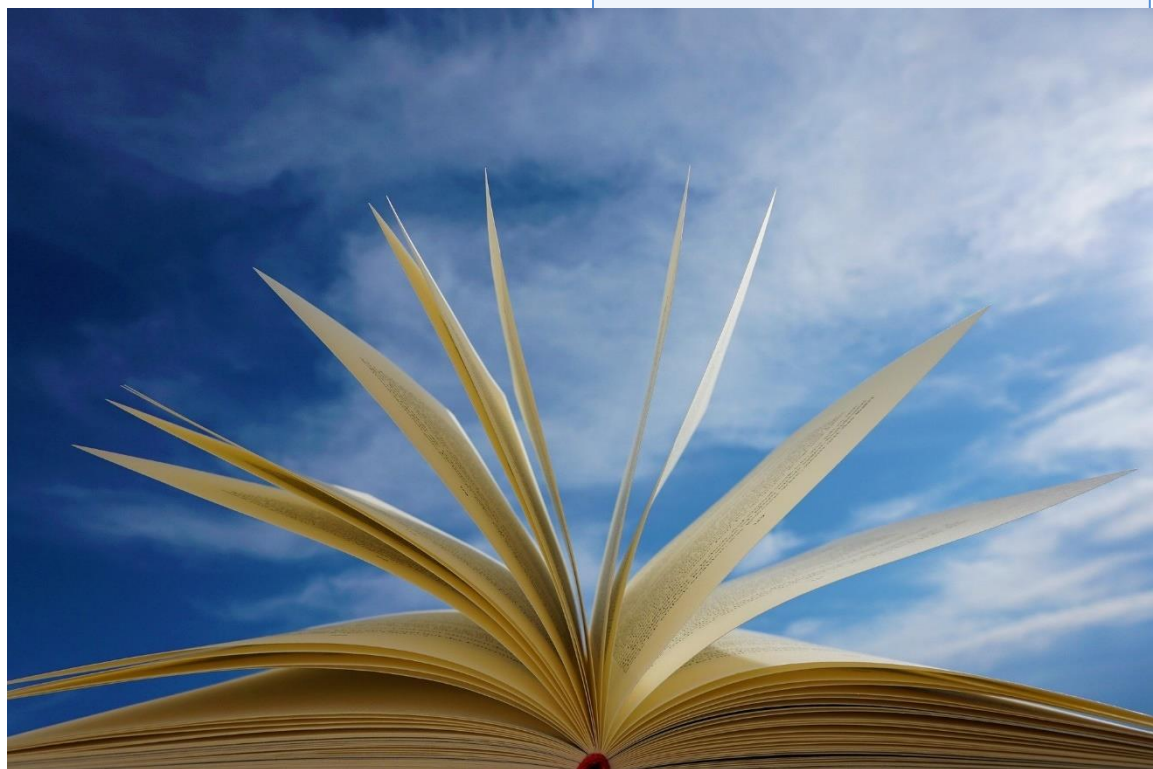
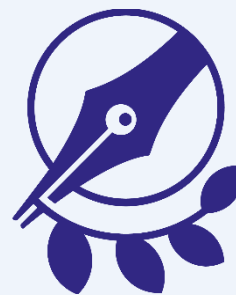


# Writers for Peace Committee

Newsletter

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December 2022

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# EDITORIAL

## COMMITMENTS FOR THE FUTURE, BUT THE FUTURE IS TODAY!

Dear friends in literature and in peace,

It is a great pleasure for me to address you as Chair of the Writers for Peace Committee of PEN International. At the recent Uppsala Congress my election was ratified almost unanimously. This is a tremendous incentive to work with PEN Centres from all over the world.

