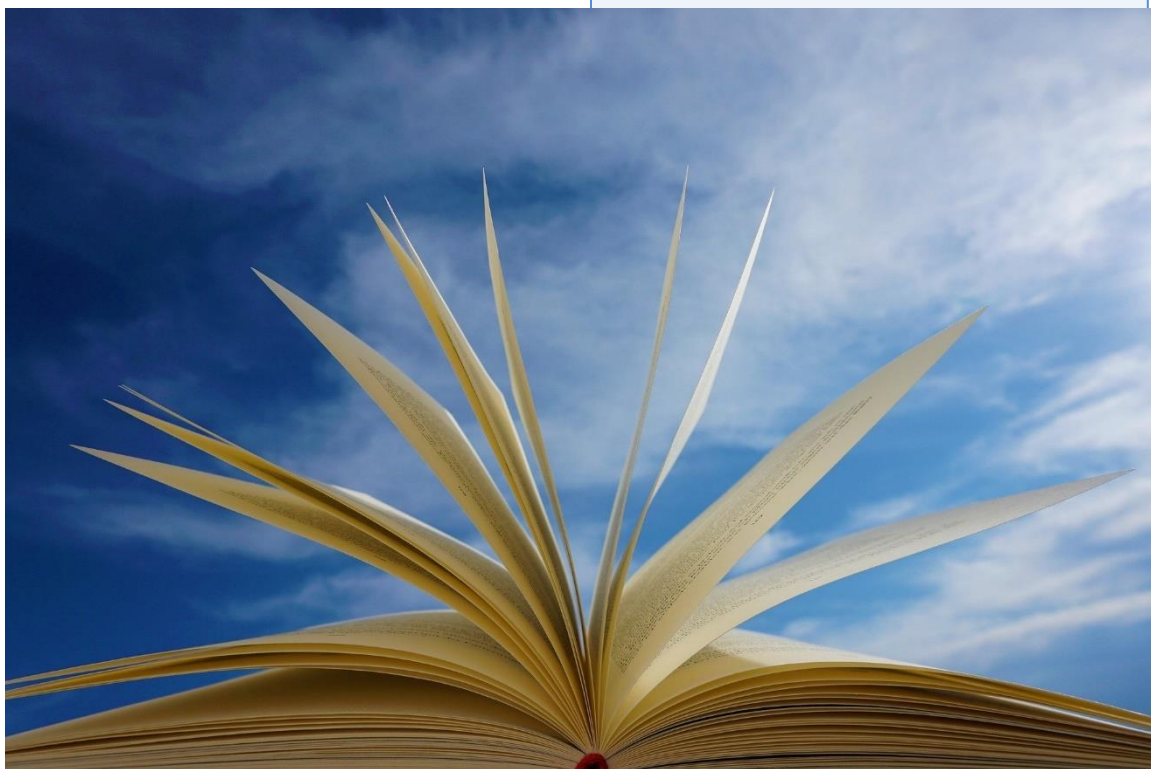
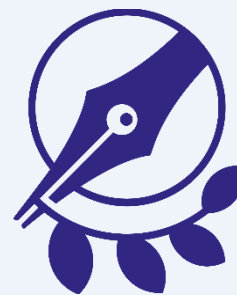


Writers for Peace Committee

Newsletter



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August 2022

EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

This is the fourth issue of the Writers for Peace Committee Newsletter – and we are announcing big changes within the Committee. First, we systematically added Spanish to the three official languages of the Committee: French, English, and Slovene, the latter due to generous funding of the Slovenian Book Agency for our work. Slovene speakers are very few in the global world, a bit more than two million and the Bled meeting is maybe the only occasion when you can hear it. We hope Spanish will open another window of opportunities to work with us. The winds of change also come to the organization of the work within the Committee. In collaboration with Chair-elect Germán Rojas, we invited members from different continents to form an Advisory Board, with the goal of better organizing our work.

We are opening the Committee to include more members from underrepresented regions and welcome your participation and ideas.

The newsletter follows the general assembly at Bled Slovenia, a hybrid meeting that showed how fragile we have emerged after two years of pandemics. Shutdowns, incapacity to meet in person, and exchange friendly words, debate passionately, and hug and kiss each other has added new stressors to coming together – and our meeting was marked by unpleasant events and hostilities unprecedented in PEN. I believe it is better this happened at Bled than in Uppsala, where all the world will be gathered for the first live congress since Manilla. The heavy atmosphere hurt many of us profoundly. We found ourselves wondering, What is the aim of PEN? What am I doing in this organization? In May, our President and the Board of PEN international reached a decision. Now, we have to work hard to heal the wounds and find hope for love and peace. Doing nothing is not an option. Dante teaches us, *The darkest place in hell is reserved for those who maintain their neutrality in times of moral crisis.*

Case Assange is still casting shame on all the (self-)proclaimed democratic world. Until he is free, all journalists are under stress and freedom of speech is under threat. Will an open letter to President Biden help resolve this?

