

# Bad Words.

PEN Canada 2005 06 Annual report

**PEN Canada**  
24 Ryerson Ave., Suite 301  
Toronto, Ontario Canada M5T 2P3  
TEL 416.703.8448 FAX 416.703.3870  
info@pencanada.ca www.pencanada.ca

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# Foreword

Words are the tools with which a writer builds his or her work, whether it be a poem, a novel, a memoir or a manifesto. Robbing a writer of words is akin to stealing a hammer from a carpenter or a colour from an artist's palette.

Yet this happens every day, in every corner of the world. Words are, often arbitrarily, declared to be “bad words.” They are forbidden, taboo, and using them can inflict a terrible penalty on those so audacious to use them.

In this report you will find some words that in contexts with which we are most familiar seem harmless enough. In other contexts, however, they are seen as inflammatory and the writers who used them have been thrown in jail. And the example set by those arrests has inevitably sent a strong message to others within the community, stifling free expression and the communication of ideas.

Some of the examples are baffling, others almost comical, but each illustrates the cruel reality of the writer's life when freedom is denied.

# President's Report

*By Constance Rooke*

The first and last word from me is a good one, and a necessary one. It's just thanks, huge thanks, to all of the people—on the Board, on Staff, and in the broader PEN Canada community—who have rallied round to make this an extraordinarily productive year.

The Board of PEN Canada is very much a “working board” rather than simply a “policy board”—and I can tell you that we've worked very hard over this past year. Board members have borne tremendous responsibility outside of our lengthy board meetings, both as individuals or in small ad hoc groups dealing with particular issues and on standing or ad hoc committees. (Board committees—both standing and ad hoc—are staffed by a combination of board members and non-board members.) Some of us worked hard to refine our budgeting and financial reporting practices. Many of us worked hard to raise money for PEN Canada—organizing special events, seeking support from sponsors and patrons and other donors, and so on. We also, of course, worked constantly on furthering PEN's vital mission and responded to critical issues as they arose.

As a board, we spent a good deal of time this year in discussion of some strongly inter-related strategic issues. We began with the recognition that (on a number of fronts) PEN Canada has made considerable strides over the last two or three years. We are very excited, for example, about recent work being done here in Canada on behalf of writers in exile (an effort we also chair for International PEN). However, this important new work has been assumed on top of our existing work on behalf of writers in prison around the world and activities related to the protection of freedom of expression within Canada. We do not want to retreat from any of this work; we want, in fact, to achieve much more. We have a wealth of ideas and an appetite for growth. Yet there is only so much that can be done by a small group of people working on a small budget, and we are conscious that many of us are feeling stretched as it is. We know that we need to be concerned about possible burn-out or just limited availability on the part of some of our most energetic and effective volunteers (whether on the board or otherwise), about recruiting more such splendid volunteers, and about building our staff complement.

What we have—and seek to resolve—is a familiar and decidedly circular problem of resources: Additional human resources are needed to develop the additional financial resources that are required to increase the human resources, both paid and volunteer, that are needed to fulfill our mission. We need additional staff positions both to support PEN's work and to help build our membership, volunteer, and

donor base. Currently PEN Canada supports 2.5 staff positions through its “base budget.” For most of the last year, support for an additional 1.5 staff positions was provided through two project-specific grants—but one of these has already expired, and the other is due to expire shortly.

The term “base budget” as used in the last paragraph is a somewhat dubious one. Our revenues come from dues-paying members, additional donations from members, event sponsors, patrons, and other donors; from special fund-raising events; and from the sale of PEN Canada merchandise. (Money associated with project grants comes and goes; and, apart from a small contribution to overhead, is necessarily devoted to carrying out the special projects for which the grants were awarded.) What this means is that none of the “base” can be assumed; for all of it we have to hustle. At the moment we are in the black, but the situation remains precarious, especially in view of increased expenses and the need for additional staff. Accordingly, the board is focusing a large share of its attention on ways of building a firmer and larger financial “base” for PEN Canada.

Over this past year, we made significant efforts to increase our membership base. We engaged in a direct mail campaign and sought out new members at a number of literary festivals and events. A year ago PEN Canada had 515 dues-paying members; we now have 746 dues-paying members, and hope we may break the 800 mark through outstanding renewals prior to this year’s Annual General Meeting. (In addition, we have a number of honorary and other non-dues paying members.) We have seen significant growth in all three membership categories: full, associate, and student. We have made progress in geographical distribution, although it continues to be the case that the majority of our members are in Ontario. We have also established a new Membership Committee, chaired by Michael Helm, with a mandate to strengthen our membership base. We have the potential, I am convinced, for very significant further growth—especially in the associate and student categories and outside Ontario.

Strengthening our membership base across Canada and across categories is an essential part of the effort to increase our revenue base, of course. But it does much more than this. It strengthens our voice and gives us more hands and minds—more people—to draw on to do PEN Canada’s work. As the categories of regular and associate members grow, we will form a stronger community of writers and readers with a passionate commitment to human rights and freedom of expression. As the category of student members grows, and as the number of young writers among our members increases, the future of PEN Canada will

become more secure. And as our members are distributed more and more widely across Canada, we will become a more fully national and a much stronger and more persuasive organization.

The board recognizes the tremendous, utterly essential contributions made to PEN Canada by our patrons and sponsors and other donors. We will seek, of course, to increase their number as we work in the years ahead to strengthen our financial base. But we are also determined to show our deep appreciation to these supporters in whatever ways we can. To that end, we have established an annual “thank you” event for our patrons and sponsors. Last year this event was linked to an exhibition of banned books at the Fisher Rare Book Library; this year it will be a private reception preceding the June 20 launch at Hart House of our new PEN Canada anthology, *Writing Life*.

The sale of PEN Canada merchandise (t-shirts, posters, etc.) is a steady, but sometimes very modest component of our revenue base. We hope to experience a “spike” in this category with the publication by McClelland & Stewart—in its centenary year!—of *Writing Life*, our third PEN Canada anthology. Two previous anthologies, *Writing Away* (1994) and *Writing Home* (1997), were also published by M&S and edited by me—and have raised a good deal of money for PEN Canada. I want to thank McClelland & Stewart for its generosity in providing all of its services without charge so that as much as possible of the cover price of the book will go to PEN Canada; and I thank the wonderful people of M&S for their endless enthusiasm and all their hard work—most especially, I thank the extraordinary Anita Chong, who worked with me on the anthology from its beginnings through to the end. Above all, of course, I’m grateful the fifty remarkable writers who interrupted their own busy writing lives to give new work to *Writing Life* in support of PEN Canada.

To fund our work, we also rely very strongly on special events, such as ticketed readings and other events whose proceeds are dedicated to PEN Canada; for example, a recent series of appearances in western Canada by Rohinton Mistry generated approximately ten thousand dollars in support of PEN’s work. We are grateful not only to Rohinton, but also to M&S and the bookstores that hosted the events: McNally Robinson Booksellers, Audrey’s Books, and Greenwood’s Bookshoppe.

Last fall, we entered into a new partnership with Harbourfront’s International Festival of Authors, thus reinstating our annual PEN benefit and positioning it as the opening night of IFOA. The evening began in the Premier Dance Theatre with a panel (Dionne Brand, Adrienne Clarkson, Ann-Marie MacDonald, and Deepa Mehta) and a reading by Alice Munro, and continued with a gala dinner and auction in the

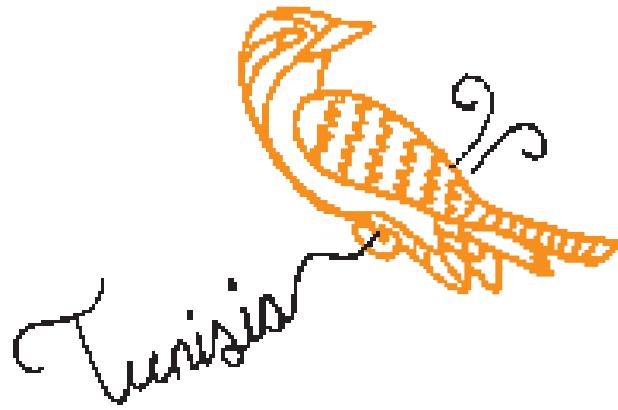
Great Hall at Hart House. The inaugural PEN Canada-Paul Kidd Courage Prize was awarded to Paul William Roberts on this occasion. (Work is now secretly underway on the second iteration of the resurrected benefit, under the guidance of Janet Somerville, Camilla Gibb, and Michael Helm, for October 2006!) Sponsors for the 2005 event were RBC Financial Group; Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP; Random House of Canada; James Appel; George & Martha Butterfield; Diamond and Schmitt Architects; *The Globe and Mail*; Soapbox Design Communications; Book City; Cumberland Investments; Deloitte & Touche LLP; Florence Minz; House of Anansi Press; Indigo Books & Music; McClelland & Stewart; Royal St. George's College; Thomas Allen & Son; and the University of Guelph—and we are immensely grateful to them all, as well as to all the people who donated marvellous “experiences” to our auction and to Hal Hannaford, our splendid auctioneer. The event was brilliantly co-chaired by Martha Butterfield and Louise Dennys; huge thanks again to them and their hard-working committee.