Now, I desire to share with all of you the essential content of the speech I delivered on that occasion: “In this moment, I am invaded by a feeling of joy and commitment. From now on we will look forward in order to face the great challenges that humanity has in front of it in these difficult times of open war, confrontation, mistrust, exacerbation of nationalisms, of underdevelopment, poverty or hunger in almost every corner of the world. “The first commitment that I can promise you and I will do it, is to open the doors and windows of the Committee to the participation of all PEN Centres in the daily life of the Committee. Centres belong to the WfPC just for the mere fact of being members of PEN International. “My second commitment is to put the Committee in line with the principles of the PEN Charter following the rules and regulations widely known and accepted by all Centres when we joined PEN International. “In this framework my third commitment is to work as closer as possible with the other 3 standing Committees (Women Writers, Writers in Prison and Linguistic Rights). “My fourth commitment is to structure a leadership where all regions will be present: Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, the Americas and the Caribbean, and Near East and Northern Africa. “My fifth commitment is to open the road to the creation of as many “country action groups” as required to be more deeply involved in the reality faced by countries where peace is at stake. “And last but not least, my sixth commitment is to work focusing on priorities in each region where PEN Centres are located.”

Today I can tell you that we have made promising progress on many of these commitments:

- a) We sent a letter to all PEN centers inviting them to participate in the daily life of the Writers for Peace Committee;
- b) at the Uppsala Congress the statute of the Committee was abolished and we are now being governed by the Constitution of PEN International, as well as its rules and regulations;
- c) We are working with the Writers in Prison Committee (WiPC) with the aim of holding our respective Committee meetings one after the other in May next year. The WiPC will meet in Zagreb, Croatia between 12 and 14 May and our committee will meet in Bled, Slovenia, between 15 and 17 May;
- d) an Advisory Board is already functioning in which Centers from all regions of the world participate and which has its doors open to other Centers that wish to collaborate; and

e) we are beginning to work on the definition of priorities for all the regions in accordance with a strategic plan that we must present to PEN International.

As you can see the Committee of Writers for Peace is very active and aware of the tremendous task that lies ahead. I want to share with you the concluding remarks of my speech in Uppsala that I quoted before:

“Let me end this intervention by making a reference to the myth of Sisyphus as a metaphor. Sisyphus, in Greek mythology, made the gods angry because of his extraordinary cunning. As punishment, he was sentenced to lose his sight and perpetually push a giant rock up to the top of a mountain, only for it to roll back down into the valley, from where he had to pick it up and push it back to the top and so on for eternity. The metaphor means that we as writers never have to give up the utopia of making peace prevail throughout the world, knowing that we will have to start our task again and again. That is why I call on all of you to never lose idealism, commitment, and the will of giving our lives in the construction of a better world.”

Germán Rojas

Chair of the Writers for Peace Committee



PEN International **Writers for Peace Committee**  
**Comité des écrivains et écrivaines pour la paix** du PEN International  
**Comité de Escritores y Escritoras por la Paz** de PEN internacional  
Odbor **pisateljev in pisateljic za mir**

# STATEMENT ON DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAN

By the Writers for Peace Committee

Freedom of expression has been under severe pressure in Iran for many years but in recent months it has been all but erased by the government's increasingly murderous agents of oppression: the Morality Police and Revolutionary Guards. These forces have been given the power not only to imprison but to torture and kill. The actions are aimed at all sections of society but are being targeted with exceptional harshness against women, young people, Kurds and religious minorities.

As in Russia, China and a depressing number of other states, the regime's authority rests only on its ability to keep its citizens in a state of continuous fear. There is no excuse for the actions of police and the other militarised organs of state in countering dissent and opposition with violence. Enforcing conformity to its own intrusive social agenda is not a legitimate function of a state. Like its ally, Russia, Iran's government is at serious risk of isolating itself from the international community totally and harming its own people even more.