Every day, Russian missiles are killing Ukrainian civilians, and in the shadow of the terrible war, all Belarussian and Russian opposition against the criminal regimes is crushed. While we are dealing with Putin's sick, belligerent ambitions, other tragedies are going on in Myanmar, Afghanistan, Yemen, Egypt, in the regions where Kurdish people live... the list is sadly long. Our mission is to give a voice to all who cannot speak or write openly.

What are humans? Are we monsters sitting on a pregnant wild boar taking selfies as Sándor Halmosi says in the poem you will find below? No. I love people too much to believe this. Let us rather be molecules releasing the spirit.

Tanja Tuma

Interim chair of the Writers for Peace committee and president of PEN Slovenia



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

PEACE IS RESPECT FOR OTHERS

Dear friends who make up the great family of PEN Centres throughout the world:

These are the first words I address to you in my capacity as President Elect of the Writers for Peace Committee of PEN International. They are words of affection, friendship, and hope.

They are words that I send you with love from Chile, a country so hidden it almost doesn't appear on the map. I send them with the south wind, charged with new strength and with the dream of dispelling the clouds. But I know that this is not enough - it is necessary for the winds and energies of all the regions of the world to come together to revitalize the daily work of our Committee.

I invite all of you to join our determination to work for democracy, truth, tolerance, the development of a culture of freedom, to do all we can for inclusion and the elimination of hate speech. In this way, among all of us, we will contribute to strengthening peace in the entire world.

Our Committee must have a universal presence. The lack of peace is a problem that has no territorial borders and is not limited to countries affected by invasions or internal wars. It is also important to focus on our priorities, and today our first priority is Ukraine.

We must actively participate in international forums where peace, equity, inclusion, ecology, overcoming poverty, and solving underdevelopment are discussed, in order to influence the global public debate.

From now on, our Committee is opening wide its doors to a greater participation by all PEN Centres.

Our fellow Centres will be kept better informed about what is being done; and all are invited to be more proactive so we all act as true peacebuilders. Our Committee must forge strong ties and work collaboratively with the other Committees of PEN International. Our internal and external communications shall be improved by making full use of new technologies and social networks. The excellent initiatives developed by the Committee in the past, especially through the work of Slovenian PEN Centre, will be kept and promoted in the future. We will use and promote the three official languages of PEN International: English, French, and Spanish; and most important of all, we will develop teamwork, participatory and open to everyone's contributions and new ideas. To ensure this all becomes our reality, I ask you to give your full support to Tanja Tuma, our interim president until the Uppsala Congress.

But let me share with you one final thought. We can do many things to give new energy to the Writers for Peace Committee, but everything will be in vain if we are not able to transform ourselves, from and within our inner world, to be better human beings. Change will only be possible if we start from an essential premise: peace is not only the absence of war; it is, first and foremost, respect for the other person.

Germán Rojas,

Chair Elect of the Peace Committee to be presented at the Congress of PEN International in Uppsala in September 2022 and president of PEN Chile



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FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE AND PEACE: JULIAN ASSANGE

By the Writers for Peace Committee

Joseph Biden

President of The United States of America

Dear Mr. President,

Active for 101 years of struggle for

Freedom of Expression and Peace,

as PEN International,

the leading worldwide organization of writers,

translators, journalists and editors,

we are hopeful when addressing you:

Is peace vital?

Is justice necessary for peace?

Is truth necessary for justice?

If the answer is Yes to all three,

then the reply to the fourth question is clear:

Should Julian Assange be free?

Benjamin Franklin would thank Julian Assange.

Let Truth be free

so that Justice can have a chance

leading to World Peace.

Written by Tarık Günersel on behalf of the Writers for Peace Committee

NOTES ON RUSSIAN WAR AGAINST UKRAINE

By Iryna Starovoyt (PEN Ukraine)

When an actual big war starts on the ground and in the air, it means that while diplomats, writers, educators, and other peacemakers may have tried – they did not do enough to prevent it.

The full-scale Russian aggression on Ukraine started overnight. From late on the night or the in the early morning of February 24 till today, our writers and readers, students and school children, have been enduring a ruthless and constant barrage of shelling and missiles. Our schools, libraries, and universities are being demolished every week. As of July 2022, about 20% of educational institutions are unsuitable for reopening. Our books, our children and adults, and our heritage are being physically erased from the surface of the earth by Russian citizens with Russian weapons and genocidal slogans that Ukrainians should not exist. And the families dare to teach those soldiers in their phone conversations how to rape and destroy us. “Russkiy mir” is destroying Ukraine and sending Ukrainians to filtration camps. Russians who actively or submissively support this war dream that Ukraine will cease to exist.