I do see that most of what I have said here relates to money. I'm counting, of course, on the other reports contained in this annual report to give you a proper sense of PEN Canada's real work, and to demonstrate why it's so important each and every year to generate the money we need to do it. As President, however, I have worked on other matters. This, after all, was the year of Orhan Pamuk, of the Danish cartoons, and of *Three Wishes*. (PEN also helped in the effort to save Kogawa House, which we expect will be used in part by our writers in exile.) So there were positions to be arrived at and statements to be made and actions to be undertaken. These were broadly collaborative efforts, of course. But I want especially to offer my fervent thanks to Louise Dennys, Chair of our Communications Committee, and to Camilla Gibb, PEN Canada's Vice President; it was a special privilege to think these matters through with you.

Finally, my thanks to all members of our remarkable board and staff—especially, of course, to Isobel Harry. It has been a wonderful year.

PEN Canada  
defends freedom  
of expression by  
assisting writers  
around the world  
persecuted or exiled  
for the expression  
of their thoughts.





In Tunisia, one may call the regime of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali many things. However, the government should never be compared to a zoo. Cyber-dissident Zouhair Yahyaoui learned that lesson the hard way. In an irreverent attempt to encourage debate on the state of his country – and to test how far a person in Tunisia could push freedom of expression – in June 2002 Yahyaoui asked readers of his satirical Web site, [tunezine.com](http://tunezine.com), if they thought that Tunisia was “a republic, kingdom, a zoo or a prison.” Yahyaoui was arrested soon after, becoming the first person working on the Internet to be targeted by the Tunisian judiciary. In protest, he refused to attend the court to hear the sentence against him. Yahyaoui was sentenced in July 2002 to 28 months’ imprisonment for spreading false information. Even though the Internet is well established in Tunisia, where even President Ben Ali has extolled its virtues, the number of service providers in the country is limited, and they are reportedly run by companies with close ties to the government. Indeed, Tunisia has become one of the most repressive countries in the world in terms of freedom of expression. All news media promote the official line and practise self-censorship to avoid news and commentary that would criticize government policies. After three hunger strikes in protest at his jail conditions, Yahyaoui was conditionally released in November 2003. Tragically, the 36-year old died suddenly in March 2005, following an apparent heart attack.

## Executive Director's

By Isobel Harry

## Report

### PEN Canada in the World

I have just returned from PEN's 72nd World Congress in Berlin. This is the 85th anniversary of International PEN – it was in 1921 that the British writer Amy Dawson Scott wrote to her daughter: "I've got an IDEA! A Dining Club – men and women of repute... I've started my international dinner Club. I've called it the PEN because it consists of poets, Playwrights, Essayists and Novelists ... If we had an International Dinner Club, with Centres in every capital city in the world, membership of one meaning membership of all, we should have a common meeting ground in every country for all writers ... the dinner club is more to draw the nations together ... in literature."

The first dinner took place on October 5, 1921, attended by 41 writers. The first congress was held in May 1923, with 11 Centres sending delegates. By 1935 there were 50 centres voting on resolutions that were to form the basis of the PEN Charter. When the Universal Declaration was being drafted in 1948 as a charter for the United Nations, the authors consulted PEN's document.

There are now 144 centres in 102 countries, and the original meaning and purpose of the organization still resonates. What Herman Ould wrote in *The New Statesman* and *The Nation* in 1935 could have been written about our own contemporary world: "The P.E.N. stands for liberty of expression throughout the world and views with apprehension the continual steps to encroach upon that liberty in the name of social security and international strategy. It affirms its belief that the necessary advance of the world towards a more highly organized political and economic order renders a free criticism of administrations and institutions imperative from all points of view."

PEN Canada celebrates its own anniversary this year – its 80th. Founded in 1926 in Montreal, we are one of the earliest PEN centres in existence. (In the 1980's the organization divided into two, with the Anglo-phone centre moving to Toronto to become PEN Canada, while the Francophone centre – Québec PEN – remains in Montreal.) We are proud of our record as a leading voice within International PEN, and that we are one of the most active centres in the organization.

At the Berlin Congress there were many wide-ranging and exciting discussions about the future of PEN, as a result of a restructuring at headquarters in London and of a new 3-year strategic plan. PEN Canada, as always, was very involved in these discussions at all levels. PEN Canada delegates (this year past president Haroon Siddiqui and myself) hit the ground running at congresses and remain busily engaged

throughout the week of meetings and assemblies. This week in May was one of the most eventful ever and in many ways mirrors the intense work we do in Canada. Congresses offer an opportunity to wrap up in an annual summary one's own achievements on behalf of PEN members, much like our AGM in Canada, in an international context.

### PEN works for persecuted writers

During the Writers in Prison Committee sessions PEN Canada took the lead in drafting two resolutions that were later approved unanimously by the Assembly of Delegates: on Iran and on China. In China, PEN Canada has seven Honorary Members detained in violation of their right to freedom of expression, and in Iran three. We also worked with the Iranian Writers in Exile PEN Centre and Swedish PEN to draft a letter to Ayatollah Khamenei regarding the urgent situation of the academic Ramin Jahanbegloo, formerly a professor at the University of Toronto who is now detained on unspecified charges in Evin prison, the same notorious prison where the Canadian-Iranian photojournalist Zahra Kazemi met her death after torture. The letter was signed by the President, International Secretary and Writers in Prison Committee Chair of International PEN, as well as by members of the board and delegates of PEN centres in the Assembly. We met Khalil Rostamkhani and Faraj Sarkoobi, Honorary Members now living in Germany, as well as the daughter of Honorary Member Nasser Zarafshan, who remains in prison in Iran. It is gratifying to encounter those on whose behalf PEN Canada has successfully campaigned and to find inspiration to continue on behalf of those still imprisoned.

A large part of our role involved chairing two meetings of the International PEN Writers in Exile Network. PEN Canada has chaired this Network for four years, and has seen much growth in membership and activities. Our own work in Canada serves as a model for other centres' academic placement programs for exiled writers: we have partnerships with over twenty institutions in Canada, with ten exiled writers currently placed. We are proud to have sat on the advisory committee for the pioneering Sheridan College International Journalism Program that will allow foreign-trained journalists to apply their academic credits directly toward a Canadian college degree. We successfully obtained two grants from the Canada Council to serve as stipends for writers placed at Carleton University (Ottawa) and at the University of King's College (Halifax), and created the PEN Canada/RBC Writer's Fellowship for New Canadians with

the RBC Foundation to facilitate the placement of a writer at the University of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon). RBC will fund the fellowship again this year. We are supported once again in all this work by the Maytree Foundation and the International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, for which we are very grateful.

Reporting at this year's International Network meetings were Norwegian, Scottish, English, German, Finnish, Sydney, Québec, Swedish, Melbourne PEN centres, PEN USA (Los Angeles) and PEN American Center (New York). Other centres joining in were Nepalese, Indian, Esperanto, Vietnamese Writers Abroad, Kurdish, and Independent Chinese. The range of activities is vast and encompasses providing administrative support for complex refugee claims, creating a European Cities of Refuge Network and working with municipalities to launch new city partners in Norway, Scotland, Sydney, Germany and England, designing public art, theatre and readings projects involving exiled writers, publishing anthologies, liaising with universities and other institutions to offer academic opportunities, and recommending changes to official cultural policy regarding translation in several countries.

In fact, the biggest news concerned the growing number of translation initiatives by centres. Esther Allen of PEN American Center's Translation Program spoke about the report on "Translation and Globalization" she presented to PEN's International Committee on Translation and Linguistic Rights, which seeks to provide an overview of international literary translation in a variety of contexts. Specific emphasis is given to the problem of the English language: that is, the fact that more than 50% of the world's literary translations are from English into other languages, while fewer than 3% are from other languages into English. The report will be a tool for International PEN and for the many regional PEN centres to further PEN's longstanding goal of promoting and supporting an idea of world literature that is inclusive of all languages and literary traditions.

PEN Canada's Writers in Exile Committee has formally proposed to our own Canada Council for the Arts changes to the way literary translation is funded. Among other changes, we have proposed that public funding for translation include translation from languages other than English, French and Canada's Aboriginal languages, regardless of the nationality of the author of the work. This initiative is aimed at recognizing the fact that Canada's culture is being transformed into a global one in order to foster a reading culture that acknowledges the depth of literary contributions of immigrants to Canada. We are fortunate to have Beatriz Hausner, former head of the Literary Translators Association of Canada, on the Committee to steer this proposal.

Advances in PEN Canada's work with exiled writers have been nothing short of astonishing. In addition to the translation initiative and the ongoing placements efforts, we held a dinner-discussion with international attendees in April, directed at expanding the Network's supporters. We received offers of support from McGill University, the Ontario Library Association and many others; ongoing discussions with the City of Toronto about the City of Refuge program are very promising.

Though the Trillium-funded highly successful Readers & Writers program came to an end this year, we are developing plans for other initiatives to ensure our exiled writers continue to be heard in communities across the country.

