



PEN CANADA
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FREE
EXPRESSION
MATTERS

Giving Tuesday 2022

Why I support PEN

I support PEN because I believe in the power of words and the freedom of expression.

Words are the most peaceful and the most powerful weapon against ignorance, intolerance, indifference and oppression. A fiction writer draws us into a world or a way of living different from our own but equally valid. A journalist shows the world as it is, hence challenging voluntary blindness and willful deafness.

As such, they both pose a threat to those in positions of political and religious power, their sense of entitlement to a monopoly on truth, and the order they impose on everyone else. As I am writing these lines, Niloofar Hamed, the reporter who broke the news on Mahsa Amini, is held in the notorious Evin Prison in Tehran. The current uprising in Iran was sparked by a photo of the 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in a coma while she was in custody of the Morality Police.

“You are not alone,” PEN’s actions say to Niloofar Hamed and others who risk their safety, freedom, and life to keep us informed about the world around us. By helping imprisoned and exiled writers and journalists, PEN brings hope to their families and friends and encourages others to follow in their path of defending freedom of expression.

That is why I support PEN.



Maria Saba

Iran-born Writer, Storyteller and Arts Educator, and the 2020 PEN Canada-Humber College Writers-in-Exile Scholar.