The Writers for Peace Committee of PEN International calls for:

- the Government of Iran to refrain from further violence and intimidation, particularly against women and children
- the Revolutionary Guard as well as the Morality Police to be disbanded and their members banned from all security duties in future employment
- the removal of all reporting restrictions on coverage of political and social unrest
- the removal of all regulations on dress and personal appearance for women
- the reinstatement of women's free role in public life, equal with men
- the observance of the letter and spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to be reinstated in all aspects of the relationship between the Government of Iran and its citizens
- the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) should monitor the actions of the Iranian State and denounce all forms of repression against freedom of expression and other forms of human rights violations
- The UN OHCHR should take action so that the UN Human Rights Committee, through the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on violations of human rights in Iran, can ensure the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in that country.
- the reinstatement of the ability to express dissent legally - whether religious, cultural or political - without risking intimidation or punishment.

While it is encouraging that Iran's Morality Police Force is apparently being disbanded, repression has not lessened, nor is there a sign that those within the Iran security forces will face justice for their violence. Therefore, our calls for serious reform are unchanged.

4 December 2022

Addendum by the Advisory Board of the Writers for Peace Committee of PEN International:

To date there are no signs that the Morality Police Force have actually been disbanded in Iran. On the contrary, we note that the repression has intensified in that country, and we denounce in absolute terms the capital punishment of protestors in Iran.

15 December 2022

# THE WAR IN UKRAINE IS COLD

By Tanja Tuma (PEN Slovenia)

While most of the world enjoys the lights in the cities of joyful advent time, Ukraine is in the dark, and Ukrainians are freezing to death. Instead of cheesy Christmas songs, they listen to bombs and missile whistles around them. No matter which sanctions and what resolutions the world community signs and proclaims, the Russian president and his rogue army are determined to keep bombing the civil infrastructure, and killing innocent lives of so many people.

Targeting power plants and the water reservoir is a crime of war, doing it on the brink of winter is obnoxious barbarity. The whole of Ukraine became the besieged Sarajevo in the 1990s. How can we stop the tyrant whose heart turned into a cold stone? How can we support Russians to remove him from power and found a new society fostering peace? The stigma he's building for them will last for decades. The deep wounds of the war cannot heal easily.

I was so happy the other day when a friend from Ukraine, Iryna Starovoyt, member of PEN Ukraine and Advisory Board of Writers for Peace Committee, replied to my letter. I was relieved to see that she is safe. Then I opened the mailbox and read about how she has lived. Cold, dark, frightened. Her personal account says more than a thousand words. Read and think about what we can do. With her approval, I share her words.

"The last few days have been tiring. Shelling, missiles exploding nearby, no electricity, no heating around the Lviv region, same in Kyiv and in 16 other regions. About 12 million people were affected by the damage. Most dangerously, our 4 atomic power plants with 15 reactors all were stopped in emergency mode. They need not only restoration of initial electricity flow to reboot but also some time pause. They can be restarted no earlier than in 48 to 72 hours. These 4 atomic power plants generate more than half of Ukraine's electricity. And it is unpredictable whether they will smoothly survive more of such "stress tests".

Living through this war since February is like inhabiting two universes: one resembling your previous life and another one inflicted by this big war. Which is more real and true? It's hard to say.

One hour you are presenting at the online conference or international reading, next hour you teach the students on campus (we set up electricity generators at my University's main building and the two dormitories, so electricity is there, the internet is there, the mobile connection is mainly absent, but it is relatively warm inside, about +16 C and there is coffee and snacks), and then at about 4:30 pm you are trying to get home and you have to hold to the walls and move very slowly to the bus stop because it's slippery out there and there is absolutely no light.

(The closest experience to losing one's sight). Nonetheless, the city's public transportation goes on as buses replace trams and trolleys, because ordinary buses need no electricity to run. And the home is in the same darkness and cold with some remnants of civilization. (We have a gas stove and oven in our apartment, so at least some simple warm food could be cooked and served by candlelight).

Fragile is our technological way to cope with the winter in the big cities in the face of sadistic war - at the moment the power grid is damaged at many power stations and at once, the basics of everyday life get brutally interrupted.

The shirtless bully on his pony knows that well and applies his knowledge.

