and signed or ratified more than 20 treaties. None had made a difference. Our report called attention to this "strategy of minimization" and criticised the Calderón administration for paying "lip-service to the need for substantive change" while actually "presenting a solution it knows to be ineffective." At the time it seemed highly unlikely that yet another report, or set of recommendations, would change anything.

Eighteen months later, however, change seemed less improbable. Thanks in part to wider PEN advocacy stimulated by our report, nine national centres sent a delegation to Mexico City. They met with senior civil servants and politicians, including the Interior Minister. Shortly afterwards the Senate voted to empower federal prosecutors to investigate attacks on journalists—one of our report's main recommendations. Three years later, a smaller delegation was granted an hour-long audience with a Senate committee on legal affairs. The committee listened attentively and discussed practical measures to tackle the country's longstanding issues with impunity. Other reports have yielded similar opportunities, often several years after publication.

When noticed by the right institutions, PEN's country reports can make a difference. *Journalism in the Shadow of Impunity* earned us an audience with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Washington, and with Canada's House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade when it deliberated on a free trade agreement with Honduras in November 2013. Smaller outcomes can be significant too, especially when they help to galvanize the work of local centres. Country reports verify and consolidate key facts about the threats faced by independent journalists, community broadcasters and racial, religious, sexual and political minorities. Many of these people have been branded as subversives and without the interest of groups like ours they face further harassment and violence. Substantive advocacy also validates their struggle and connects them to new audiences, including foreign legislators who are contemplating trade deals with their governments.

From its inception, PEN has asserted that writing can change the world. If nothing else, this idea enjoins us to support the courageous writers, journalists, bloggers and broadcasters who are willing to resist a culture of impunity in the Americas or the creeping chill on dissent in India. Our country reports, and the advocacy they give rise to, are modest attempts to amplify the voices of such people, to show our solidarity with them, and to offer them moral support as they seek to change the world.

Writers in Exile

Committee Report

Marina Nemat, Chair

Last year, we welcomed four Ethiopian journalists and one from Honduras to Canada. They have all had their refugee hearings, have been accepted here, and have moved from the temporary accommodations that we provided to their own apartments. Now, their main challenge is to bring their families to Canada—the WiE committee will continue to work with them on getting their loved ones here.

On a very high note, Gezahegn Mekonnen Demissie, one of the Ethiopian PEN Members, has begun working with a producer at Hot Docs to make a documentary film to air on TVO. One of our members, Hannah Fisher, helped facilitate the connection. Niv Fichman at Rhombus is helping Gezu with another script, about the Ethiopian famine. Gezu is making the whole committee very proud!

We have also been very busy with Turkish journalists, about ten of whom have recently joined our committee. They were all in danger of arrest after the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey; many of them worked for *Zaman*, the newspaper President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan shut down, accusing its employees of being spies and enemies of the state. Several of the Turkish journalists on the committee arrived in Canada through the United States, to claim refugee status here. A few have already had their hearings and been accepted, and others are still waiting. When our presence has been requested, we've sent two PEN-affiliated observers to each hearing, and have provided official letters of support.

Most of my energy as chair was involved, these past few months, in organizing meetings between our committee and the Ministry of Global Affairs and Ministry of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship in Ottawa, which took place on March 24. The meetings were mostly successful, and we feel we're making positive inroads. The committee also met with Jim Creskey at *The Hill Times* at their office for lunch.

While many of us were in Ottawa, Mary Jo Leddy led another group of our members in meetings at the constituency offices of Ministers Freeland and Hussen. As we learned with Illamaran Nagarasa's case, we need to be persistent to get results. Maran is doing great right now with his wife and daughter here, and is very happy to finally have been reunited with his family. His success gives us hope! To bring his family here, we visited Minister McCallum's constituency office in Markham every day for about 2 weeks, taking them coffee and donuts and speaking to them about Maran's suffering and the need to right a terrible wrong that was done to him.

One of the challenges that our Turkish journalists will be facing is reuniting with their families. We will discuss with officials in Ottawa and try to shorten the wait. We are also concerned that President Erdoğan has threatened to strip the journalists who have escaped Turkey of their Turkish citizenship. This was on our mind in our recent session in Ottawa, and I'm expecting updates soon.