The loss of life in Ukraine, all the damage and extreme tragedy of the daily total war, devastated towns, and cities with no access to drinking water, gas, electricity, or first aid, destroyed harvests, the threat of famine, millions of shattered fates, millions of refugees heading West are broadcasted live by the world news and social media. This war may well be the best-documented war in human history, I am noticing with sadness and grief.

But there's something that news feeds don't get enough on the deeper level. This is blasphemy and sacrilege. Putin takes imperial pride in the extreme cruelty and outrage. He has escalated several times and will go on. He will not stop until he is stopped. Now it is high time for many countries around the globe to clean up their houses, quit deluding themselves, and admit that engagement with dictatorships, supposedly separating business from politics, is not dialogue but appeasement.

"There is no other Ukraine." Taras Shevchenko jotted down back in 1845. Hence Ukrainians have no choice but to fight for their homeland and to win. They are not wholly heroic. They tried otherwise, ceding the land to imperial Russia back in 2014. As we all now know, it didn't stop the further escalation.

And it is important to acknowledge that these are mainly pacifists who go to this war to rescue Ukraine: cosmopolitan men and women of different backgrounds, successful in life, happy and proud with their families, their society, and their country. Democracy was in place here, and the succession of power was regular – six presidents were peacefully elected one after another within 30 years. Fair elections – both national and local – were cherished and guarded by Ukrainian polity for many years, though they were dwarfed or even hacked by the Kremlin's attempts to interfere, and then corrective mechanisms of the direct democracy – the maidans – were erupting in millions of caring citizens.

On February 24, a long campaign of Russian aggression peaked, and all masks dropped off. Putin's stake is not about Russian-speaking Ukrainians or the defence of the ethnically Russian minority. And it never was. Putin wants us all dead and raped, or raped and dead. (Kharkiv is 75% Russian speaking, Mariupol is 100%). Abominably, he is supported nowadays by many, very possibly by most Russian citizens. Not only within Russia but also abroad. Those who still claim that they are Soviet people. In this claim, they are like passengers standing in a crowd on the platform, but the train has long since left, the rails have been dismantled, and the station has collapsed from old age. Allegedly, Soviet Russians are happy to threaten the rest of the world with nukes. They believe more in the Russia Today TV channel presenters like Margarita Simonyan than their own close relatives and contacts in the bombarded and besieged cities of Ukraine.

My hope is that many of my fellow citizens will survive this war. This is a tragic transformational time. With the help of its many allies, Ukraine won the battle of Kyiv and effectively holds a front line of more than 2,000 km. If Russia advances at the same speed as it has in the last three months in Donbas, it will need 22 years to conquer Ukraine.

I see a new generation of Ukrainians coming of age in the eye of the historical tornado, a generation which is both resilient and robust, and which will neither fall victim to a bad neighbourhood nor be trapped grieving over monuments to poets, eco-activists, reformers, and anti-corruptionists who died in this war. The new generation's freedom is coupled with its prowess. These young, smart, and capable people will continue the work of reviving Ukraine and making it an even better and more welcoming place. The cherry orchard has been the epitome of Ukrainian environmental thinking since the Baroque time – tender and stoic. One must cultivate one's own orchard by love and duty.

Just peace requires that this time the evil will be called by its name, put to international trial for the crime of aggression, crime against humanity, and many others. Dead souls are ruling all over Russia again, dead souls are executing irrational and ruthless orders. Totentanz could be thrilling for perpetrators in the moment of violence, we saw that in history. But then the fullness of real life, integrity, and virtues will prevail.



ON JULIAN ASSANGE

By Joe Lauria (PEN America)

It is hard to exaggerate the monumental significance of the case of Julian Assange.

It is hard to exaggerate the utter destruction of a man's life for doing his job better than almost anyone else or the destruction of Western governments' claims that they champion a free press.

Our website, Consortium News, has provided the most comprehensive coverage of the Assange case in the English language. We were inside Assange's courtroom in London and followed every hearing later by video link to the courtroom. We have just come from Australia, where we have contacts with Assange's family and his supporters there.

Within weeks he could be extradited to the US to face up to 175 years in an American dungeon for the crime of publishing accurate information.

Julian Assange is not a rapist. He's not a spy. He's not a hacker. He's not an agent of Russia or anywhere else. He's a publisher who is slowly being killed for his work as a publisher, and for no other reason.

Julian Assange's case is one of the most important press freedom cases in history. And why? Harold Pinter said that while the U.S. commits crimes around the world the media acts as though "Nothing ever happened. Even while it was happening, it wasn't happening."

Julian Assange and WikiLeaks showed that it did happen.

And for that, the U.S. has imprisoned him in a major European capital and charged him with revealing its wrongdoing.