Perhaps the most significant outcome from the Berlin Congress for PEN Canada is that we will continue as chair of the Writers in Exile Network for another year. During that year, we will begin to explore a plan to base Network coordination in Canada. Canada is traditionally a welcoming country for immigrants and as such is uniquely placed to coordinate a refugee writer network for International PEN. We have already received expressions of strong support from many centres, especially Norway, and from International PEN, for our efforts toward this goal in the next year. We will begin right away by meeting with the Scholar at Risk Network (based at NYU) and World University Service Canada to explore possible collaboration in areas of mutual concern.

Thanks to a very committed Exile Committee of long-standing advocates, we move forward in a thoughtful and strategic manner. Thank you to volunteer members Maggie Helwig, Anna Luengo, Munir Saami, Haroon Siddiqui, Fraser Sutherland, programs staffer David Cozac and former Readers & Writers project coordinator Philip Adams for all their energetic work.

### More good work

Another successful PEN initiative carried out by PEN Canada in support of International PEN, with PEN's International Secretary – on behalf of UNESCO – was to help create the new Jamaican PEN Centre. It was only a year and a half ago that Joanne Leedom-Ackerman & I visited Kingston Jamaica and encountered the Calabash Literary Festival crew and other writers. Colin Channer, Justine Henzell and Kwame Dawes gave us a very warm welcome and lots of enthusiasm for the PEN idea. We also met with Carolyn Cooper and Rex Nettleford at the University of the West Indies' Mona campus, John Maxwell of the *Jamaica Observer*,

Rachel Manley, David Boxer of the National Gallery and several others who expressed interest in the project. Subsequently I visited Calabash where I met even more writers and where Russell Banks sat down with us and did a PEN pitch no-one could turn down: Put yourselves into a world network of writers to help persecuted writers. So, 20 Caribbean writers signed the Charter, fulfilled the membership requirements and sent two writers to Berlin, again with the help of UNESCO, where the new centre was approved unanimously.

While this report is not the usual tour of domestic activities since last report, I hope it provides perhaps a more visceral feel for the work of PEN Canada. So many ideas whirl around PEN congresses that one's head is literally spinning with possibilities and plans, often based on what one hears from other PEN centres. For example in a session on PEN and education, we heard that Swiss-Italian PEN teaches classrooms of kids how to read newspapers; that Scottish PEN works with the journalists' union on the right to freedom of expression; that the African Writers Abroad PEN centre encourages "orature" where primary and secondary school children listen to each other's cultures' stories and produce little books; and that PEN USA in Los Angeles has developed a creative classroom program in which students are encouraged to censor their classmates to teach them lessons about free speech. These are great ideas to bring to bear on our plans to further our fledgling Freedom of in the Classroom project in collaboration with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.

The most memorable PEN encounters – other than with Honorary Members – often are with the newer centres, and the program description given to me by Dr. Samay Hamed, a board member of the new Afghan PEN centre – set up with Canadian and Norwegian funding – is a good example. The centre's house in Kabul is called PEN House; 216 members pay dues of \$1.00/month. The first day of every month is called Roshanak, or Children's Day, for the teaching of children's literature; the last day of the month is Rabi'ah Day, after "the mother of Persian poetry," given over to facilitating women's writing. Every Thursday is Rainbow Day, for the reading of new works or presentation of cultural programs. Each month, one day is Mirror Day for critiques of cultural authorities and personalities, a kind of "PEN Court," Hamed said, where a Minister, a head of a cultural NGO or famous writer has to face the assessment of the PEN members. In some high schools Afghan PEN has what it calls Writers' Nests where writers visit to hold workshops; and finally, there's the Young Writers' Galaxy, with 100 university students so far. "We are a poor country," said Hamed, "but not poor in literature." A question arising from this conversation is: How can PEN Canada

support these efforts? We've already decided to pursue getting some old computers donated by the City of Toronto. I welcome other member suggestions.

### PEN Canada at home

So, what kind of year was it here at home? The annual program reports by chairs Alan Cumyn and Christopher Waddell reflect just how actively we have been campaigning on your behalf against censorship and to free persecuted writers. The International PEN Writers in Prison Committee conference in Istanbul in March provided us with an intimate look into the lives of Turkish writers and journalists facing endless charges simply for expressing opinions different from the officially-approved canon and reminded us of how important PEN's support is at this crucial time in Turkey's history.

Thanks to President Constance Rooke's vision of a more inclusive broader-based organization of readers and writers, we have a new outreach strategy designed to get more people across Canada interested in joining PEN Canada. With a grant from the Ontario Arts Council, we worked with communications expert Mary MacNutt, and with membership chair Michael Helm, to refine our message to potential members and supporters, with particular focus on the general public and youth. We are keen on engaging PEN's writer members in promoting our mission across the country whenever they are speaking or reading. Our presence at literary festivals is increasing through our Empty Chair representing an Honorary Member who cannot attend. With Alliance Atlantis's generous offer of help to produce a 30-second public service announcement, we hope you will soon see PEN Canada's first-ever televised message flickering across your screens.

This year marked the culmination of concerted outreach to acquire volunteers and interns to help with the office workload. Thanks to Sheridan College we enjoyed the assistance of Scott Bryson of the Print Journalism Program for a month; the Summer Career Placement Program of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada will pay Jackie Grandy, former volunteer, to work with us for ten weeks this summer; as last year, we will have an intern from Humber College's Public Relations Program to help with Fall events; in August, Aidan Johnson from the University of Chicago will intern with us for ten weeks thanks to a grant he has received from their Human Rights Program. Pike Wright has worked a day a week this year as volunteer coordinator, processing the many requests we receive and interviewing and channeling volunteers into a clerical or events stream. Invaluable assistance was also provided by Umwalli Sollange,

Hallie Switzer and Emily Blakelock, as well as the bevy of volunteers who donate their time to the cause of free expression.

David Cozac's quick and efficient program expertise related to freedom of expression and exiled writers is a boon to all who come into contact with him. Caitlin Smith has worked long and hard on events and on developing fundraising strategies in the area of individual donors, among her many other tasks. She is the take-charge person at PEN Canada whom most callers and visitors encounter when first coming into contact with the office. I am truly grateful to both for making this organization a force to be reckoned with.

Special thanks to Philip Adams for his friendly and compassionate coordination of the Readers & Writers project; he is missed by many exiled writers who are relieved to know he is now working with one of our partner organisations, Diaspora Dialogues.

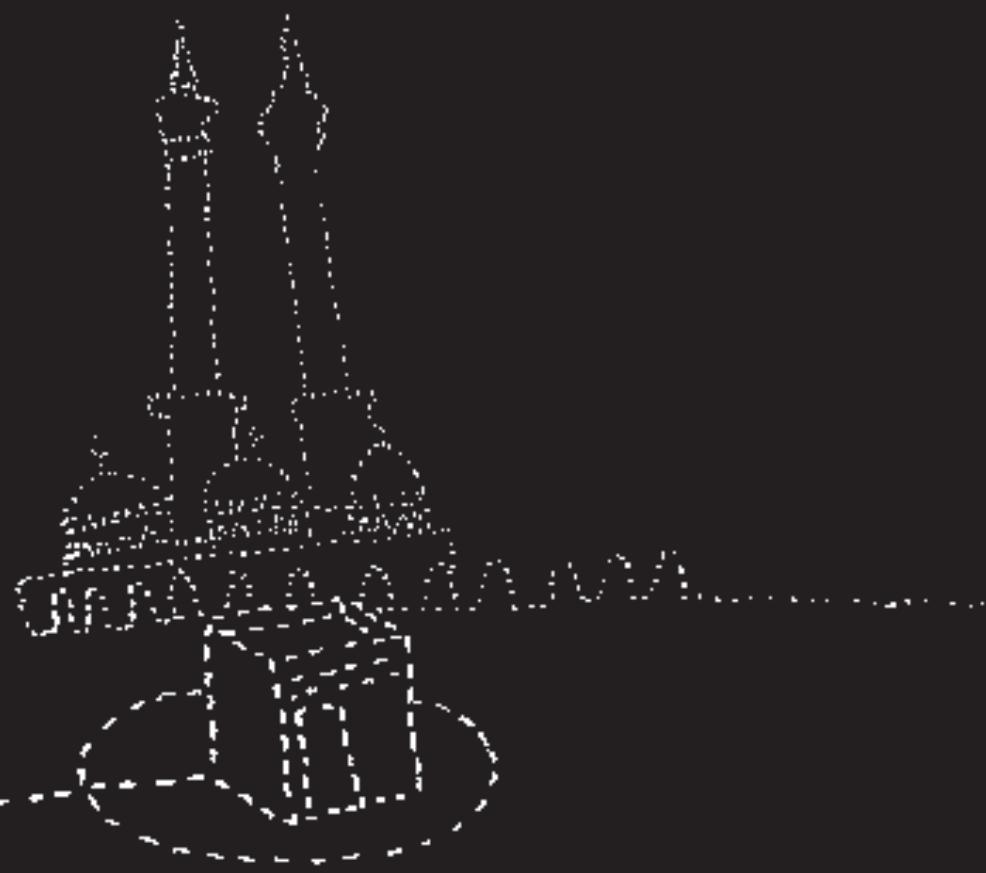
On behalf of PEN Canada, I also wish to express my deep gratitude to president Constance Rooke, our volunteer board of directors, and to all members, patrons and corporate sponsors listed in this annual report. With your commitment, PEN Canada remains an important advocate for civil rights in this country and internationally, and an essential voice for the voiceless.