Writers in Prison

Committee Report

Jim Creskey, Chair

MAKING IT PERSONAL

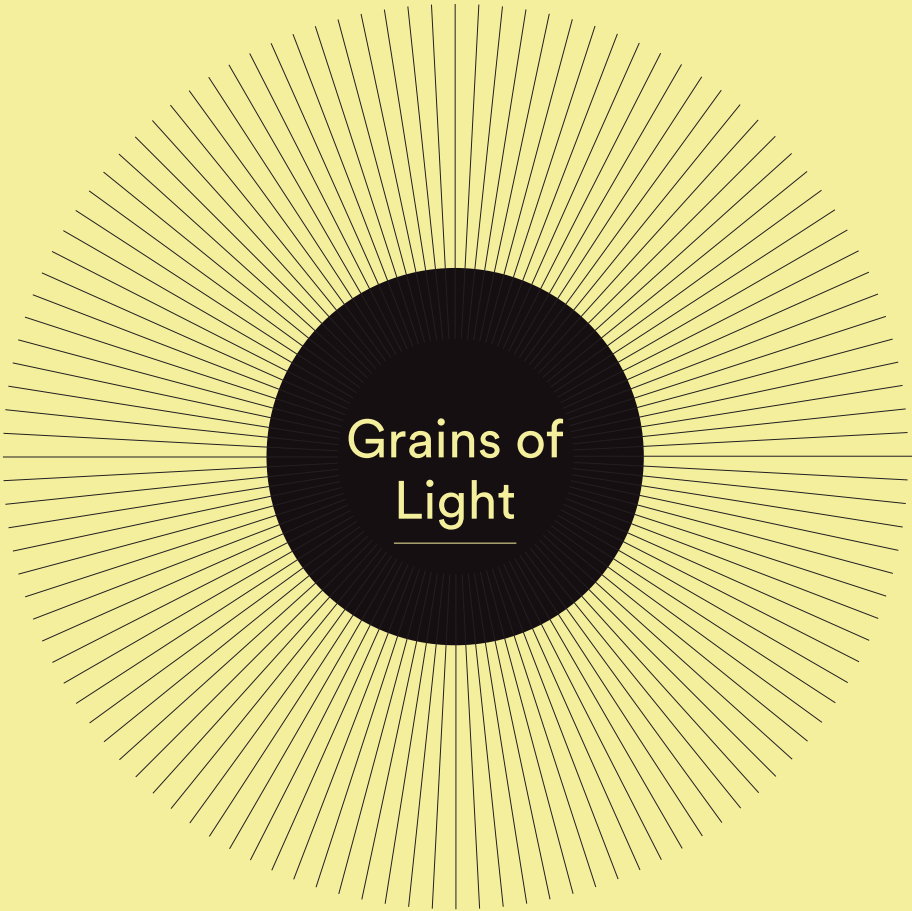
More than ever, I am certain that the work done by the Writers in Prison Committee and the Writers in Exile Committee is at the heart of PEN Canada's reason for being. Over the past several years the distinction between the two committees has often blurred, as writers in many countries have become writers in peril. This is especially true in countries like Honduras where journalists are more often murdered with impunity rather than imprisoned.

PEN Canada has been asked to help remove writers from imminent danger (recently in Afghanistan and Iran) as well as play a direct role in the Canadian refugee process (as we did in cases from Honduras and Ethiopia). PEN members have stepped in with personal support for individual writers, moving our work from the impersonal to personal, from head to heart. We all grew from the experience, and I think we should remember to keep it personal as often as possible.

In Ottawa, we are thinking about how the small special project grants (\$20,000) administered by individual Canadian embassies abroad may fit into our own plans. Based on recommendations in PEN Canada's report on Guatemala, we've determined that using such a grant to organize a community radio journalism workshop in Guatemala seems like a good idea.

It's worth remembering that it was a small grant from the British embassy in Guatemala City that got us started with our annual *Escribir sin Miedo* investigative journalism prize in Honduras, and our ongoing support of PEN Honduras. It is important that we continue providing this support, and also build on the knowledge base and contacts that we have in Honduras and now Guatemala. Having a PEN staffer, Brendan, who can help to continue this work and maintain these contacts along with the WiP chair will keep this important program alive.

Along with our direct and personal involvement in Central America this remains a good way for PEN Canada to harness the multilingual strengths of many of our members, reaching out in a personal way to imprisoned writers.



HOW ONE PEN CANADA MEMBER
OPENED A DOOR FOR IMPRISONED AZERI
WRITER RASHAD RAMAZANOV

Emily M. Keeler

Kate Creasey, a writer and film producer living in Montreal, joined PEN Canada's advocate program thinking that she would spend a few hours every Sunday penning a letter to an imprisoned writer. The Advocates Program equips PEN Canada members with addresses and ideas for writing to jailed writers all over the world. These letters are a demonstrative act of solidarity; proving to writers that they are missed, that they haven't disappeared. Sustained correspondence can also indirectly inform both prison guards and governing bodies that a writer hasn't been forgotten and that there are people fighting for his or her just release.

So Kate began writing to Rashad Ramazanov. Rashad is an Azerbaijan-based author of seven books and numerous articles under the pseudonym Rashad Hagigat Agaaddin. On May 9, 2013, Rashad—who also posted criticisms of the Azeri government to social media—was arrested on drug possession charges. The Azeri government alleges that the Baku police found just over nine grams of heroin in Rashad's pants pocket. These charges are spurious. Rashad's lawyer, told Human Rights Watch that his first visit with Rashad after his detention was delayed for a week, and that Rashad had been beaten by the police. For the first several days of his pre-trial detention, Rashad's wife, Könül, was not given any information about where he was being held, or for what reason. She was heavily pregnant with their second child at the time. In November 2013, Rashad, who has never been known to use heroin, was sentenced to nine years in prison on charges for the illegal possession and sale of a large amount of narcotics.