This is an attack on press freedom usually associated with the most repressive totalitarian regimes. Assange's case goes to the core of how we define ourselves in the West: are we democracies that uphold the right to criticize the government or growing autocracies that crush dissent?

"The really horrifying thing about this case is the lawlessness that has developed: The powerful can kill without fear of punishment and journalism is transformed into espionage," said the UN rapporteur of torture Nils Melzer. "It is becoming a crime, to tell the truth."

Silencing Assange was the beginning of the recent tide of censorship in the West with Ukraine being used as the excuse and it is getting worse. Before, the U.S. government pressured social media to shut down speech it didn't agree with. Now it is directly involved, creating a Disinformation Governance Board under the Department of Homeland Security law enforcement to police the media. Woodrow Wilson failed by one vote in the U.S. Senate in 1917

to legalize direct government censorship in the Espionage Act despite the First Amendment. Now Wilson's dream is coming true.

He wasn't able to openly legitimize government censorship but was able to get the Sedition Act passed, under which the leader of the U.S. Socialist Party was imprisoned for a speech he made against the military draft. Hundreds of others were imprisoned for what they said.

Assange has been indicted under that Espionage Act, which is in direct conflict with the First Amendment, but thus far not successfully challenged in court. Vice President Joe Biden said in 2010 that Assange could not be indicted because he only received classified material and didn't steal it himself. But now Biden refuses to end Trump's prosecution of Assange.



It began with Assange, but now efforts are underway to stamp out the smallest spark of dissent, lest it grow. The U.S. government is demanding total control of the narrative. The word total as in "totalitarianism."

We in the West have to understand what is happening to us in the midst of this war hysteria. We have to rationally analyse this crisis. We cannot put up with censorship of the press, no matter what we think of the war in Ukraine. There are irresponsible people in the media who are calling for a direct war with Russia and some who think a nuclear war can be won. The madness has to stop.

Assange is the most dangerous man alive to the Western establishment. He was destroying the myths by which it retains its legitimacy. And thus, they are destroying him.

Julian Assange is dying. And so too is Western democracy if the world does not rise up in his defence.

JULIAN ASSANGE

By Uroš Lipušček (PEN Slovenia)

Killing bearers of bad news was an ancient practice that has survived to this day. This fact is also confirmed by the difficult fate of the Australian journalist Julian Assange, who may be extradited to the United States for revealing secret US diplomatic dispatches about US military operations abroad and related crimes.

Assange, whose basic rights were violated in the court proceedings, such as the rule of confidentiality between the accused and his lawyers, should have been released from prison a long time ago. U.S. judicial authorities demanding his extradition intend to try him under the Espionage Act of 1917, an act used by President Woodrow Wilson to silence, among other things, internal opposition to U.S. military involvement in World War I. Said law in its original form provided sentences of up to 20 years in prison for this type of activity, but according to the latest version, Assange can be sentenced to up to 175 years in prison.

This law was passed in 1917 when the U.S. entered World War I, but today, at least officially, the U.S. is not at war, although in the most powerful country in the Western world, there is a lot of talk about war; for example, about the Second Cold War which can turn into a hot war.

Holding the world's leading hegemonic role, the United States is becoming increasingly militarized, as is evident by the record military budget, which is larger than the military budgets of the next 11 countries. The brutal Russian aggression on Ukraine has turned into a proxy war aimed at bringing Russia to its knees and changing its regime. The ultimate goal of this policy is undoubtedly to subdue the autocratic PRC of China as well.

Accordingly, the spectrum of civil rights in Western countries is also slowly declining. Until now, censorship has been a trademark of autocratic regimes. With the recent establishment of the Board against Disinformation in Washington and the ban on broadcasting Russian programs in Europe; the EU and the US have also joined this infamous group.

Clearly, Brussels does not trust the prudence of the Union's citizens, who have the right to be informed of Russia's views first-hand, even if it's mere propaganda. Without taking Russia's security interests into the account, Europe will not be stable and peace will continue to be threatened.

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The introduction of censorship is therefore very detrimental to all European citizens. Italian colleagues, for example, report that the media situation is bleak and that show » Carta Bianca« on Italian radio and television RAI was canceled because it was not in line with the official policy towards the Ukrainian crisis. One American journalist lucidly stated that this was an "intellectual zone without flying" especially since many journalists resort to self-censorship.

The famous Voltaire theorem, "I hate what you write, but I would give my life to allow you to continue writing," has become, for Europe, which would like to be a champion of human rights, clearly controversial. Despite the very probable disagreement with the claims of the Russian regime media about Ukraine, the ban on their broadcasting and the potential abolition of pluralism in the media field threatens democracy. Such measures are allowed only in times of war. Jamming foreign programs was formerly the domain of communist repressive regimes during the Cold War. Apparently not anymore.