I am definitely happy and privileged to work. In stark contrast to reality, it is important to at least try living your normal life for a couple of hours a day. We all need some comfort from inflicted brutality.”



# WRITING FOR PEACE

By Vera Botterbusch (PEN Germany)

For me, writing means to commit myself to all that is human, to mankind everywhere in the world, to the living conditions, to questions of humanity, to the society in which I live, to worldwide questions concerning freedom and peace. To protest against injustice and inhumanity.

For those very reasons Daphne Caruana Galizia was killed 5 years ago. For her human commitment, for these interventions against corruption, lies, for freedom, for peace - I wrote this poem:

In memory of Daphne Caruana Galizia

Why did we kill you  
because we saw you  
because we hate you  
humanity and the rest!

Daphne, your life was a great sacrifice  
for the discovery of crimes and vices  
to find the truth and keep justice!

But we must fight for freedom  
nevertheless, we must believe in fraternity!

The root of my commitment are my own experiences, my observations, my feelings and reflections. It is the desire to enter into a fruitful dialogue with others, through my dreams and my hopes and to protest against injustice and inhumanity.

An interior and public dialogue by the desire to leave the usual, the comfort-able. A desire which can't always be satisfied, but which is dominated by the need to survive in difficult and dangerous living conditions. To self-create a universe in order to get out of an undesirable and unbearable reality. Having the possibility to travel to unknown countries through the imagination, to participate in the realization of a positive life, of deep humanity.

Hope in dialogue with others is an absolute necessity against despair. There is only hope to avoid the crash, the violence. There is only the need for practical and mental help. It takes the



attempt and the effort to understand, to make people understand, to renew, to inspire, to learn, to evolve, to unfold and develop, to be curious in common sense, to have an open mind and an open heart: discovering the unknown, not sticking to the usual. To open up to protests, to fight for an evolved society in the sense of “liberty, equality, fraternity”.

In this context of searching for peace, the dialogue is necessarily linked to the sign of compassion and expression, to the conviction and the wish to survive in difficult and dangerous living conditions. To live in this world without suffering. To dream of a future in peace with societies all over the world that respect their citizens and do not only think about profit, power and the submission of others. The dialogue is nourished by the spirit of “Hope dies last”.

*Photo is the property of  
<https://daphnecaruanagalizia.com/>*

**To write for peace is to write for humanity.**



## MONTENEGRIN PEN CENTER

By Milan Marković (PEN Montenegro)

From 1997 to 2020, Montenegro developed as a multi-ethnic democracy, with slow but still visible steps in the direction of strengthening civil society, integration of minorities, protection of human rights and freedom of speech and expression, etc. Those strides resulted in NATO membership in 2017 and the status of the region's leading candidate in the process of joining the European Union.

At the beginning of 2020, during the first wave of the global pandemic, the Serbian Orthodox Church launched mass protests in Montenegro, due to the alleged violation of their religious rights. However, these were politically motivated protests whose goal was the reconfiguration of Montenegro's internal and external priorities, that is, the deviation of the national Euro-Atlantic course towards the open influence of Russia and Serbia. Under the pressure of those protests, there was a change of government in the 2020 elections. The newly formed government was under the dominant influence of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which is supported by numerous examples of brutal persecution based on national criteria in public administration and the state system, as well as in the report of the European Parliament from March 2022, in which the Serbian Orthodox Church was recognized as an instrument of Russia's malignant influence on the Western Balkans.

At this moment, pro-Russian and pro-Serbian political forces are trying to overthrow the Montenegrin legal order by violating the constitution and blocking the state system at all levels. Writers, journalists and intellectuals who are not afraid to be critical of Greater Serbia's plans and Russian influences in the country are constantly targeted by these authorities. Some of them, such as members of the Montenegrin PEN Center, writers Andrej Nikolaidis and Milorad Popović, are exposed to threats and insults directly from the Prime Minister and the parties in power, which further fuels hate speech in the public and internet space.