Three years later, Kate wrote her first letter to Rashad. It was, in part, about the snow in Montreal. Kate and her husband decided they would regularly send postcards, and longer letters when they had time to write them. "I was wondering about if he had a family, and so on, all the sorts of things that one starts to imagine when one's taking the act of faith to write to somebody," Kate recalled at a meeting in the PEN Canada office earlier this spring.

And then, in December 2016, PEN Canada received word from renowned Baku-based Human Rights Defender Intigam Aliyev that Rashad had received just one of Kate's postcards, but not the letter. (Kate had numbered the postcards, and mentioned the letter in one of them.) Shortly thereafter, Könül, Rashad's wife, found Kate's husband on Facebook and sent him a message. Kate is fluent in Turkish—having lived in Istanbul for five years—and figured that the language's proximity to Azeri would mean that she and Könül could connect. "It was a quiet day at the office, and I thought maybe I'd see if Könül was on WhatsApp," Kate explains. "I was thinking, what time is it in Baku? Eight o'clock? So I sent her a message and that's how it started." Rashad and Könül had lived in exile in Turkey for a year following dire threats against Rashad in 2009, and as it turned out Könül and Kate could communicate with relative ease, and a little help from Google Translate. "Being in contact with Könül has been really important in terms of everything we've been able to do subsequently," Kate says.

On January 23, Könül told Kate that Rashad had been put in solitary confinement, and that he would be held there for two weeks. "I immediately got in touch with Brendan de Caires at the PEN Canada office," Kate says. In addition to reaching out

through PEN's Canadian diplomacy network, Brendan connected Kate to colleagues at PEN International, and Norwegian PEN. The secretariat immediately began to compose a Rapid Action Network notice in order to bring international attention to Rashad's plight. Because of Kate's personal connection to Könül, the secretariat was able to work with Könül to choose language that would prevent further danger. "Her concerns with the initial draft were legitimate," Kate says. The notice had originally urged PEN Members all over the world to write directly to Azerbaijan's President, İlham Aliyev, despite the fact that Rashad's imprisonment was the result of his criticizing the President. Könül suggested that such a directive could be perceived as a personal attack on the government, and that it could worsen Rashad's conditions: "It's very important for the relationship," Kate says, about involving Könül in the process, "that she feels like there's trust and that we're being responsive to the reality that she's got to live in Baku on a daily basis. She's got two small kids, and this is all happening within the space of a week."

Because she happened to be in Washington D.C. for her job that same week, Kate decided to find a spare afternoon to pay a visit to the Azeri embassy. "It was the most surreal thing," she says. "I went unannounced—I didn't want to give them an opportunity to say no. I was surprised that the Azeri Embassy was very unguarded. No gates, no nothing. Just ring the doorbell and a guy comes to the door." Kate smiles. Her visit is but one example of the polite and considered persistence with which she has worked to help Rashad. "I said, My name is Kate, I'm a television producer, I'm doing some work on behalf of PEN Canada, I'd like to talk to somebody about the situation of somebody in Azerbaijan who's not receiving mail from Canada." By framing her concern so politely, and by omitting mention of Rashad's imprisonment, Kate managed to get herself invited in the embassy for tea. "He took me into the embassy, put me in this room that had all of these pictures of the Aliyev family all over it, sat me down and asked me if I wanted tea. I said, Of course. Absolutely. My goal in going was to see if we could open up a line of communication, so it was important to be as friendly as possible." By the time Kate had identified that her concern was regarding a political prisoner, it was too late for the official at the Embassy to rush her back out onto the street. "It would be so rude. That would break every rule of Central Asian hospitality," she says. The official stiffened and said he was unsure how to help, but he asked her to make a formal request, in writing. "So, I waited a couple days, and when I was back in Montreal wrote him an email. Thank you so much for your generous hospitality last week. I'm so pleased we had an opportunity to meet. As I said, I'm concerned about this man. And I've also learned that he's in solitary confinement. This is most concerning. What are you going to do?" Kate sent similar missives to Canadian and Azeri embassies in neighbouring nations.

Working with PEN Canada, PEN International, and a network of diplomatic actors, Kate was able to sustain a brief but effective campaign for Rashad. Essentially, she created a headache for bureaucrats, asking urgent questions about Rashad's treatment and keeping his name appearing on dockets. Exercising such diplomacy and using soft power to keep politely forefronting Rashad's situation, Kate (along with the

interventions of PEN centres around the world) created a chain of mentions and line items that resulted in Rashad's release from solitary confinement. He was also granted access to his lawyer, a right he had been routinely denied before Kate's interventions. In February, Könül was permitted a weekend-long conjugal visit with Rashad, and he was able to see their children for the first time in years. And, as per Kate's request, he received access to some of his mail.