We are also witnessing these tendencies in our country, Slovenia. The right-wing coalition, which suffered a severe defeat in the recent parliamentary elections, has, for example, unilaterally taken control of public service broadcasting, especially the News program, and cancelled the most popular show, "Studio City." This year, Slovenia fell by as many as 18 places on the annual index of media freedom prepared by Journalists without Borders.

The future will be difficult on a global scale. International morals and ethics have suffered a blow even in the most democratic countries, and Russian military aggression against Ukraine threatens a general war.

Since the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, the world has never been so threatened and on the brink of nuclear war, as it is today. The thought of the great British philosopher and pacifist, Bertrand Russell, "...that we will put an end to the human race; if humanity does not give up the war," is becoming a very urgent topic. Constant wars have unfortunately become a part of our lives.

Assange's fate will show where Western democracies are heading. Let me end with the information that the Slovenian political parties to the left of the center, which will make the new government, have, at the request of the Slovenian PEN Centre, publicly committed themselves to offer Assange political asylum.

METAPHORIC HORSES

By Teresa Salema Cadete (PEN Portugal)

Some notes on the 54. Writers' Meeting in Bled, May 2022

Have "global ethics" failed; is there still such a thing as "global ethics?" The pleasure of asking direct questions seems to be reborn after two years of pandemic separation, and rage against warfare, and against the so-called "five new horsemen of the Apocalypse" (Covid, Hate Speech, Violent Protests, Global Warming, the Decline of Democracy). Wishing to understand the incomprehensible: the present. European war, the "Bosnias" of this world, and the need to stand with Ukraine without giving up critical thinking about the media reports.

How can writers respond? Firstly, by listening to experienced, unmasked stories, by writers who risked their lives passing borders and helping others, from the 1990s until now. Listening, questioning, exchanging words. Sometimes we recognize some familiar lines, transported to the skies over other languages: "O slano more, koliko tvoje soli / je v solzah portugalskih!" Such lines were written on the booklet of a poetry evening in 13 languages, beautifully spoken by Tajda Lekše – yes, it is Pessoa and his salty sea as tears of Portugal...

Could many questions be summarized by a big one, such as "what can writers do against a war that nobody wanted and nobody expected to happen?" Anyhow, the old Apocalypse horseman, War, emerged and seemed to overshadow the five new others.

War came first, said PEN International President, Burhan Sönmez, in his opening speech. Should it, therefore, be the "father of all things", as Heraclites sustained? Has it permanently lived in a latent way in the so-called peaceful years, while conflict, as a basic principle of democracy, could be solved by debate, dialogue, diplomacy, negotiation, and compromise? Or were many conflicts merely "frozen" (Sylvestre Clancier)? And yet, "when borders are broken, the law is also broken", reminds us of our Ukrainian colleagues. Such issues as the "spiritual crisis" of Europe will probably have to wait for better days. Is it also the fear that fake news, words of bad faith, are entitled to prevail, to become true, or simply the last words? Or at last, as the Mayor of Bled put it during a walk to the castle, when you first tell the history of Bled, or any other region, just say: "First came the occupation, then came the liberation" ...

Anyhow, for "too many conflicts" there are still "too few solutions" (Valentin Inzko). Is the so-called European crisis due to a loss of the sense of urgency, to the fading of such words as "respect", not only for people who deserve to keep living in their country, in their home, but also for all living beings, for the Earth beyond borders? And yet – does it help to wish a return to February 23rd, 2022, to ask "how many poems can heal this world" (Dragica Čarna)? What helps is seeing old friends again, even in these troubled times.

THINKING ABOUT PEACE

By Lucina Kathmann (PEN San Miguel de Allende)

Do you have peace in your family?

Do you have peace in your body?

Do you have peace in your soul?

My Senegalese friend told me that to greet a person politely, you must ask these questions. Peace comes first. Yet when we have it, we take it for granted, and when we see it slipping away, it is already very late.

We have many deficient ideas about how to restore peace when it is threatened. The shoot-'em-up film celebrates an apparently automatic return to peace when the ground is littered with the bodies of the bad guys. Other films show how we or they “won the war.” Generals claim that fresh troops or more weapons will bring peace. Yet we know that troops and weapons never bring peace.

About Guns

The United States Constitution says the people have the right to bear arms. Decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court permit virtually anyone who wants guns to own them and carry them wherever they like. Since 2020, gun violence is the leading cause of death for children in the United States.

Guns are a big business. Almost anyone can buy a gun. From there it is an easy step to bring it to Mexico or anywhere else. In September 2010, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton acknowledged that 90% of the guns used in Mexico come from the United States.

With knives or fists, a dispute in a neighborhood cantina takes only two normally trained policemen to put down. Once this disputatious person goes to Texas and brings back a gun, not only might the intended victim be shot, but so might the police and passers-by.