Academic and research institutions profiled for the study of the Montenegrin language and culture are also under attack. For example, during 2021, the Faculty of Montenegrin Language and Literature suffered from financial blockades by the authorities, as well as constant threats of cancellation

We are witnessing the project of political reorientation of Montenegro, which was publicly presented in the middle of 2020 by the Serbian historian Aleksandar Raković, who is close to the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić. The goal of this project is the assimilation of ethnic Montenegrins and the transformation of Montenegro into a Serbian colony, that is, an outpost of Russian political and economic influence on the Adriatic.

Western partners supported the changes two years ago, not realizing that this was the beginning of Montenegro's surrender to Russia's sphere of interest. That is why it is necessary to strengthen pro-Western alliances, in order to jointly suppress the malignant Serbian and Russian influence that is responsible for the current authoritarian practices in Montenegro.

# THE WORLD CANNOT AFFORD TO HAVE ANOTHER WAR IN TAIWAN STRAIT

By Tienchi Martin-Liao (Independent Chinese PEN)

China claims Taiwan is part of its own territory and has been putting pressure on the democratic island to accept its rule. Taiwan has lived with the threat of invasion by the People's Republic of China for decades. On the 20th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party on 16.—23.10. 2022, Xi Jinping has consolidated his power and became the leader of the country for the third term. Xi said at the closing ceremony, that China will not rule out military intervention in Taiwan when two scenarios happened: 1. Foreign forces get involved in the Taiwan issue. 2. when Taiwan declares its independence.

Since Nancy Pelosi, the speaker of the US House of Representatives, visited Taiwan in August this year, other politicians from all over the world followed her step and visited Taiwan to show their political sympathy and economic interest. After all, Taiwan's electronic company TSMC is the leading manufacturer of the semiconductor and delivers about 60% of the chips to industrial countries. Most of the countries have diplomatic relations with China and accept the "one China Policy". No one wants to annoy China, but business is business. However, China regards all these kinds of official visits to Taiwan as a provocation. Ever since August China's military aggression against Taiwan has escalated. There are dozens or even over hundred military airplanes and frigates circulating around the island daily.

After Russia's invasion to Ukraine, we have reasons to worry that the same military conflicts could break out at the Taiwan Strait. China would attack Taiwan and destroy the democratic republic along with its prosperous social and economic system.

In recent years, China has boosted its cognitive warfare. High tech, especially the application to the big data and artificial intelligence, has facilitated its military superiority. On the one hand China offers the "one country, two systems" principle to Taiwan, on the other hand, it continues its cyber-attacks to Taiwan. According to the Check Point software, in 2021, there are 2644 attacks per week from China to Taiwan's governmental institutes or private sectors. This is 5 times higher than in the US. Beijing also sends a huge amount of disinformation and misinformation to Taiwan to destabilize the domestic order. Chinese authorities said these are private hackers' mischief and has nothing to do with the official side.

Since the outbreak of Ukraine war in February, the world transport and delivery chains are broken. There is a global shortage of energy and food. The important dialogues about climate changes are interrupted. Millions of Ukraine people flee to other European countries. The inflation is out of control, the daily living becomes so expensive that many people could nearly afford it. The war in Europe has a devastating impact on the world order. We cannot afford to have another war in Asia.

Taiwan has increased its defense budget, boosted its military forces and extended compulsory military service beyond four months. Yet with its 23 million population, it could not withstand an initial Chinese assault. Taiwan may expect limited U.S. support as well as certain help from U.S. allies in the Indo-Pacific, yet the European countries would probably be less supportive, because their economies cannot break the ties with China after the disruption of Russian energy supplies.