Kate and Könül are keeping in touch. Kate has received photos of the stack of mail Rashad's been working his way through, and has been actively trying to get Rashad access to books. He prefers philosophy, and through a friend who works in Turkish publishing, Kate's been able to send Rashad a small library. Könül has told Kate that all but one of her postcards have made it through.

But Rashad is still in prison, with five years yet on his sentence. Azerbaijan continues to regularly jail writers and editors who have criticized the state. In 2013, the country expanded its laws against defamation to include all online digital expression, and has been enforcing these laws against users of social media. In 2016, two prominent Azeri journalists, Khadija Ismayilova and Rauf Mirkadirov, were arrested on spurious charges and sentenced to serve terms of seven and six years, respectively, in prison. Raslim Aliyev, an independent reporter and the acting chair of the Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety, died in Baku as the result of a severe beating in August, 2015. Our work is not done.

But for now, Kate's letters and postcards are making it through. And while Rashad is still in prison, he and Könül are now aware that there is a vast network of writers working in solidarity on his behalf. Shortly before Rashad was put in solitary confinement, at the beginning of what would become a sustaining friendship, Könül wrote Kate an important message: "This really feels like a breath of fresh air. We're so tired. For four years we've been struggling. We're suffering. We're out of energy." Being a member of PEN is joining a fraternity of writers, yes. But it's also a sorority of fighters, working together to aid writers in peril. Kate's ability to foster a trusting connection with Könül through her letters to Rashad, and to use the power of polite persistence, have brought some light into the dark corners of Baku Prison #2, where Rashad still spends his days.

And with yet more polite persistence, one day, he'll hopefully be able to receive that missing postcard at home, with his family. The postcard, Kate says, had a poem on it: Turkish poet Nâzım Hikmet's "Baku at Night." A self-described "romantic revolutionary," Hikmet was exiled from his native Turkey and sought refuge in the Soviet Union. Hikmet's poem describes beholding the Azeri capital in the pitch black of night with a sense of soaring freedom and intimately felt nostalgia: "Baku is a sunny wheat-field./ High above on a hill,/ grains of light hit my face by the handfuls,/ and the music in the air flows like Bosphorus."

When Kate told Könül what was on the postcard, she laughed. "She's said, It's way too Soviet for them," Kate says, "and we chuckled and said some writers, their power never goes away."

HONORARY MEMBERS

PEN Canada works on behalf of its Honorary Members around the world. We welcome your help, as an advocate or supporter, for the writers highlighted in this report as well as those listed below.

AZERBAIJAN

Rashad Ramazanov

Rashad Ramazanov (*pen-name Rashad Hagigat Agaaddin*) was arrested on May 9, 2013 and sentenced to nine years in prison on charges of “illegal possession and sale of drugs.” He is an Azeri blogger well-known for his anti-government postings, and PEN International considers the charges against him to be politically motivated. In 2017 Ramazanov was placed in solitary confinement for 15 days and his family and lawyer were denied visits. Ramazanov has been an outspoken political commentator on social media, and prior to his arrest received warnings and threats from the authorities and death threats from Islamist extremists. He fled to Turkey in 2009 with his wife and one-year-old daughter, returning to Azerbaijan the following year. When the threats resumed, he lived apart from his family for a year in order to protect them. His wife was heavily pregnant with their second child at the time of his 2013 arrest, and his son was born on May 30, 2013, 21 days after his arrest. His wife reports living under heavy surveillance, and the stress is having an impact on her health.

Faraj Karimov

Faraj Karimov was arrested in Baku, Azerbaijan on July 23, 2014 and charged with drug offences. After being held incommunicado for 10 days he was granted access to a lawyer. Karimov claimed he had been beaten in custody and forced to sign a “confession” so the police wouldn’t “cause problems for his parents” by planting weapons at their house. In recent years, several prominent Azeri journalists and activists have been arrested on spurious drug, firearms, “hooliganism” or tax evasion charges after voicing criticism of the government.

CHINA AND AUTONOMOUS REGIONS**Liu Xiaobo**

The 2010 Nobel Peace Laureate, Liu Xiaobo, is a prominent dissident writer, and former president and board member of the Independent Chinese PEN Centre. Liu was arrested for signing Charter 08, a declaration calling for political reforms and human rights. Liu was held under “residential surveillance,” a form of pre-trial detention, at an undisclosed location in Beijing, until he was formally charged on June 23, 2009 with “spreading rumours and defaming the government, aimed at subversion of the state and overthrowing the socialism system in recent years.” The charge is said to be based on his endorsement of Charter 08 and over twenty articles published between 2001-2008. Liu was sentenced to an 11-year prison sentence on December 25, 2009. In 2012, Liu received PEN Canada’s One Humanity prize.