Positive Uses of Military Force

Arms are dangerous and armed interventions are dangerous. Armies do not automatically cause wars, but when they are on the scene, the potential for violence increases.

Yet not all military intervention is futile. In Haiti in 1994, foreign troops helped maintain order while Aristide was returned to power. In East Timor in 2006, peacekeeping forces helped in a transitional period. UN troops have helped in Bosnia since 1995; the same is true in Namibia, in Mozambique. There are many instances of military peacekeeping.

Many examples of effective action involve multinational troops, like NATO or the UN. Most are extremely restricted. In some cases, the soldiers do not have the authority to shoot. However sometimes multinational forces have waged military campaigns which went far beyond peacekeeping.

The NATO bombing in Serbia and Kosovo in 1999 may have helped to restore peace in the former Yugoslavia, but it did much more collateral damage than ordinary peacekeeping military activities.

There are examples of omission too, cases where international peacekeeping forces did not go in, or did not go in fast enough. Many people believe that an opportunity to save many lives was lost through international military inaction during the genocide of the Tutsi people in Rwanda in 1994, where 75% of the Tutsi population was exterminated.

Caveats

The dangers of failing to use armed forces carefully, with the speedy withdrawal of troops a constant option, are obvious. Armed interventions have run amok for centuries. During the 1980s, there were massacres of civilians in Guatemala and El Salvador: Dos Erres, El Mozote, the Sumpul River. In the 90s there were massacres in Mexico in the wake of the Zapatista uprising, such as in Acteal. None were justifiable as military operations.

On a personal level, we often can sympathize with a survivor's desire for revenge, but revenge simply does not work. It does not bring back the Jews, the Armenians, the Tutsi. It doesn't bring back your sister or your son. The tragedies are permanent; they are exactly the same if the perpetrators are pardoned as if they are executed. Truth commissions, working to clarify the crimes after a war might help us learn from history, but now and always we must keep working.

Do you have peace in your family?

Do you have peace in your body?

Do you have peace in your soul?

Thanks to Charles Hauss, [link to essay Military intervention](#)

The article was originally written in November 2010.

IN MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA PEOPLE DIE FOR FREEDOM OF SPEECH

By Neža Vilhelm (PEN San Miguel de Allende)

NICARAGUA

Police keep Cristiana Chamorro under house arrest

On 2 June 2021, police and riot police raided the home of journalist and presidential aspirant [Cristiana Chamorro](#) on the outskirts of the Nicaraguan capital. She was then placed under [house arrest](#) and held incommunicado until 7 June 2021. Police reported that they seized mobile phones and computers from the residence, as well as a large number of printed documents which the government of Daniel Ortega planned to use to incriminate her for alleged money laundering.

During the police deployment, government forces attempted to obstruct the work of journalists covering the event. Several [reporters were beaten](#) by [riot police](#).



More journalists summoned in Chamorro case

More than thirty journalists and independent media owners were summoned as witnesses to testify in the investigation against Cristiana Chamorro, former Director of the Fundación Violeta Barrios de Chamorro. Well-known journalists, [Álvaro Navarro](#), Director of the online media outlet [Artículo 66](#), and [Patricia Orozco](#), former Director of the radio show Onda Local, as well as [Juan Lorenzo Hollman](#), Secretary of the Board of Directors of the daily La Prensa, and Eduardo Enríquez, Head of News at the same newspaper, were summoned to testify.

In all cases, the journalists defended their professional work and accused the government of trying to implicate them in non-existent crimes in order to harm Cristiana Chamorro and, at the same time, intimidate and silence media outlets that are critical of the government.

Well-known Nicaraguan cultural personalities did not escape this escalation by the government. Six days earlier, on the 1st of June 2021, the award-winning writer [Sergio Ramírez](#), winner of the 2017 Miguel de Cervantes Prize, was summoned to testify in his capacity as legal representative of the Fundación Luisa Mercado, a small NGO dedicated to cultural promotion, located in Masatepe, the south of the capital hometown of the novelist. The Prosecutor's Office questioned Ramírez about his NGO's links with the Fundación Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, and he assured that all cultural cooperation projects were carried out in strict accordance with the laws of the country. [Editor's note: Since that time, the situation of freedom of speech and human rights in Nicaragua has continue to seriously deteriorate. We will report on this matter in future issues of our Newsletter.]

MEXICO

In Mexico, the situation with our journalists and media people continues to be dire. The government does not officially sentence and send journalists and media people to prison — they are slain, and often in public. Or, they are disappeared« and if found, they are dead.

The only real recourse we have to improving this situation is GLOBAL public awareness through social media and journalists in other countries. We must raise awareness around the world, and continue to seek support from our friends in PEN and organizations that support freedom of expression in the media.