Henry Kissinger said in May 2022: “It is important for the overall peace of the world for the United States and China to mitigate their adversarial relationship.” The two largest economies have to avoid direct confrontation. Kissinger believed that China was not informed of President Putin’s plan to invade Ukraine, and the war has created uncertainty in Russia’s alliance with China, leaving room for new negotiations in the near future. The war has divided the world into autocratic and democratic blocs. Russia is facing sanctions and isolations, there is the chance for the free world to reach out to China. Beijing shall not follow the wrong footsteps of Russia, it’s not worthwhile to share the same objectives with it. China should keep its significant trade with Taiwan, Europe and the US, and slowly accept the universal value of human rights, democracy, freedom and non-violence.

Tienchi Martin-Liao (Independent Chinese PEN Center), 25.11.2022

## BLED MEETING

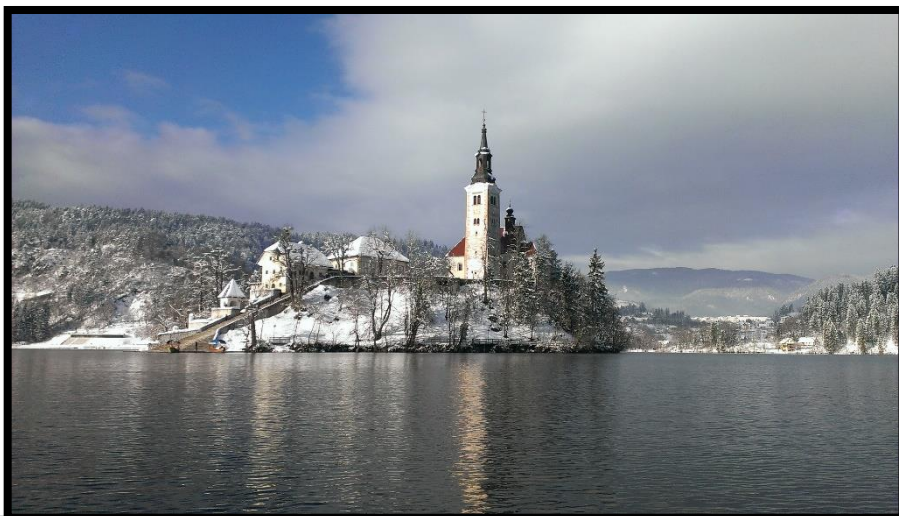
By Slovene PEN and WfPC

Slovene PEN centre together with Writers for Peace Committee will organise the 55th Bled meeting between 15 and 18 May 2023. Like the tradition requires, the meeting will take place in Hotel Park, overlooking the beautiful Bled Lake. More information will follow soon, but for now we can already share the two topics.

The topic of Slovene PEN will be **Literature is (which) truth and justice?** PEN international *Democracy of Imagination Manifesto* ends with a thought: "Literature crosses all real and imagined frontiers and is always in the realm of the universal." Yet, this is the starting point. Literature is often considered a mirror of society and the individual. In today's world of digital technology and social media when every profile and account is telling its own story, it seems that the object of literature is evasive, virtual, deformed, and even fake. How do media news and their perpetual states of emergency which make the companies earn more money affect writing and creating? How can literature return to the sources and essence of its being? Is it in the roar of digital cries possible to create literature that fosters justice and peace in the world and in every individual? Each war starts with the Man. Justice is not a verse, it is neither an essay nor a novel. Justice is action.

The second topic, the one chosen by the Writers for Peace Committee will be **Imagine all the people...** When Lennon wrote this song, the third astronaut mission landed on the Moon, the Vietnam war spread to Laos, and the people of Bangladesh were faced with genocide. Like today, there were wars and repression in nearly every corner of the world. The topic of the 4th Bled meeting that year was *Why do we write?* Maybe the answer lies in the word "imagine". Just imagine a world from Lennon's song could be made possible. What kind of social order would foster peace? Liberal? Capitalist? Controlled? Free? Would it be the same social order in every country and continent? *Imagine all the people and challenge the present world burning with wars with the prospects of peace.*

More information, all important details and the formal invitation will be available in the coming weeks.