ETHIOPIA**Eskinder Nega**

The editor and journalist Eskinder Nega was arrested on September 14, 2011 on terrorism-related charges brought under Ethiopia’s 2009 Anti-Terrorism Proclamation. Nega was arrested for publishing a column disputing the government’s claim that detained journalists were suspected terrorists, and for criticizing the arrest of well-known actor and government critic Debebe Eshetu. Nega was charged with having affiliations with Ginbot 7, a banned political party the government considers a terrorist group, and for receiving weapons and explosives from neighbouring Eritrea in order to carry out acts of terrorism in Ethiopia. Nega was convicted on June 27, 2012 and given an 18-year prison sentence on July 13, 2012. On May 2, 2013 the Ethiopian Supreme Court upheld the conviction charges in a ruling PEN International and other rights groups described as “highly dubious.”

ERITREA

Said Abdelkader, Yusuf Mohamed Ali, Emanuel Asrat, Temesken Ghebreyesus, Mattewos Habteab, Dawit Habtemichael, Medhanie Haile, Dawit Isaak, Seyoum Tsehaye, Fesshaye Yohannes

In September 2001, 13 newspaper journalists were arrested after President Issaias Afeworki closed Eritrea’s independent newspapers, leaving only the state-run *Hadas Eritrea*. PEN Canada adopted the following 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 Isaak (writer and co-owner of *Setit*), Seyoum Tsehaye (TV and radio journalist who wrote a weekly column for the newspaper *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 at least 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. Other reports indicated that Yohannes had been tortured prior to his death. 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. Also in 2007, Reporters Without Borders named Seyoum Tsehaye their “journalist of the year.”

Isaak, 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 Isaak in jail. In April 2002, it was reported that Isaak had been hospitalized suffering from injuries caused by his torture. In November 2005, Isaak was briefly released for a medical check-up and was allowed to call his family and friends in Sweden. As of January 2010, Isaak 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.

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 2017, Isaak received the Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize on World Press Freedom Day. The prize recognizes a person, organization or institution that has made an outstanding contribution to the defence and/or promotion of media freedom.

KYRGYZSTAN

Azimjon Askarov

Azimjon Askarov, a member of Kyrgyzstan's Uzbek minority, is a journalist and human rights defender best known for exposing corruption. In June 2010 Askarov was convicted on trumped-up charges of organizing mass disorder and of complicity in the murder of a police officer in the wake of inter-ethnic violence. Three months later he was sentenced to life imprisonment. Askarov complained of being beaten and threatened while in custody, claims that were later verified by independent witnesses. In March 2016 the UN Human Rights Committee stated that Askarov had been arbitrarily detained, tortured, mistreated, and prevented from adequately preparing his defence as well as being denied treatment for serious medical conditions. In July 2016, after several unsuccessful appeals, the Supreme Court overturned his life sentence. On January 24, 2017 Kyrgyzstan's Chui Regional Court reinstated the life sentence, a decision that PEN International denounced as "an appalling miscarriage of justice" and "another attempt by Kyrgyz authorities to suppress free speech." In 2016, Askarov was awarded PEN Canada's One Humanity prize.

MEXICO

José Armando Rodríguez Carreón

José Armando Rodríguez Carreón was a veteran crime reporter for *El Diario* who made his name covering Juárez's *femicidios*. He was shot dead in his car on the morning of November 13, 2008 as he waited for his eight-year-old daughter whom he was taking to preschool. Rodríguez covered drug-related violence and organized crime in Ciudad Juárez; he briefly left Mexico after receiving a series of death threats. Shortly before his killing Rodríguez reported on alleged links between the drug trade and relatives of the state attorney general. Rodríguez's murder became the focus of international campaigns against impunity which intensified after two federal investigators in charge of his case were murdered. In the 2010 President Felipe Calderón told a delegation from the Committee to Protect Journalists that the case had been resolved by a jailhouse confession. Further investigation revealed that the confession had been extracted under duress and the alleged killer was never charged with Rodríguez's murder. There has been no progress in the case since then.

Politkovskaya’s body was found in the She suffered a gunshot wound to the several inconclusive trials, PEN Intern impartial investigation into Politkovsk

RUSSIA

Anna Politkovskaya

Anna Politkovskaya was a special correspondent for the newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*. She reported on the human rights abuses carried out by Russian forces in Chechnya and openly criticized Vladimir Putin. In 2001, she was detained by Russian officials in Chechnya, threatened with rape and torture, and subjected to a mock execution. On October 7, 2006, Politkovskaya’s body was found in the stairwell of her apartment building. She suffered a gunshot wound to the head. Eleven years later, following several inconclusive trials, PEN International continues to call for an impartial investigation into Politkovskaya’s murder.