GENOCIDE



In 20th century history, one event that is laden with controversy is the killing of approximately 1.5 million Armenians by Turkey between 1915 and 1923. Armenians say that their people were killed as the Ottoman Empire forced them from eastern Turkey during those years – and that this was a deliberate campaign of genocide. For their part, Turkish officials insist the death count is inflated and that Armenians were killed or displaced as the Ottoman Empire tried to secure its border with Russia and stop attacks by Armenian militants. However, Canada, along with about 25 other nations, including France, Russia and Argentina, says that those Armenians were victims of genocide. Many academics who specialise in such matters concur. **But, woe to the Turk who alludes to the events as “genocide.”** Witness Orhan Pamuk, one of Turkey’s most well known authors. He faced up to three years in prison for a comment published in a Swiss newspaper early in 2005. Pamuk was quoted as saying, “...a million Armenians were killed in these lands and nobody but me dares to talk about it.” Turkey does not dispute the deaths, but rejects labelling them “genocide.” Debate on these issues has been stifled by stringent laws, some leading to lengthy lawsuits, fines and, in some cases, prison terms. Legal proceedings against Pamuk were later dropped; however, the legislation that makes utterances of “genocide” or references to it as an insult to Turkish identity are still on the books.

PILGRIMAGE



## UZBEKISTAN

The word connotes spirituality, faith, journey. The pilgrim is reverent and normally seeks enlightenment on his or her path. However, in Uzbekistan, a country in which close to 90 percent of the population is muslim, “pilgrimage” means trouble. The rulers of the Central Asian country have limited religious expression ever since gaining independence in 1991. Unregistered religious activity is illegal and virtually all religious communities are subject to strict government control – especially Islam. The regime in Uzbekistan sees “radical Islam” as a threat to national security. Therefore, harsh measures against “fundamentalists” also end up persecuting any Muslim who publicly expresses his or her belief. It was in this stifling atmosphere that young journalist Sobirjon Yakubov committed the transgression of writing about his experience on the haj – the pilgrimage to Mecca. In a country where the state limits even the number of Muslims who can go on the haj, reporting on it for public consumption went too far. The 22-year-old correspondent for the newspaper *Hurriyat* was arrested in April 2005 on charges that he had violated an article of the Uzbek Criminal Code by attempting to “overthrow the constitutional order.” Yakubov’s colleagues at the newspaper said he was a moderate Muslim who had written on Islamic issues. His article about the haj, titled “A Journey to the Land of Dreams,” led to his being jailed and facing 20 years in prison. In April 2006, on account of lack of evidence, Yakubov was released, but remains in the land of nightmares.

## Writers in Prison Committee

*By Alan Cumyn*

A year of WiPC work emerges like a patchwork quilt of releases and imprisonments, victories and setbacks, hopeful signs and frustrating reversals. Issues flare up and die down, but always central are the writers we have chosen to speak for and care about, our Honorary Members.

A year ago, in Iran, Akbar Ganji was out of the notorious Evin prison on medical leave. Held for five years for writing about the serial murders of writers and intellectuals, he was suffering from back and respiratory problems. Evin prison was the site of the 2003 death by torture of Canadian photojournalist Zahra Kazemi. Now Ganji's leave had expired and he was overdue to return to Evin. He swore he would not.

Nasser Zarafshan, another PEN Canada Honorary Member, was also still in prison, and on a hunger strike. He vowed he would not relent until freed.

In Saudi Arabia, new Honorary Members Ali Al-Domaini and Matrouk Al-Faleh were in prison for criticizing the slow pace of reforms and trying to set up a human rights group. Their minder, Carleton History professor Debbie Gorham, began a significant letter-writing campaign on their behalf.

A year ago PEN Canada was also working hard behind the scenes with Canadian government officials to convince the Chinese government to release journalist Jiang Weiping, whose wife and daughter were now living in Toronto. Jiang, in his sixth year of prison, had written about a corrupt official who had gambled away a fortune in public money. Since Jiang's incarceration, communications with his family had been infrequent and his health too was suffering.

By August 2005 the new Saudi Honorary Members were freed in an amnesty proclaimed by the king. Jiang Weiping had also been allowed to meet with his brother and sister-in-law in prison, and there was hope for an early release. But Akbar Ganji was back in Evin prison on a protracted hunger strike.

Also in the works last summer was an intriguing report by China specialist Charles Burton on the China-Canada Bilateral Human Rights Dialogue. Along with other NGOs, PEN Canada has long been active in pressing the Canadian government to improve these yearly in camera meetings, which had never been formally reviewed. Nine years ago the dialogue replaced Canada's efforts to pressure China on human rights through the increasingly dysfunctional United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR). But many China watchers felt the dialogue was largely ineffective given China's regularly deplorable record on Internet censorship, arrests of journalists and dissidents, its politically tainted justice system, and continued ill-treatment of prisoners, among many other issues. Finally, after years of pressure, Foreign Affairs agreed to commission Burton, a well-respected academic, to study the dialogue.

In the fall of 2005 the WiPC was concerned with the upcoming trial of Orhan Pamuk, a Turkish writer of international stature facing up to four years in prison for "insulting Turkishness." His crime? He had commented in an interview about mass killings of Armenians and Kurds in Turkish history. These particular charges made international headlines, but similar ones were pending against many other Turkish writers.

The fall brought two notable positive turns in our WiPC work. After significant international pressure, Nguyễn Hồng Quang was released from a forced labour camp in Vietnam. The dissident writer, lawyer and head of the banned Vietnamese Mennonite Church had already served two years on vague charges. And in Mexico, where PEN Canada has been working with Mexican groups to campaign against impunity for murders of journalists, the Mexican government finally announced a number of legal initiatives to protect journalists, including naming a special prosecutor and pledging better police training.

The new year brought a wave of good news. Jiang Weiping was released six months early, and the case against Pamuk was dismissed. Yet Jiang's requests for a visa to visit his family in Canada were denied, and in Turkey many other less prominent writers continued to face charges related to the "insult" laws.

In February Yu Donghue, one of PEN Canada's longest-serving Honorary Members, was released from a Chinese jail. He had been held since 1989 after throwing a paint-filled egg at a huge portrait of Mao during the Tiananmen protests. Sadly, after years of mistreatment, Yu was in a state of mental collapse that had been long rumoured but now was confirmed.

February brought as well the incendiary controversy over the Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammed. The issue cut across a sensitive divide in the International PEN charter which, on the one hand, decries cen-

sorship, but on the other requires members to "use what influence they have in favour of good understanding and mutual respect between nations; [to] pledge themselves to do their utmost to dispel race, class and national hatreds, and to champion the ideal of one humanity living in peace in one world." PEN Canada's President Constance Rooke issued a press release which, while defending the right to publish the cartoons, also asked for restraint on all sides so that space for critical debate might be created.

Also in February PEN Canada's WiPC participated in the annual Foreign Affairs human rights consultations in advance of the UNCHR meetings in Geneva. But this year much of the talk revolved around reform of the UN body itself. Canada was very active in bringing about needed change, and the result is a revamped UN Human Rights Council which hopefully will avoid the political manoeuvrings and failings of the old body.

In March 2006 in Istanbul Executive Director Isobel Harry and Programs Coordinator David Cozac met with representatives of International PEN and the 50-odd PEN centres which have WiPCs. PEN Canada is one of the few centres with salaried staff dedicated to WiPC work, and our long history of involvement, personified in Isobel Harry, gives us a key leadership role in the group. The conference gave members a chance to discuss and debate many issues, but also to meet released Honorary Members. A "case" becomes something else altogether when a warm hand presses yours, when someone looks in your eyes and thanks you for writing, for speaking up, for caring.

After months of hunger strike, Akbar Ganji was finally freed in March 2006. Yet Nasser Zarafshan remained in prison, and May brought more troubling news: Canadian-Iranian professor Ramin Jahanbegloo had been arrested and is now being held in Evin prison. A director at the Cultural Research Bureau in Tehran, he has been a moderate voice. His arrest brings the spectre of the horrible fate of Kazemi, and the ill-treatment of Ganji, Zarafshan and so many others.

So the work goes on.

Most recently Professor Burton has finally released his long-awaited report on the dialogue with China. His findings? Our pleas for human rights improvement are dying within the middle levels of the Chinese government bureaucracy. There's no evidence that anyone in a decision-making role hears them. The dialogues have mostly been an empty diplomatic show.

But, partly due to PEN Canada's pressure, we now have a credible public report that says so. In so many ways, the work is just beginning.

## National Affairs

*By Christopher Waddell*

How the state continues to restrict public access to some words and wants new powers to learn what words are being used in private conversations dominated much of the work of the National Affairs Committee over the past year.

On the one hand the courts in Canada continue to impose publication bans while police and justice officials try to use the court system to force journalists and authors to reveal the identity of confidential sources. On the other, those same authorities also want expanded powers to undercut individual privacy by intercepting emails more easily and obtaining information about an individual's web browsing habits from Internet service providers that is now denied without a court order.