UPDATE ON KENYA

By Maximillia Muninzwa (PEN Kenya)

There was a time in Kenya when journalists had to risk their lives writing political stories, always aware that they could, at any time, be arrested for subversion or incitement. They lived with their hearts in their hands, as we say in this part of the world.

If I were to say that things are no better today, I would only be making sensational news. Kenya has come a long way in relation to freedom of speech. In recent times, we haven't witnessed any member of the Fourth Estate detained for trumped-up charges as before.

What we worry most about now are the rising cases of what most people believe are extra-judicial killings. Not a week passes without reports of bodies of some reportedly missing person being found dumped somewhere. There is always a common thread. Someone is reported Missing. The police are informed and swing into action. The body is discovered. At worst, they are shot at point blank range. And then comes the most distressing part.

Make-believe narratives are quickly churned and shared across various media.

In one of two recent cases, a man was fatally shot in broad daylight a few meters from his house. As the police began investigations, they said he was one of the most wanted criminals. He had defrauded people of thousands of dollars every week by forging ATM cards and mobile money accounts. In the other case, in the process of filing a report about their missing friend, all four were never seen alive again. Their bodies were found dumped in a forest a few days later, several kilometers from where they lived. All we hear from the police is that the four young men were criminals, laundering money and web scumming.

These revelations always come up after the bodies of missing persons have been found. There are a number of pertinent and critical questions that beg for answers. We'll let you think them through.

Politically, gender representation remains heavily skewed. We have witnessed how patriarchal narratives take centre stage when debate on affirmative action comes up in parliament. Now as the country prepares for elections in August, there have emerged two major players. One is allied to the Azimio la Umoja Kenya coalition, and the other One Kenya Alliance led by the Deputy President.

Azimio has picked a renowned female politician as the candidate's running mate and her entry into the fray is likely to put the coalition in a more favored spot. Many Kenyans are envisioning their next first woman president... A dream, yes, yet a very valid one.

Sadly, Kenya has not affected the two-thirds gender rule even though it is enshrined in the Constitution and the fact that women are a critical stronghold of the electorate in Kenya. The question that now begs is, would the current enthusiasm be the same were Hon Martha Karua the flagbearer, with a man for a running mate? Just a thought, from a woman. Whatever the outcome, we'll push the new government to ensure party nominations take cognizance of the gender requirement where the two-thirds rule fails.

Gender and politics aside, there is one presidential candidate whose ten-point manifesto is like none before. The first agenda of the Roots Party is legislation to make marijuana commercially and recreationally viable.





PEN QUECHUA MANIFESTO

TO RESTORE PEACE IN THE WORLD

We, the writers, novelists, poets, and singers of the Quechua people, survivors of the 500-year-old holocaust of hundreds of native peoples of America, speak out against the war in the Slavic region of Ukraine, on the European continent happening in 2022.

Considering that:

PACHAMAMA is the gravitational center that holds all things together and gives them meaning and makes them real.

PACHAMAMA does not let the sky and its inhabitants and the earth and its inhabitants, together with rivers and seas and oceans be loose pieces floating in space.

PACHAMAMA is the spiritual principle of balance and values and virtues.

PACHAMAMA is life and beauty.

PACHAMAMA is not an ideology, and it is not a philosophy.

In PACHAMAMA all humans are in a relationship of equality with one another.

Today, the widespread disconnection of humanity from one another has expanded to unprecedented levels because humans have used their knowledge to build more and better weapons to attack one another, without thinking that at the same time they are attacking PACHAMAMA by destroying the air and the owl, the hawk and the seagull, the stork, and the wild goose. Destroying the land, the wildcat, the fox, the wolf, the elk, and the wild boar. Polluting the rivers, the salmon, and the carp.

Polluting the ocean, the walrus, the seal, and the whale.

What will become of PACHAMAMA without her little children who nurture balance and harmony? Humans, "mighty" humans, come to your senses. That is the reason for this manifesto:

1. The center and circumference of the Life of the planet is none other than the creative energy of PACHAMAMA. To know and seek its riches in order to share them among all beings is the main value.
2. PACHAMAMA cannot be separated from political thoughts, moral, ethical, or social teachings. We cannot forget that all beings are proportionally related to all beings.
3. This universe is moving towards a single goal: the fullness of PACHAMAMA, the rivers are its blood and the earth is its body. To attack them is to lose everything. It is the end of all beings, including humans.
4. If the spirit of PACHAMAMA is real in our lives, how is it that we can continue to build weapons of mass destruction? How is it that Russians kill Ukrainians? And that Ukrainians defending their country kill Russians? Aren't they children of the same PACHAMAMA? Shouldn't this really make us shudder?
5. Many say that Ukrainians and Russians are far from our territory and if they have decided to kill each other, let them kill each other. How can one think like that? They forget that we and PACHAMAMA all share in one another's lives. Nothing moves in the North without causing its effect in the South. Nothing is destroyed in the East without destroying the West.
6. Justice, separated from PACHAMAMA is a dead thing. PACHAMAMA is the embodiment of Justice, Peace, and Righteousness. Therefore, war is not between countries but between all human beings, a corporate war between brothers of the same human blood.
7. In a world that sings the praises of its leaders, let us at least have the courage not to escape PACHAMAMA by closing our eyes, but by opening our eyes and ears and planting our feet more firmly on the earth as our spirits unite in the one purpose: LIFE. We are PACHAMAMA.