SAUDI ARABIA

Raif Badawi

Raif Badawi was arrested in Jeddah on June 17, 2012 after organizing conference to mark a “day of liberalism” in Saudi Arabia. The event was banned and Badawi’s online forum—which aired debates on social and political questions—closed by court order. On May 7, 2014, Jeddah’s Criminal Court sentenced Badawi to 10 years in prison, 1,000 lashes and a fine of 1 million Saudi riyals for “founding a liberal website,” “adopting liberal thought,” and “insulting Islam.” When Badawi appeared in court on May 28, 2014, two additional penalties were inserted into the written verdict: a 10-year travel ban and 10-year ban from participating in visual, electronic and print media, after his release. In January 2015 Badawi received 50 lashes in a public flogging; further punishment was reportedly deferred due to his ill health. Badawi received PEN Canada’s One Humanity prize in 2014.

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national continues to call for an
aya's murder.

SYRIA

Tal al Mallouhi

Syrian state security agents detained high-school student Tal Al-Mallouhi on December 27, 2009 and interrogated her about posts on her personal blog. Her family home was raided and her computer, notebook, and other personal documents confiscated. She was held incommunicado at an undisclosed location, without charge, and denied access to her family, for nine months. She was granted a single family visit at Doma Prison in September 2010. After her mother published an open letter requesting more information about the case and calling for Tal's release, it was reported that Al-Mallouhi had been charged with spying. She appeared at a closed session of the Damascus State Security Court on February 14, 2011, where 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

Dilmurod Sayyid Saidov

Dilmurod Saidov—aka Sayyid—is an investigative journalist well known for exposing corruption. He was charged with extortion and forgery after the head of the Agricultural Equipment and Tractor Park in Samarkand alleged that Saidov had tried to extort US\$15,000 from him. His case was riddled with procedural violations but when his lawyer appealed the sentence in late 2009, the Samarkand Region court upheld the journalist's sentence. A further appeal, to the Uzbek Supreme Court, is underway. Saidov suffers from tuberculosis and was admitted to hospital for 27 days in mid-August 2011. His family has requested a provisional release during trial but this was rejected on the basis that he is a "dangerous criminal." Saidov has reportedly been subjected to harsh prison conditions and psychotropic drugs during his detention. In 2014, his brother Obid told Human Rights Watch that Dilmurod "is no longer living, but merely existing."

CELEBRATE LITERATURE

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AN INTERVIEW
WITH LAURA LEGGE,
WINNER OF THE
RBC/PEN CANADA
NEW VOICES AWARD

*The RBC/PEN Canada
New Voices Award
is generously funded by
the RBC Emerging
Artists Project*

Laura Legge writes the kind of stories that sound a bit like dancing. The recipient of not only the 2016 RBC/PEN Canada New Voices Award, but the PEN International New Voices Award for writers between the ages of 18 and 30, Laura's fresh perspective on language and character have a beguiling and flexible power. Her winning story, "Dress, Rehearse," takes place shortly after her protagonist, Farah, is released from prison. Farah's experience of the time she spent inside is primarily revealed in the way that Laura writes about Farah's bodily experience of freedom—a newly discovered sensitivity to sunlight, to the feeling of a gentle fabric being draped around her shoulders. We never learn of Farah's offence, though we are made to understand that one condition of her release is that she never again speak with her sister, the person with whom she had not only committed a crime, but built a whole lifetime of memories, including staging little-girl revenge plots as acts of living room theatre back in the distance of their shared childhood. The story culminates in Farah taking to the makeshift stage once more. Laura, a serious basketball fan, answered these questions over email, while watching the Toronto Raptors play against the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Why write a story about a woman who is returning home from prison?

I volunteer in a women's prison, and in a halfway house. I was trying to work through some of what I've heard and seen in those two different places. I was struck by how much women seemed to dislike the halfway house, and parole, and the whole process of reintegration; for some, it's worse than formal incarceration, where at least the limits were loud and patent.

Why do you think reintegration can be so difficult?

It depends on the person, which institution they are being released from, how long they were there, etc. But most people are released without money, adequate housing, or a job. The support systems in place to help women overcome these serious barriers are seldom adequate. It's difficult to get work with a criminal record.

Also, many people leaving prison feel isolated after they're released, whether that's because their friends and families have shunned them or because they carry so much shame. And of course many women I know experienced trauma while incarcerated, sometimes compounded by earlier life experiences.

My friend Bev runs a nonprofit for women who, like her, have been incarcerated. She told me that she once saw someone she knew from the Grand Valley Institution walk out of a grocery store carrying a frozen chicken over her head, knowing she would be arrested for stealing it, and then be sent back to prison. She just couldn't cope with all those things by herself, paying bills, finding an apartment, getting her kids to talk to her again.

CELEBRATE

Why does theatre play such an important role in this story?