Finally it remains a sad truth that hardly a year goes by without attempts somewhere in Canada to ban or restrict access to books and this year unfortunately was no exception.

Last summer the National Affairs Committee submitted a brief and then appeared in October before Ontario's Panel on Justice and the Media, created by the province's Attorney General to improve understanding and relations between the media and Ontario's justice system.

Our submission concentrated on four issues:

- Arguing against publication bans imposed by the courts but if they are used, they should be imposed only after argument in open court following sufficient notice to the media that allows for submissions in opposition to a ban; introduced for a fixed time only; and imposed on a selective rather than blanket basis.
- Stressing the need for timely prosecutions to prevent situations where those with the financial resources can drag out a case in the courts to bankrupt an author or journalist.
- Condemning the recent increase in attempts by authorities to obtain the confidential sources of journalists and authors; and
- Suggesting a regular educational interchange between authors and journalists and judges to improve the knowledge each has about the other's activities.

The panel is still working on its report with no date yet set either for submitting it to the Attorney General or for releasing it to the public.

Another issue being closely monitored by the National Affairs Committee is the possibility of legislation to place new limits on privacy by giving police more powers to intercept e-mail and other forms of electronic communications. The previous Liberal government introduced Bill C-74 in the House of Commons on November 15, 2005 to do just that. It would also have given police greater powers to gather information more easily from Internet service providers about their customers. Fortunately, that bill died when the Liberals were defeated in Parliament days later. The Conservative government has not yet indicated whether it will introduce the same or a similar bill into the new Parliament but PEN Canada will be watching this issue closely as a member of the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group in Ottawa.

In the coming months there will also be parliamentary hearings on the Conservative government's proposed changes to the Access to Information Act. New restrictions on access to information contained in the Federal Accountability Act are worrisome and PEN Canada will express its concerns to the committee when hearings are held on the bill.

On a different legislative front, our efforts in conjunction with The Writers' Union of Canada to change provisions in the child pornography legislation, Bill C-2, in the last Parliament unfortunately did not succeed. Members of Parliament did not accept our submission that the bill should not remove the defence of artistic merit from previous legislation. Under C-2 passed last year, writers and artists will have to demonstrate their work has "legitimate purpose" if faced with child pornography charges. It remains to be seen how courts will interpret this new provision.

Two other national issues generated considerable debate and action among executive members during the past year. One was how Canadians should respond to demands that Danish cartoons about Mohammed be banned from publication while also preserving freedom of expression.

As our February 10 news release on the Danish cartoon controversy stated: "PEN Canada often defends speech with which many of us strongly disagree. If we did not, the principle of free speech would be meaningless. Healthy debate has been the way of our society, within the bounds of decency and the law. PEN Canada supports the right of a free press to publish these cartoons, but also believes that a wise consideration of the principle of 'voluntary restraint' would have led to better decisions. Finally we urge all

Canadians as they enter into dialogue on this matter to support two great principles on which our democracy depends: the right to free speech and respect for the dignity and beliefs of others. Both must be upheld."

The other issue was the campaign by the Canadian Jewish Congress to have access to the book *Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak* restricted in school libraries and declared ineligible and not "age-appropriate" for the Ontario Library Association's Silver Birch Award. That was followed by the Toronto District School Board's decision to remove *Three Wishes* from school library shelves.

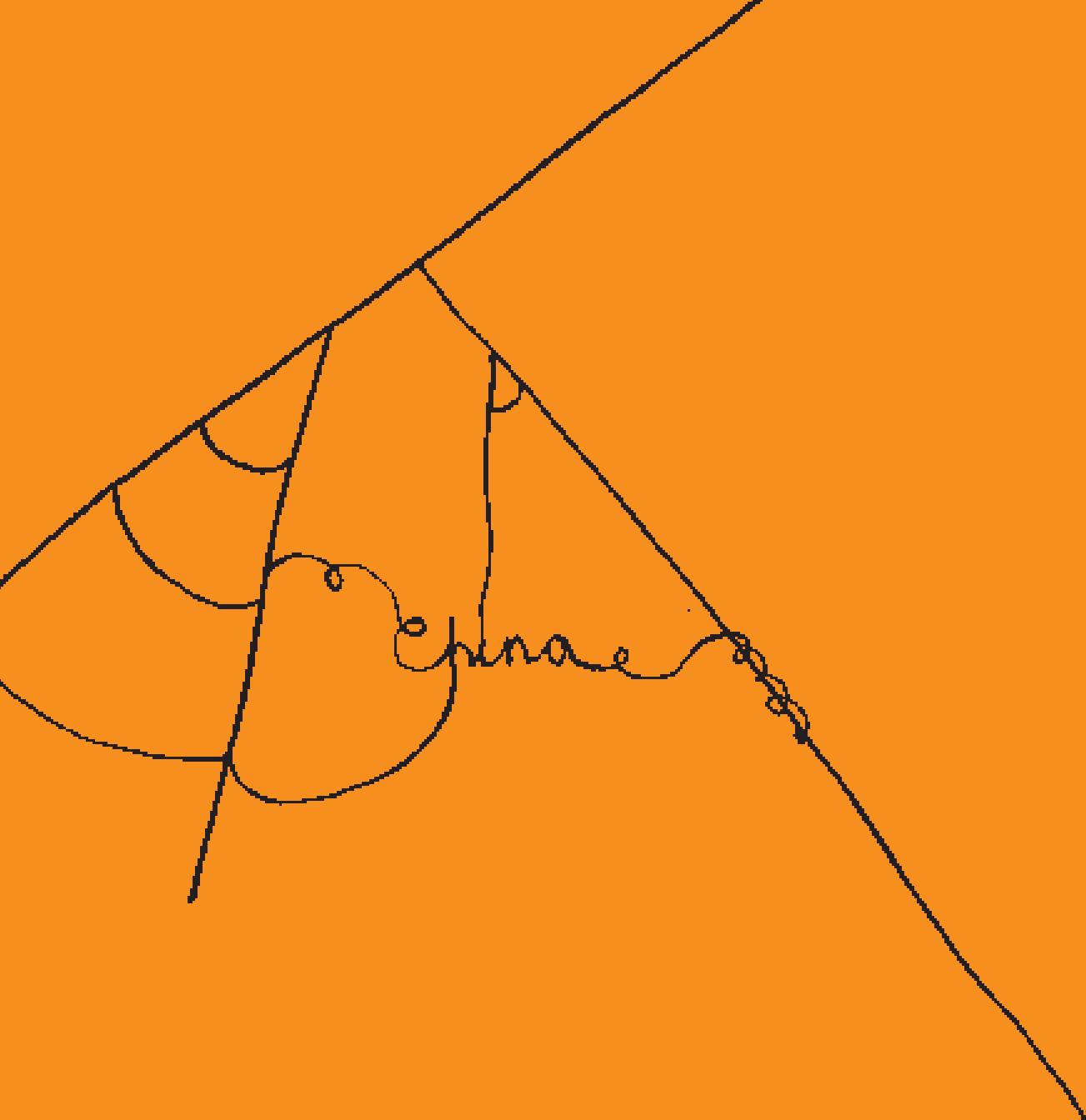
PEN Canada also joined a broad coalition of groups that included The Writers' Union, the Book and Periodical Council, the Association of Canadian Publishers and the Coalition for School Libraries in holding a news conference to defend freedom of expression and call on the Toronto Board to return *Three Wishes* to school library shelves.

Our call achieved only partial success as the Board staff will review the process by which it determines material is "sensitive" and report in September. The decision of the chair of the school board to rule out of order an effort to raise questions at a school board meeting about banning the book was deeply disturbing as it demonstrated the lack of understanding on the part of many school trustees of the implications of their decision to remove *Three Wishes* from book shelves.

The fact that restrictions could be placed on public access to books in schools demonstrates the continuing need for PEN Canada to be vigilant and to speak out loudly when freedom of expression is threatened at home as well as around the world.

TIANANMENN  
SQUARE





The problem with listing a bad word or phrase that would get you into trouble in China is choice: which one is most representative? There is an embarrassment of riches, so to speak. Indeed, *The Washington Post* in February 2006 obtained a list of 236 keywords that alert the Chinese censors to potentially suspicious activity on the Internet. In any event, “human rights” appears to encompass a lot of the issues that Beijing regards as sensitive. Be it independence in Tibet or Xianjiang, Taiwan, the Falun Gong, state corruption or the June 4, 1989, massacre in Tiananmen Square, the over-arching matter concerns human rights and freedom for the individual. The rapid growth of Internet use in mainland China has resulted in the state becoming ever-more vigilant in monitoring it. Countless Web sites are banned, while one cannot get very far in carrying out discussions on-line of what Beijing deems as a taboo topic. How does one know if what one is writing or posting on the Net prohibited? Why, none other than the cute cartoon icons “jingjing” and “chacha.” Not so cute is what those names mean: jing cha is “police” in Mandarin. These virtual male and female Internet police officers appear on the user’s screen any time that s/he is surfing a sensitive topic. In other words: we’re watching you. In a bizarre twist, the jingjing and chacha characters each have a Web log (“blog”), while users can interact with them live to find out more about the state-imposed restrictions on their freedom of expression rights.