## POETRY CORNER

By Bruno Mercier (PEN Suisse Romand), Judyth Hill (PEN San Miguel de Allende)

### BRUNO MERCIER - ORAGES CYRILLIQUES

Looking my brothers in the eyes,  
Belarusian poets in exile  
Ukrainian writers at the front  
Russian soldiers deserters ...

It will take a lot of courage  
To tear silences  
To flush out wild beasts  
Lend your voice to prisoners

It will take a lot of courage  
Lying at the bottom of the Dnieper  
To live love together  
Waking up in the same bed

Share despair naked  
Standing on an open balcony  
Stop blocking windows  
In the middle of a vodka storm.

For Yauhen Sapach and PEN Belarus in exile

© Bruno Mercier, Uppsala

29 september 2022

Translated by Sara K. Zver



## SYLVESTRE CLANCIER - TODAY ALL UKRAINIANS ARE MY FRIENDS

It was a few years ago that I discovered Ukraine.

I was welcomed there by two generous  
and fraternal poets and writers,

Volodymyr and Pavlo, one from Lviv,

the other from Kyiv. I also met

Andrei there, a fabulous novelist, made famous

for his humour and his penguin.

I loved discovering in their company

their beautiful country, so European and so alive.

I appreciated the joy and the good nature

of the students and the good humour of everyone

on the terraces of the cafés or in the bookstores

where I read a few poems.

And this despite the war in the Donbass

which the country started to be subjected to.

Every week, young conscripts

died there for their country.

Today I saw Volodymyr again, who had to go into exile

to offer his wife and his 10-year-old daughter another future,

I write to Pavlo, I read Andrei.

They are my first Ukrainian friends,

but since that terrible February 24,

all Ukrainians are my friends.

Sylvestre Clancier

Honorary President of the French PEN Club

Translated by Sara K. Zver



## LANA DERKAČ - PEACE WITHOUT A PASSPORT

Peace is a world traveller.

But often it easily packs its suitcases  
and leaves people and the ground.

Sometimes it leaves the biggest suitcase.

Like, it will come back. Years can even go by until  
it fulfils its promises which it gave, while leaving.

Most often it leaves us in silence. Or maybe  
it still speaks, only then we all speak  
a different language.

Peace is a nomad.

Crosses distances of space.

Somewhere they are encouraging it to a change of place,  
elsewhere, getting used to comfort

so it hard gets up from a harmony of sand or armchair.

War and peace unscrew and screw bolts of our duration  
so peace is also a mechanic.

And a poet.

Its harmonious movement of the tongue  
gives rhythm to the waves.

Setting the slope like a pillow for the animals,  
using the wind to massage the spines of the plants.

In the middle of a monsoon peace can write the laws of the sun  
inside of us. Vote on the clear regulations.

It passes the border without a passport,  
outsmarts the custom officers who can't stop it.

When it moves away,

it is like a thunder in a heaven's quarry.

But actually, someone has mined the peace.

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**For publication:** Tanja Tuma, president of PEN Slovenia, member of the Advisory Committee of the WfPC and member of the Board of PEN International

**Chair:** Germán Rojas, Chair of the WfPC (PEN Chile)

**Contributors:** Germán Rojas, Chair of the WfPC (PEN Chile)

Tanja Tuma, member of the Advisory Committee of the WfPC and member of the Board of PEN International (PEN Slovenia)

Vera Botterbusch (PEN Germany)

Milan Marković (PEN Montenegro)

Tienchi Martin-Liao (Chinese Independent PEN)

Bruno Mercier (PEN Suisse Romand)

Sylvestre Clancier (French PEN Club)

Lana Derkač (PEN Croatia)

**Translators:** Sara Katarina Zver

**Proofread by** Kim Echlin (PEN Canada)

**Editor and designer:** Sara Katarina Zver

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*PEN International Writers for Peace Committee does not necessarily endorse all the opinion expressed in the articles contained in this Newsletter, which are the sole responsibility of their authors.*