When I was a kid I loved theatre. Now I realize that may have stemmed from not having a linguistic framework for my feelings—so I acted them out, and often embodied them. Hilton Als had this line, in a recent issue of *The New Yorker*, about Eugene O’Neill’s play *The Hairy Ape*: “O’Neill created one of his more densely and poetically conceived scripts, about a world where language and the body confuse one another, and end up cancelling each other out.” That is kind of the world that “Dress, Rehearse” takes place in, except that language and the body don’t ultimately cancel each other out—they just kind of vibrate against each other, sustaining tension.

Do you think that writing is a kind of performance, too? In the story, performance signals a kind of return to an impossible past. You can’t become a child again.

You’re totally right about that signal in the story: You can’t become a child again. I don’t see writing as a performance, really. It’s a way of making a little diorama so you can look at something from a bunch of angles. But it’s 100% language. There’s nothing else to it but the black text and white spaces. In theatre, there’s the body, the sounds, the lights. It’s much more performative just by virtue of all those things, and all the people required to manoeuvre them.

Do you remember reading something that made you realize you wanted to write, to build imaginary worlds with words instead of, as you say, the body?

Oh, emphatically, yes! Poetry is my first love and though I’ve always read pretty widely and ravenously it’s still the thing that speaks most directly to me. The first poetry books I cherished were Garcia Lorca’s *Gypsy Ballads*, Paz’s *Sunstone*, and Celan’s *Glottal Stop*. In early highschool, I read James Baldwin’s *Another Country* and knew everything would be different from that point forward. George Orwell’s sentences did that for me, too. I think the idea I got from Baldwin and Orwell was that if you used language intentionally, and you built a world precisely, and very well, around it, you could make the whole enterprise of living not only worthwhile but exquisite.

LITERATURE

And so you became a writer. And, more recently, a graduate with an MFA in writing.

Yes, from NYU. I got to learn from really, truly amazing faculty—people whose writing I admire deeply. Claudia Rankine, Fady Joudah, Katie Kitamura, Marilyn Hacker, Hari Kunzru, many more.

I am a writer, I write every day, I consider it to be a spiritual practice, but I was a reader first. I think that ties into the sense of recognition I feel I've had with regard to my own work. To have these writers who, to me, make the world very beautiful, to have them read my writing and take the time to formulate and articulate their feelings about it, that's all I could ask for. And to be able to hear them and now other writers speak, read their work, talk about craft, to feel that I am a legitimate part of that community, that means everything. I have published stories, essays, and poems in different places, and it feels really good to know the work is out there, hopefully being read, but the act of publishing still feels more removed than do those conversations, those opportunities to be together.

How did you find out about PEN Canada?

PEN is an important fixture in the world! I think I first heard about PEN in high school when I got into writing correspondence, especially to people who were incarcerated. I got to know the organizations that were advocating for the rights of prisoners around the world.

What do you think this prize has meant for your career?

This prize has had a massive impact on my career and on my personal evolution. It's gotten me attention I wouldn't otherwise have had from multiple agents and a publisher, all of whom approached me and not the other way around. Everyone at PEN Canada has been so kind to me. I would say the most valuable aspect, though, has been the mentorship I've received from PEN Canada's president, Randy Boyagoda. To have someone who is highly skilled and experienced in the field, as well as compassionate and encouraging, take an active interest in your work and your well-being—I can't imagine anything more valuable.

Literary Events

THE YEAR IN CONVERSATION PEN Canada hosted provocative, engaging live events with Salman Rushdie, Rawi Hage, Junot Díaz, Madeleine Thien, Adam Hochschild, David Bezmozgis, Haroon Siddiqui, just to name a few.

<p>Maya Angelou: And I Still Rise (August 12–18, 2016)</p>	<p>Ideas in Dialogue: Crossing Imaginary Lines (April 28, 2016)</p>
<p>PEN Canada co-presented the film <i>Maya Angelou: And I Still Rise</i> at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema from August 12-18. A look at a seminal figure in literature and history, this feature documentary describes the life of the legendary author of <i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i>.</p> <p>PEN Literary Readings at Blue Metropolis Literary Festival, Montreal (April 15 and 16, 2016)</p>	<p>Celebrated authors Junot Díaz and Sunil Yapa in conversation at the Bram & Bluma Appel Salon, Toronto Reference Library, on diaspora, globalization, and those we reach towards when we write—economically, geographically, and personally—and also about the ways in which reading can be a radical act of empathy. In partnership with the Toronto Public Library.</p> <p>George Brown College School of Communication (September 27, 2016)</p>
<p>Thanks to the efforts of PEN Canada board member Elise Moser, PEN Canada was for a second year in a row involved in a series of events at Montreal's Blue Met. This year we established a working partnership with PEN Québec. PEN-member writers read short statements in English, French or Spanish before each of thirteen different events at the festival, highlighting the cases of women writers persecuted for exercising their freedom of expression.</p> <p>Against Type: An Intimate Evening of Conversation with Junot Díaz and Rawi Hage (April 27, 2016)</p>	<p>Haroon Siddiqui, the <i>Toronto Star's</i> editorial page editor emeritus and a past president of PEN Canada, discussed exile and freedom of expression with refugee writer Luis Horacio Nájera, a Mexican journalist and PEN Canada-George Brown writer-in-residence, and with Eden Eyasu, Eritrean author, journalist and former PEN Canada-George Brown writer-in-residence. Moderated by Paula Applebaum, professor of communications, George Brown College.</p> <p>By Word and Deed: Resistance in Times of Turmoil (October 22, 2016) International Festival of Authors</p>
<p>Claimed authors Junot Díaz and Rawi Hage discussed the challenges of writing novels that defy labels in a publishing industry that's obsessed with them. Moderated by PEN Canada Vice-President, Emily M. Keeler.</p>	<p>Writer and filmmaker David Bezmozgis in conversation with Adam Hochschild, author of <i>King Leopold's Ghost</i>, <i>To End All Wars</i>, and, most recently, <i>Spain in our Hearts: Americans in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939</i>, about the lessons we learn from writers and activists battling fascism, racism, and other forms of injustice.</p>