## Minders

*As part of PEN Canada's work to effect the release from prison of its Honorary Members, some of our membership serves as volunteer minders. The member selects one or more of the cases of an imprisoned writer. The minder then takes on the role of monitoring developments in the situation of the Honorary Member. The key roles that the minders play are to write regular letters of support to the imprisoned writer and/or to family members and letters of appeal to the relevant government officials. If they have the time and the inclination, minders are also welcome to draft petitions; highlight the case through op-ed pieces in the local newspaper; alert other media to the situation of the Honorary Member; or make presentations to local schools or community organizations. The work that minders do proves invaluable to that done by PEN Canada.*

*If you are interested in becoming a minder, please contact us at 416.703.8448 x24, or [wipc@pencanada.ca](mailto:wipc@pencanada.ca).*

### Honorary Member

Zahra Kazemi CANADA/IRAN  
Hada INNER MONGOLIA, CHINA  
Gao Qinrong CHINA  
Shi Tao CHINA  
Tohti Tunyaz XINJIANG, CHINA  
Zheng Yichun CHINA  
Ven. Ngawang Phulchung TIBET, CHINA  
Nine Eritrea journalists  
Amir Abbas Fakhravar IRAN  
Nasser Zarafshan IRAN  
Ko Ang Tun / U Myo Htun BURMA  
Aung San Suu Kyi BURMA  
U Win Tin BURMA  
Asiye Uzel Zeybek TURKEY  
Ragip Zarakolu TURKEY  
Rakhim Esenov TURKMENISTAN  
Muhammad Bekzhon UZBEKISTAN  
Yusif Ruzimuradov UZBEKISTAN  
Mamadali Makhmudov UZBEKISTAN  
Le Dinh Nhan VIETNAM  
Pham Hong Son VIETNAM

### Minder

Douglas Donegani  
Jane Kay  
Elaine Slater  
Charles Perroud  
Carol Devine  
Kevin Tierney  
Mark Frutkin  
Lisa Pasold  
Mary Burns  
Kevin McLoughlin  
Liza Potvin  
Ron Graham  
Dave Glaze  
Ziggy Pattinson  
Ziggy Pattinson  
Celia Ferrier  
Patrick Woodcock  
Patrick Woodcock  
Clayton George Bailey  
Chi Dang  
Susan Glickman





The famous American writer and philosopher a bad word? If you live in Burma, he is. Just ask Win Tin. The 76-year old writer was arrested in 1989 amid a crackdown by the military against pro-democracy activists. Win Tin was accused of being a “leftist” politician, advocating a campaign of civil disobedience and quoting from the works of Thoreau. Win Tin was one of several intellectuals with the National League for Democracy (NLD) who, during a June 1989 meeting, quoted passages on civil disobedience from Thoreau. Everyone present, including NLD head Aung San Suu Kyi, suggested that they be adapted to the pro-democracy struggle in Burma. Win Tin himself was selected by Suu Kyi to prepare a discussion on the defiance of authority for a future NLD meeting. At that gathering, Win Tin presented the slogan, “defy all orders and authority disapproved by the majority,” after Thoreau. The NLD adopted it and had it published in its literature. NLD members then began to practise what they preached. A military crackdown was inevitable. Virtually the entire NLD executive was arrested. Suu Kyi remains under house arrest, while Win Tin continues to serve a cumulative prison term of twenty years. The writer has battled failing health and horrible conditions behind bars. Win Tin has even been subject on two occasions to a psychologically damaging mock release. No doubt that Henry David Thoreau – whose overnight experience in prison in 1846 inspired his famous essay on civil disobedience – would be appropriately appalled at how his name and ideas have resulted in the unjust jailing of another writer following in his spirit.

ARTICLE

# 19

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.*

WOMEN

MEN'S

RIGHTS



After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, a new era was heralded for Afghanistan. Human rights and the rule of law would be enshrined. Afghans took steps to reflect this apparently positive change in circumstances, including writer Ali Mohaqiq Nasab, who launched the monthly *Haqq-e-Zan* (“*Women’s Rights*”). Yet, Nasab was to find out that promoting human rights was a punishable offence. In October 2005, a Kabul court sentenced him to two years in prison at the end of a summary trial on blasphemy charges. *Haqq-e-Zan* had re-printed articles by Iranian scholar Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri, which local clerics deemed “un-Islamic,” that questioned strict interpretations of Islamic law such as amputating the hands of thieves as punishment for stealing, publicly stoning convicted adulterers and the fact that a woman’s court testimony is considered only half as valid as a man’s. The Supreme Court’s religious council, the Dar-ul-Ifta, issued a verdict against Nasab in September after ruling that the articles contradicted Koranic verses. A religious advisor to Afghan President Hamid Karzai also filed a complaint about the magazine. Such was the tide of voices against Nasab that even the country’s Media Commission, which under Afghan law is supposed to try press offences, announced that it would no longer recognize him as a magazine editor. The two-year sentence against Nasab was reduced to six months, with the blasphemy charges dropped. Still, the editor must surely be contemplating the absurd, Orwellian irony of his situation: free to publish under the banner “*Women’s Rights*,” but not to discuss them.

## Honorary Members

### CANADA

**Zahra Kazemi**, a Canadian photojournalist of Iranian descent, was murdered in Tehran in July 2003 after being imprisoned and tortured for taking photographs outside Evin prison. Kazemi's body was buried in Shiraz, southern Iran, on July 22, 2003, contrary to the wishes of her son, Stéphan Hachemi. Calls for the body to be exhumed and repatriated to Canada have fallen on deaf ears. To date, no one in Iran has been brought to justice for Kazemi's murder. A show trial in 2004 resulted in the acquittal of an Iranian security agent. The government of Iran also publicly stated that her death was an accident, despite overwhelming evidence that the journalist was severely tortured, including sexually assaulted, while in custody.

### CHINA AND AUTONOMOUS REGIONS

**Hada** was one of the founders, in 1992, of the Southern Mongolian Democratic Alliance (SMDA) for the peaceful promotion of human rights and Mongolian culture. The Chinese authorities reportedly viewed the SMDA as a threat to "national unity." Hada and the SMDA published an underground journal, *The Voice of Southern Mongolia*, and he also finished a book, *The Way Out for the Southern Mongols*. In October 1989, he opened the Mongolian Academic Bookstore in Hohhot. The bookstore was closed down immediately after his arrest in 1995, and all its books, research papers and other properties were confiscated as criminal utilities and evidence. Hada is imprisoned in the 4th Prison of Inner Mongolia, in city of Chi Feng (Ulaan-Hada). He is reportedly prohibited from talking to other inmates, allowed only limited contact with his family and denied proper medical care.

**Gao Qinrong** worked for the Xinhua state news agency as a reporter. He was arrested on December 4, 1998, and sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment on May 4 after

a closed, one-day trial on April 28, 1999. The charges are believed to have included bribery, embezzlement and pimping. It is thought that the charges against him were trumped-up and that the real reason for his arrest was a report that he published alleging corruption in an irrigation project set up in drought-plagued Yuncheng, Shanxi Province. Gao's imprisonment was kept secret until March 14, 2000, when CNN International aired a story about his case. Qinrong is currently being held in Jinzhong Prison, Qi County, Shanxi Province.

**Tohti Tunyaz** (Muzart) is an ethnic Uighur historian and writer from the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, China. On March 10, 1999, he was sentenced to eleven years' imprisonment and two years' deprivation of political rights. Tunyaz had reportedly been watched by security police for some time prior to his arrest, and is said to have been arrested with allegedly sensitive material. Some reports claim that the content of this material was on ethnic relations published for classified circles only; others that it was material published for the general public. Tunyaz is said to have been formally charged with "inciting national disunity" and "stealing state secrets for foreign persons," charges that were amended by the High People's Court of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. He has a wife and children in Japan. One son was able to visit his father in prison in 2002.

Officials from the Changsha security bureau detained journalist, poet and dissident writer **Shi Tao** near his home on November 24, 2004. This came several months after he e-mailed notes detailing the propaganda ministry's instructions to the media about coverage of the anniversary of the crackdown at Tiananmen Square. On December 14, authorities issued a formal arrest order, charging Shi with "leaking state secrets." On April 27, 2005, the Changsha Intermediate People's Court found Shi guilty and sentenced him to a 10-year prison term. The court verdict reveals that

Yahoo! Holdings (Hong Kong) Ltd provided Chinese police with detailed information that enabled them to link Shi's personal email account and the specific message containing the alleged "state secret" to the IP address of his computer. Shi Tao is a member of the Independent Chinese PEN Centre. In late December 2005, it was reported that Shi Tao was suffering from respiratory problems and skin inflammation as a result of forced labour.

**Zheng Yichun**, a Professor of English, was arrested by the security services in Yingkou, Liaoning Province, on December 3, 2004, and charged with "suspicion of inciting subversion of state power." The Prosecutor's Office cited 63 of Zheng's articles as evidence for the charges against him. They were among 300 articles that the police confiscated from his home. Zheng, a prolific Internet writer and poet, has published several books on a number of topics, including political reform, increased capitalism in China and an end to the practice of imprisoning writers. Zheng's trial on April 26, 2005, lasted less than three hours. Zheng was convicted on July 21, 2005, of "incitement to subversion of state power" for his critical writings, many of which were posted on-line on overseas Web sites. He was sentenced to seven years in prison on September 20 by the Yingkou Intermediate People's Court, Liaoning Province. Zheng is being held in the No.1 Prison in Panjin City, Liaoning Province. His health has reportedly already taken a turn for the worse since his arrest.

