



February 25, 2025

Mr. Fady Dagher, Montreal Police Chief

Mme. Valérie Plante, Mayor of Montreal

Sent via email

Dear Police Chief Dagher and Mme. Mayor Plante —

PEN Canada was founded in 1983. We are a nonpartisan organization of writers and readers. One of our central roles is to defend the right to freedom of expression. We raise our voices against domestic and international violations of freedom of expression.

Today, we write to raise PEN's voice about the arrest of author and journalist, Mr. Yves Engler. It is our understanding that Mr. Engler has been arrested and was detained for his pro-Palestinian writing. It is not clear to us whether Mr. Engler has been charged or what charges he is facing. But if it is true that he has indeed been arrested and detained and is either facing charges or has already been charged, the actions taken by the Montreal Police raise serious questions about impartiality and respect for the fundamental rights to freedom of expression. PEN Canada takes no position on the substance of Mr. Engler's comments, only on his right to make them.

Mr. Engler has been an outspoken critic of Israel and the actions that state has taken against Palestinians in Gaza. In so doing he is acting well within his rights of freedom of expression. PEN Canada takes the position that it is not a crime to take a pro-Palestinian stance in public. It is not a crime to object to those who support Israel's actions or to describe them as fascists. It is not a crime to criticize or condemn the state of Israel. It is not a crime to write that Israel's actions in Gaza are genocide. To object, in print, to others who support Israel's actions is not a

**FREE
EXPRESSION
MATTERS**

PEN Canada
401 Richmond Street West
Suite 244
Toronto, Ontario
M5V 3A8

queries@pencanada.ca
416.703.8448

threat to any individual or to the police. It is not harassment to object to actions taken by the Montreal police or to write about them. It is not a crime to ask other citizens of Canada to object to actions taken by the Montreal police. Every citizen of Canada is entitled to write their opinions and to speak out in public. Freedom of expression is a fundamental right, whether one agrees with the content of such statements, or whether one disagrees with the content.

If the Montreal police are arresting and charging journalists and writers for speaking out against Israel or taking a pro-Palestinian stance, such actions will have a chilling effect on all writers and journalists. Such actions undermine the freedom of expression which is a fundamental right of Canadians and is protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

PEN Canada raises its voice to support all writers and journalists exercising their right to freedom of expression, including Mr. Engler.

Respectfully,



Brendan de Caires

Executive Director, PEN Canada

**FREE
EXPRESSION
MATTERS**

PEN Canada
401 Richmond Street West
Suite 244
Toronto, Ontario
M5V 3A8

queries@pencanada.ca
416.703.8448