<p>Imagining China, PEN Patron Salon (November 17, 2016)</p>	<p>Journalists, Free Expression, and Mexico's War on Drugs (March 9, 2017) Ryerson Centre for Free Expression</p>
<p>Author and past PEN Canada president Charlie Foran in conversation with Madeleine Thien, nominated for the 2016 Man Booker Prize and winner of the 2016 Scotiabank Giller Prize for her novel <i>Do Not Say We Have Nothing</i>, on the subject of China and the Canadian imagination.</p> <p>Salman Rushdie and the 1992 PEN Benefit (November 21, 2016)</p>	<p>An inside look at what's happening to journalists and free expression in Mexico, one of the world's most dangerous countries for journalists since 2006. Featuring Luis Horacio Nájera, exiled Mexican journalist and 2016 PEN Canada Writer-in-Residence at George Brown College, in conversation with James Cullingham, documentary filmmaker, historian, and professor of journalism at Seneca College. Hosted by Ryerson Centre for Free Expression, co-sponsored by PEN Canada.</p> <p>PEN Canada Gala Dinner Honouring Sir Salman Rushdie (March 29, 2017)</p>
<p>Grace Westcott, executive director of PEN Canada, addressed the Rose Reisman Women's Lecture Club on the stories and significance of the 1992 PEN Benefit and PEN Canada's efforts to engage the Canadian government and the United Nations on behalf of Salman Rushdie.</p> <p>Night of a Thousand Birds, Poetry Reading Marathon to benefit PEN Canada (January 18, 2017)</p>	<p>This year, PEN's signature fundraising dinner celebrated a landmark literary and human rights anniversary—when Salman Rushdie famously emerged from hiding to attend a PEN Canada benefit twenty-five years ago. We were privileged to host many of the guests who were at the original benefit party, including former politicians Bob Rae and Barbara MacDougall. PEN Canada President Randy Boyagoda joined Rushdie on stage with questions for the Booker-prize winner (and former PEN America president) about literature, his work, and freedom of expression today during the dessert course. The Rushdie benefit, a celebration of bravery in the face of fear, was the most successful PEN Canada fundraiser to date, bringing in over \$80,000 to continue the work of aiding writers in peril.</p>

HONORARY MEMBERS RELEASED

Re

Muhammad
Bekjanov

UZBEKISTAN

leased

“We are pleased to hear that Muhammad Bekjanov has been released, although he should have never been imprisoned in the first place. One of the world’s longest-imprisoned journalists, Bekjanov was unfairly tried and tortured yet no one has been held accountable,” said Jennifer Clement, PEN International President. “We demand justice for Bekjanov. All other writers and journalists unfairly imprisoned in Uzbekistan must also be released immediately.”

Muhammad Bekjanov is former editor of the banned *Erk* opposition party newspaper and brother of exiled opposition leader Muhammad Salih. He was arrested in March 1999 after being forcibly returned to Uzbekistan from Ukraine, accused of involvement in a series of explosions in Uzbekistan’s capital, Tashkent, the previous month. He said he was tortured into confessing yet the authorities did not investigate his allegations and in August 1999 sentenced him to 15 years in prison. Although his sentence was reduced in 2003, he received an additional five years in December 2011 for allegedly violating prison rules just weeks before he was due to be released.

During his imprisonment, Muhammad Bekjanov suffered a broken leg, lost most of his teeth and his hearing in one ear as a result of alleged mistreatment and contracted tuberculosis.

Members, Donors, and Partners

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17

This list acknowledges those individuals and organizations who became members or provided support between April 1, 2016 and March 31, 2017.

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and to everyone who has contributed their thoughts and time.

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