**Li Zhi** is an Internet writer and financial official in the Dazhou municipal government, Sichuan Province. He was arrested on August 8, 2003, by Sichuan Province State Security Police after posting an essay on an overseas Web site that accused Sichuan officials of corruption. Police seized his computer. Li was officially charged on September 3 with "conspiracy to subvert state power" for having contact with foreign-based dissidents. The Dazhou Intermediate People's

Court sentenced Li, aged 33, to eight years in prison on December 11. Observers said the punishment was particularly harsh for a cyber-dissident. Li is imprisoned in Sichuan Province and is said to be suffering from a worsening Hepatitis B condition.

The group of Buddhist monks in the Drepung Monastery, known as the Tibetan Freedom Organization, produced pro-democracy leaflets, a Tibetan translation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the first Tibetan political manifesto calling for a democratic system based on Buddhist tradition. On November 30, 1989, they were convicted and sentenced from 17 to 19 years in prison for various charges of espionage and "counterrevolutionary" organizing. It is thought that the long sentences given to the members of the group were intended as a warning to other Tibetan "separatists." Of the ten monks who were imprisoned, only one remains incarcerated: **Ven Ngawang Phulchung**. Phulchung is serving a 19-year prison term. His sentence is due to expire on April 15, 2008.

#### ERITREA

**Yusuf Mohamed Ali, Mattewos Habteab, Dawit Habtemichael, Medhanie Haile, Emanuel Asrat, Temesken Ghebreyesus, Dawit Isaac, Fesshaye Yohannes and Said Abdulkader** were arrested in the days following September 23, 2001. They have yet to be sentenced. The detentions came in the wake of the closing down of all eight independent newspapers by the authorities on September 18, 2001 (these include the weeklies *Meqaleh*, *Setit*, *Tsigenay*, *Zemen*, *Wintana* and *Admas*). The authorities have either denied that a clampdown has taken place, claiming instead that the journalists have merely been sent to carry out their national service; or that the closures and mass arrests were necessary for the sake of national unity; or were effected because of the failure of the newspapers to comply with laws covering

media licences. However, a more likely explanation is that the crackdown was an attempt to stamp out criticism of the Eritrean government's treatment of students and political dissenters, and its prosecution of the war against Ethiopia.

#### IRAN

Iranian intelligence services abducted journalist and film critic **Siamak Pourzand** on November 24, 2001. On March 6, 2002, Iranian judicial authorities started closed and unannounced proceedings against Pourzand. He was sentenced to eleven years in prison on April 13, 2002, on charges of "undermining state security through his links with monarchists and counterrevolutionaries." It is widely believed that the charges against him are based on "confessions" that are thought to have been exacted under duress. Pourzand was re-arrested on March 30, 2003, after being conditionally released in December 2002. The targeting of Pourzand is thought to be connected to his position as manager of the *Majmue-ye Farrhangi-ye Honari-ye Tehran*, a cultural centre for writers, artists and intellectuals, or to his articles critical of the Islamic regime. As of April 2005, Pourzand has been on conditional medical leave from prison. Every two months, he is required to submit to the medical office at Evin a medical report on his condition.

A distinguished member of the Iranian Writers' Association (Kanoon), the Committee on Serial Killings in Iran and the Iranian Bar Association, **Nasser Zarafshan** is the legal representative of two of the families of Iranian writers assassinated in November 1998 in what came to be known in Iran as the "serial murders" case. Zarafshan was arrested on August 7, 2002, and later charged with "disseminating State secrets and the possession of firearms and alcohol." He was convicted in a secret trial by a military court and sentenced to five years' imprisonment and fifty lashes. The action against Zarafshan is thought to be both in retribution for his

criticism of the official investigation carried out into the serial murders and also as a means of silencing others who seek the truth behind the killings. Zarafshan is held in Evin Prison and is reportedly in poor health. He suffers from stones in both kidneys, which were reportedly contracted because of the poor water quality at Evin.

#### BURMA/MYANMAR

The leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD) and writer was taken into "protective custody" following violent clashes between opposition and pro-government supporters on May 30, 2003. **Aung San Suu Kyi** sustained non-life threatening injuries during the demonstration. Aung San Suu Kyi has been under house arrest at her lake-side home in Rangoon/Yangon since then. Most of the NLD's offices have been shut down and the government has ordered the indefinite closure of the country's universities and colleges. Aung San Suu Kyi was held under de facto house arrest for six years from July 1989 to July 1995, and again from September 2000 to May 2002. Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in October 1991.

Student activist and writer **Ko Aung Tun** was arrested in February 1998 and reportedly sentenced in March 1998 to 13 years' imprisonment for writing a book on the history of the student movement in Myanmar. According to official reports, Ko Aung Tun was charged under the 1962 Printers and Publishers Registration Act, the Unlawful Association Act and the Emergency Provisions Act. At a March 1, 1998 press conference, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) claimed that Aung Tun was arrested for "collaborating with terrorist groups." Ko Aung Tun is detained at Insein Prison.

The prominent journalist, writer and Central Executive Committee member of the National League for Democracy (NLD) was arrested on July 4, 1989, during a nation-wide

crackdown by the authorities on the opposition. **Win Tin**, now aged 76, was publicly accused of guiding and influencing her. He was also accused of being a “leftist” politician who urged the NLD to adopt a civil disobedience campaign against martial law, quoting the works of philosopher Henry David Thoreau and the example of Mahatma Gandhi. Despite the political allegations against him, he was formally charged with a criminal offence and sentenced to three years’ hard labour in October 1989. In June 1992, just a few months before completion of his three-year sentence, Win Tin was sentenced to an additional 10 years’ imprisonment under Section 5(j) of the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act. Win Tin’s third prison sentence was imposed on March 28, 1996, bringing the total years of incarceration to 20. Since the start of 2006, he has no longer been able to receive visits from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Win Tin is entitled to a twice-monthly visit from a relative for 20 to 25 minutes.

#### TURKEY

**Asiye Güzel Zeybek** was arrested in February 1997 during a demonstration protesting alleged links between Mafia groups and the government. Zeybek was the editor-in-chief of *Atilim*, a radical newspaper, and was accused under Article 168 of the Penal Code of connections with the now-banned Marxist-Leninist Communist Party and specifically of running and distributing the MLCP journal *Işçinin Yolu* (*Worker’s Path*). The initial trial proceedings against Zeybek were commenced in February 2001, four years after her arrest. A series of hearings were since held. At the conclusion of a lengthy trial, Zeybek was released on June 5, 2002, after spending five years and four months in prison. On October 16, 2002, Zeybek was sentenced to the heavy sentence of 12 and a half years’ imprisonment for belonging to the MLCP. She currently lives in Sweden.

**Ragip Zarakolu’s** staunch belief in freedom of expression, his vocal campaign against book bannings and his persistence in publishing works that violate Turkey’s repressive censorship laws have resulted in a series of indictments dating back to the early 1970s. The Belge Publishing House, which Zarakolu owns, has operated under a barrage of charges brought by Turkish authorities. He is currently on trial for an article published in the journal *Ozgur Politka* on March 8, 2003. The article was entitled “Sana Ne” (“Of No Interest”) and its lambasting of what Zarakolu describes as Turkey’s “aggressive and derogatory language used against the Kurdish region in Iraq” has seen the publisher once again fall foul of Article 312. Convictions under Article 312 carry sentences of between six months and two years.

#### TURKMENISTAN

**Rakhim Esenov**, a respected novelist, historian and freelance correspondent for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), remains under investigation in Turkmenistan on the charge of “inciting social, national and religious hatred using the mass media” with his novel *Ventsenosny Skitalets* (*The Crowned Wanderer*). If convicted, he faces up to four years’ imprisonment. Esenov, 78, was questioned by members of the Turkmen Ministry of National Security (MNB) upon his return to Turkmenistan on February 23, 2004, following medical treatment abroad. Already in poor health following a heart attack only two days prior to his arrest, Esenov suffered a stroke during interrogation and was taken to hospital. Esenov was initially accused of smuggling 800 copies of his banned novel – which had been seized by customs officials in January 2004 – into Turkmenistan from Russia.

#### UZBEKISTAN

**Muhammad Bekzhon** was deported from Ukraine in March 1999 on accusation of involvement in a series of explosions

in Tashkent. Several others were arrested in connection with these events, including writer Mamadali Makhmudov. It is thought that Bekzhon’s arrest is linked to his association with the exiled opposition leader Muhammed Salih (his brother) and that the charges are linked to his work on *Erk*, the opposition party’s newspaper, although it has been banned since 1994. Bekzhon was sentenced to 15 years in prison in March 1999. His sentence is set to expire in March 2014. He is held in Kagan Prison in Bukhara. There are concerns that Bekzhon has been tortured.