We raise our voice:

To call upon all people to share the vision of their heart calling for Peace and brotherhood among brothers, in this Christian year 2022, but 2015 in the Andes when the constellation of the Southern Cross is at its zenith and emanates all life and power and truth.

POETRY CORNER

By Sándor Halmosi (PEN Hungary), Judyth Hill (PEN San Miguel de Allende)

SÁNDOR HALMOSI - THERE IS A VICTORY IN EVERY DEFEAT

(Mert minden vereségben győzelem van)

But you mustn't get complacent, not for a minute,
you mustn't sit back, you must be alert,
quiet and informed, resolute, and load-bearing,
you must expect miracles to happen, you must
believe in signs, but first you have to write the signs
on foreheads, minds dwelling behind foreheads must be
sharpened, eyes must be kissed and filled up with light,
you have to remove the hex from people, but you
mustn't bury it, for what you bury will grow out again
and will be tougher, it will become itself and power,
the demons have to be named, and tamed, you must
call them, as you were called, as I was called by powers
greater and more humble than me, because cherry trees
will come into bud soon, and thus you too shall heal,
because in every defeat there is victory,
and in every victory there is a smaller defeat.

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SÁNDOR HALMOSI - AGAPE

(Agapé)

We are monsters.
We are sitting on a pregnant wild boar
and taking selfies.
Our teeth are white.
We give names to all our disgrace.

© Translated from Hungarian by Márta Gyermán-Tóth



SÁNDOR HALMOSI - BRING IT WITH US

(Hozzuk magunkkal)

from the depth of time
the tenacious softness of plants
and among the plants they lived
every hurt
and every forgiveness.

The knowledge that anyone
who plays with feelings
is risking his life
and the knowledge
that life is deep living
and this is the only way
to survive.

Through the tenderness of the body.
As the texture of the spirit.

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SÁNDOR HALMOSI - TWO MOLECULES

(Két molekula)

Two molecules collide.
Two bare, naked particles in their
infinite dread of a vacuum they clash.
The heat released – spirit.

© Translated from Hungarian by Elizabeth Csicsery-Ronay



JUDYTH HILL - WAGE PEACE

Wage peace with your breath.
Breathe in firemen and rubble,
breathe out whole buildings and flocks of red wing blackbirds.
Breathe in terrorists
and breathe out sleeping children and freshly mown fields.
Breathe in confusion and breathe out maple trees.
Breathe in the fallen and breathe out lifelong friendships intact.
Wage peace with your listening: hearing sirens, pray loud.
Remember your tools: flower seeds, clothes pins, clean rivers.
Make soup.
Play music, memorize the words for thank you in three languages.
Learn to knit, and make a hat.
Think of chaos as dancing raspberries,
imagine grief
as the outbreath of beauty
or the gesture of fish
Swim for the other side.
Wage peace.
Never has the world seemed so fresh and precious:
Have a cup of tea ...and rejoice.
Act as if armistice has already arrived.
Celebrate today.

Judyth Hill ~ September 11, 2001



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For publication: Tanja Tuma, Interim Chair of the Committee (PEN Slovenia)

Chair : Tanja Tuma, Interim Chair of the Committee (PEN Slovenia)

Contributors: Tanja Tuma, Interim Chair of the Committee (PEN Slovenia)

Germán Rojas, Chair Elect of the WfPC (PEN Chile)

Tarık Günersel (PEN Turkey)

Iryna Starovoyt (PEN Ukraine)

Joe Lauria, (PEN America)

Uroš Lipušček (PEN Slovenia)

Teresa Salema Cadete (PEN Portugal)

Lucina Kathmann, vice president emerita of PEN International and member of PEN San Miguel de Allende

Neža Vilhelm (PEN San Miguel de Allende)

Maximillia Muninzwa (PEN Kenya)

PEN Quechua

Sándor Halmosi (PEN Hungary)

Judyth Hill (PEN San Miguel de Allende)

Translators : Elizabeth Csicsery-Ronay (PEN Hungary)

Márta Gyermán-Tóth

Proofread by Judyth Hill (PEN San Miguel de Allende)

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