Journalist and opposition politician **Yusif Ruzimuradov** was deported from Ukraine in March 1999 on accusation of involvement in a series of explosions in Tashkent. Several others were arrested in connection with these events. It is thought that Ruzimuradov’s arrest is linked to his association with the exiled opposition leader Muhammed Salih and that the charges are linked to his work on *Erk*, the opposition party’s newspaper (where Ruzimuradov was editor-in-chief), although it has been banned since 1994. Some of the defendants testified to having been tortured under interrogation including beatings, electric shock and threat of rape of female family members. Ruzimuradov was sentenced to eight years in prison in March 1999, on charges of attempting to “overturn the government by force”, “membership of an illegal organisation” and “slander” of the Uzbek President. His sentence is set to expire in March 2008. He is held in Navoi Prison.

**Mamadali Makhmudov** is a well-known poet in Uzbekistan. He was taken into custody in February 1999 and taken to an unknown location. He “reappeared” in May and was charged with threatening the president and constitutional order. These charges appear to be based on the evidence that he possessed copies of the banned *Erk* newspaper, voice of the banned Erk political party, and because of his

association with writer, Muhammad Salih, Erk’s exiled leader. Makhmudov was sentenced to 14 years in prison. Makhmudov received a Hellman/Hammett grant in 2000, given to recognize the courage of writers around the world who have been targets of political persecution and are in financial need.

#### VIETNAM

**Le Dinh Nhan**, the Acting Head of the Institute for the Propagation of the Dharma, Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV), was arrested on December 29, 1994, for publishing an open letter criticizing government policy on freedom of speech and religious expression. He was held under “temple arrest” until around mid-1995, when he was transferred to an isolated area in Quangai. Since 2003, he has been at Nguyen Thieu Monastery, Binh Fonh Province, held incommunicado with security guards reportedly permanently stationed at the gates. Le Dinh Nhan has been the author of renowned books on Buddhism and Oriental philosophy for the last thirty years. He is said to be one of the most respected religious leaders of Vietnamese Buddhists.

**Pham Hong Son**, a doctor and the head of a pharmaceutical firm, has been in prison since March 27, 2002 for translating and posting an article on the Internet headlined, “What is democracy?,” which he downloaded from the American embassy in Vietnam’s Web site. He had previously posted several pro-democracy and human rights articles on Vietnamese discussion forums. On June 18, 2003, Pham was sentenced to 13 years in prison for “espionage” and to three years’ house arrest under the supervision of the Hanoi People’s Court. On August 26, his sentence was reduced on appeal to five years in prison and three years’ house arrest. In late July 2005, it was reported that Pham Hong Son had been coughing up blood.





Eritrea

The African country of Eritrea gained independence from neighbouring Ethiopia in 1993. After centuries of occupation and rule by others – including an Italian and British presence between the late 19th and first half of the 20th century – Eritrea could finally claim to be free. Would that the same could be said of the country’s media. Since 2001, a “free press” in Eritrea no longer exists. That phrase and what it represents are taboo within the country’s borders. The government cracked down on all opposition in the shadow of the terror attacks of September 11, resulting in the mass jailing of opposition politicians along with writers, journalists and other individuals who clamoured for freedom. Just as during the height of the insular Soviet Union and the current “Hermit Kingdom” of North Korea, the ability for the outside world to glean information about conditions within Eritrea is exceedingly difficult. Indeed, while we know of at least 12 independent journalists who were detained during the 2001 crackdown – nine of whom are currently Honorary Members of PEN Canada – it is impossible to confirm their whereabouts, let alone their fate. Information available to the international community is conflicting and unverifiable. Rumours are: a) that the journalists were merely sent to carry out their national military service; b) that the actions were necessary for the sake of national unity; or c) the newspapers were penalized for failure to comply with laws covering media licences. When the government lifts its ban of the free press, the world will know the truth. Let us hope that, by then, it won’t be too late for these imprisoned journalists.

## Honorary Members

*Released*

**UZBEKISTAN** On April 3, a court in the capital, Tashkent, freed **Sobirjon Yakubov**, a reporter for the state-run weekly newspaper *Hurriyat* (Liberty), for lack of evidence against him. Yakubov was detained on April 11, 2005, on suspicion of religious extremism and participation in an illegal Islamic organization, and criminally charged three days later with “undermining the constitutional order of Uzbekistan.” Yakubov’s colleagues said the charges against him were politicized and he was being punished for writing about Islam and advocating democratic reforms, according to press reports.

**IRAN** On March 17, journalist **Akbar Ganji** was released from Evin prison. He was granted a conditional release in advance of the Iranian New Year, which began on March 21. It was highly unlikely that Ganji would be returned to jail. He is said to be in weak health and very thin because of a series of hunger strikes in 2005; however, he is expected to recover fully. Ganji spent nearly six years behind bars.

**CHINA** Journalist **Yu Dongyue** was released from prison on February 22 after having spent nearly 17 years behind bars. In 1989, Yu was sentenced to 20 years in jail following the Tiananmen Square massacre. He had been one of the individuals who defaced the portrait of Mao Zedong that overlooks the square. Because of repeated torture and appalling conditions in prison, Yu Dongyue is now clinically insane.

**TURKEY** Charges against Honorary Member **Orhan Pamuk** were dropped in January 2006. The renowned author had been charged with denigrating Turkish identity over comments that he made to a Swiss newspaper in 2005. Pamuk faced up to three years in prison if convicted. Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, under which Pamuk was tried, threatens the freedom of expression rights of many other Turkish writers and editors.

**AFGHANISTAN** Editor **Ali Mohaqiq Nasab** was released from prison in December after having served just over two months of his sentence. The rest of his six-month term was suspended. He had been given a two-year prison term – later reduced on appeal to six months – for articles published in his magazine *Haqiq-e-Zan* (*Women’s Rights*) that were deemed to be “un-Islamic” and blasphemous.

**SIERRA LEONE** Journalist **Paul Kamara** was released from prison on November 29 after having spent 14 months behind bars. The Freetown Appeal Court overturned his October 4, 2004, conviction by Judge Bankole Rachid, who had sentenced him to two concurrent 24-month sentences for “seditious defamation.” Kamara left the court smiling, accompanied by his wife and daughter, the staff of his newspaper, other journalists and his lawyer.

**VIETNAM** Honorary Member **Nguyễn Hồng Quang** was released from a forced labour camp on August 31, apparently due to international pressure, two days before Vietnam’s national holiday on September 2. The dissident writer, lawyer and General Secretary of the banned Vietnamese Mennonite Church was arrested on June 8, 2004, for allegedly “instigating others to obstruct persons carrying out official duties,” after police searched his house in Ho Chi Minh City.

**SAUDI ARABIA** Newly-crowned King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia issued a royal pardon on August 8 releasing **Ali Al-Domaini**, **Matrouq Al-Faleh** and others. They were to be released from jail shortly. Al-Domaini and Al-Faleh were among thirteen leading intellectuals and peaceful reform advocates who were arrested in March of 2004 for expressing dissatisfaction with the composition of a new government human rights organization and announcing their intentions to set up an independent human rights monitor. In May, Al-Domaini was sentenced to nine years in prison, while Al-Faleh received a six-year prison term. They were convicted of “stirring up sedition and disobeying the ruler.”

## Exiles

Since the inception of PEN Canada's Writers in Exile Network, we have secured residencies for many writers in exile.

Below is a list of past and current placements and partners in the Writers in Exile Network.

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Benjamín Santamaría Ochoa, Mexico  
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### Owen Sound, City of

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*Creative non-fiction course*  
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*Creative non-fiction course*

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*Indefinite use of writing space at office*  
Nooshin Salari, Iran  
*Indefinite use of writing space at office*

### Toronto Writers' Centre

Petronila Cleto (Philippines)  
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Emma Beltrán, Mexico  
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Tesfaye Kumsa, Ethiopia  
*Master of Arts, Communications;  
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*Writer in Residence, Winters College*

\* The Author Residencies program of the Canada Council for the Arts graciously provided funding for these two placements.

# DEMOCRACY





While it is highly regarded in countries that practise it, “democracy” is considered a “bad word” in many parts of the world, perhaps no more so than in Tibet. A large, forbidding land that was thought to be the inspiration for the fabled Shangri-la, since the invasion by China in 1950, Tibet has become a dystopian and forcibly occupied region. In 1989, several Buddhist monks from the Drepung Monastery in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa decided to speak out against Chinese repression. They sought what Beijing denies them to this day: democracy. They produced leaflets in favour of democratic institutions and published a Tibetan translation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The monks also drafted a political manifesto that called for a democratic system based on Buddhist traditions. This was too much for the Chinese authorities. Police rounded up the participating monks and brought trumped-up charges of belonging to a “counter-revolutionary group” and of producing “reactionary literature.” After a short show-trial, the monks were all given lengthy prison terms, the longest being 19 years. They were sent to the notorious Drapchi Prison in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa. One of the monks, Kelsang Thutop, died in prison in 1996 of an undisclosed illness; it is thought that he died of complications resulting from ill-treatment and malnutrition while in jail. To date, all but one of the monks have been freed. The reputed leader of the group, Ven. Ngawang Phulchung, remains behind bars in reportedly terrible conditions. He is an Honorary Member of PEN Canada.

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